



*"Our deepest fear is we are powerful beyond measure"*



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# June Newsletter

2017

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## Does Diet Matter? 5 Food Rules For Pregnancy Success - Dr. Kali MacIsaac ND

**A**s a naturopathic doctor who works almost exclusively with patients trying to get pregnant, one of the most common questions I get is – what should I be eating to increase the likelihood of a healthy pregnancy?

I absolutely love that most people are generally aware that what they eat affects their health, and their chances of achieving and maintaining a healthy pregnancy. How diet affects fertility is pretty simple – the food you eat affects the health of all of the cells in your body. I explain it to my patients is like this: it takes three basic things to create a healthy baby - a healthy egg, healthy sperm, and a healthy uterine environment. In the case of surrogacy, whether you are responsible for the egg, the sperm, or the uterine environment, what you eat affects your contribution!



One of my favourite sayings regarding diet comes from Michael Pollan: “Eat food. Not too much. Mostly plants.” It's a hard motto to disagree with, and it rings true for all of the diets that are healthy for fertility.

Though there is quite a lot of information available on diet and fertility, when we look at the literature for what helps your fertility we can condense it into a few key rules. Diets like the Mediterranean diet have been shown to increase IVF success and pregnancy outcomes ([https://www.ebscohost.com/assets-sample-content/Nutr-RC\\_The\\_Fertility\\_Diet\\_EBCS.pdf](https://www.ebscohost.com/assets-sample-content/Nutr-RC_The_Fertility_Diet_EBCS.pdf)); so have diets high in monounsaturated fats (<http://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-truth-about-fats-bad-and-good>). Paleo works for some, vegetarian for others. Putting the best aspects of all fertility-friendly diets



## Does Diet Matter? 5 Food Rules For Pregnancy Success - continued

together, I tell patients to follow these 5 simple guidelines – whether you’re making the eggs, the sperm, or the uterine environment:

### 1. no processed foods

The research is becoming pretty clear that processed foods are bad for your health in general, and fertility is no exception. Processed foods, high in trans fats, promote inflammation, insulin resistance, and increases the risk of an ovulatory fertility disorder (<https://hms.harvard.edu/news/trans-fats-may-raise-risk-infertility-2-9-07>). Trans fats have been shown to increase the risk of fetal death during pregnancy (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/18053997>), and increase the risk of pre-eclampsia in pregnant women (a potentially life-threatening pregnancy complication) (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=pre-eclampsia+and+elaidic+acid>). Trans fats are found in any products that contain damaged oils, a result of the process of full or partial hydrogenation. Full hydrogenation is when liquid oil has been modified into a solid (margarine); partial hydrogenation occurs when you fry something in oil (French fries, potato chips) or cook to damage oils (donuts, pastries, fast food). Staying away from processed foods is a must for all involved in making a baby.

### 2. no refined flours

Refined flour products (breads, pastas,

pastries) raise and drop blood sugar like a roller-coaster ride, which contributes to reproductive hormone imbalances, insulin resistance, and inflammation. As a doc concerned for the health of my patients and their future generations – I’m very concerned about these outcomes. Hormonal imbalances contribute to infertility because they are intricately involved in everything it takes to get pregnant! Hormone disruption interferes with egg cell maturation, ovulation, the ability of sperm to fertilize eggs, implantation, and maintenance of ongoing pregnancy (<https://friscoinfertility.com/infertility/causes/female/hormone-imbalance/>). Below I’ll discuss insulin resistance and inflammation in regards to fertility.

### 3. no added sugar

As I mentioned above, unstable blood sugar levels result in hormonal imbalance, insulin resistance and inflammation. Reproductive hormone imbalance aside, insulin resistance is another serious outcome of sugar intake – women with insulin resistance have decreased implantation, clinical pregnancy and ongoing pregnancy rates after IVF (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/23176069>). Inflammation that results from blood sugar imbalances further hinders fertility – it decreases sperm and egg quality, alters endometrial receptivity (likelihood that an embryo will ‘stick’) and can interfere with ongoing healthy



pregnancy (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3107847/>). And lastly, sugar can deplete vitamins and minerals that end up in short supply because of the hormonal imbalances I mentioned. Bottom line – cut the sweet stuff.

### 4. lots of veggies

You’re probably not surprised about this one, but it couldn’t be more important that you eat your veggies (especially your greens) for fertility. The Nurses’ Health Study (2008) looked at the diets and health outcomes of over 18,000 women over 8 years. What they found was that a diet high in whole foods, with mostly ‘slow’ carbohydrates (whole grains you’ve cooked yourself, fruits and



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veggies), that was mostly plant-based was associated with a six-fold increase in fertility (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2276768/>). Six-fold! I'd take that boost any day. My rule of thumb is that 50% of every meal should consist of darkly coloured fruits and veggies – dark green, red, purple, orange, and yellow veg and fruit are high in antioxidants and alkaline minerals that feed our cells the nutrition they require for optimal health.

### 5. healthy fat is your friend

Out with low-fat, in with whole foods high in natural fats! The low-fat craze is one I am more than happy to say goodbye to. The importance of fats can't be understated – they feed directly into the steroid hormone cascade, meaning you manufacture progesterone, DHEA, estrogen, testosterone, and cortisol out of fat.

This study from the Harvard School of Public Health showed that women with the highest intake of monounsaturated fat were 3.4 times more likely to have a child after undergoing IVF (<http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/mediterranean-diet-foods-avocados-olive-oil-boost-success-fertility-treatments-article-1.1110559>). Of all the foods, avocados and olive oil were found to be the most fertility-friendly of the monounsaturated fats.

This study showed that the Mediterranean diet, high in veggies, lean protein, omega3s from fatty fish, whole grains and monounsaturated fats from

sources like avocados and olive oils lead to a 90% lower risk for preterm delivery (<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16202717>).

And more research has shown that whole fat dairy is better for fertility than low fat dairy. If you don't have dairy sensitivities, high-fat organic and grass-fed dairy is what I suggest (toxins are stored in animal fat, so the quality matters). If you do have a sensitivity? Stick to eggs, avocados, coconut milk/oil/meat, butter or ghee, nuts and seeds, and healthy organic and wild or grass-fed animal protein – every single day.

Following just the above 5 rules, I've seen dramatic changes in my patients trying to conceive. Remember these rules, and you're well on your way to fertility success – whether you are contributing the eggs, the sperm, or the uterine environment.

If you're interested in learning more about how diet affects your fertility, you can find the completely free Acubalance Fertility Diet here (<http://www.acubalance.ca/resources/fertility-diet>).



Dr. Kali MacIsaac ND graduated from the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine and holds an honours bachelor of Biomedical Science from the University of Waterloo. She is an active member of the BC Naturopathic Association (BCNA), the Canadian Association of Naturopathic Doctors (CAND), the Pediatric Association of Naturopathic Physicians (PedANP) and the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM). Dr. Kali has an incredible passion for offering practical natural solutions for her patients' health care needs - she is willing to challenge the idea that health equals the absence of disease, and pushes boundaries of what is possible to help patients achieve their highest potential and optimize their fertility. Dr. Kali is a regular contributor to the online content at [acubalance.ca](http://acubalance.ca) and [focusmedical.ca](http://focusmedical.ca), and lives and works in beautiful Vancouver, BC Canada.



Don't forget  
to read Angela's  
new **blog** this week:

*How it all Begins -  
Women who are meant  
for more.*

[www.surrogacycommunity.ca](http://www.surrogacycommunity.ca)

## The dollars and cents of surrogate moms - Peterborough Newspaper

**M**P Dean Del Mastro is talking about reproduction again. But this time, he's taking a surprisingly progressive position.

Del Mastro is proudly anti-abortion. He has been vocal about this at pro-life rallies, saying at one in Ottawa in 2010 "My position is clear. I believe life begins at conception," and "My definition of when life begins is what I've learned in church. It's based on my faith."

He famously tore into Liberal MP Justin Trudeau, now the party's leader, in 2010 after Trudeau made pro-choice comments on a radio show before appearing in Peterborough to speak to Catholic students.

But this is different. On Monday, Del Mastro will table an amendment to Canada's decade-old laws governing how surrogate motherhood works in this country.

Del Mastro, who sits as an independent after leaving the Conservative caucus while he faces trial on Elections Canada charges, wants Canadian women to be paid to act as surrogates for couples unable to have children.

In Canada, parents who use a surrogate either to carry a fertilized donor egg or one of her own cannot pay the woman for her services. It's illegal under the Assisted Human Reproduction Act.

While many Canadian women agree to become surrogates at no cost, it's become common for Canadian couples to hire surrogates living in other countries, who



can be paid for their services. The Act allows this, and even grants Canadian citizenship to the resulting baby.

The idea behind the Act was to ensure that the parties entering into a surrogacy were doing so out of the goodness of their hearts, not for profit. But Del Mastro doesn't buy that, and he's right. While it's clear that women who become surrogates do so because they want to help, the MP says it's pretty obvious a lot of Canadian surrogates are paid under the table, and he's probably right.

Del Mastro calls the whole system flawed, and wants it changed.

It's interesting that our MP, who is up front and definite about his

traditional beliefs, would take on something as 21st-century as assisted pregnancy. But if you think about it for a moment, it makes perfect sense for a conservative politician to want to change a law that keeps Canadian dollars in Canada and pays Canadians for the work they do. Raising awareness and acceptance of surrogacy is a nice side effect.

Del Mastro is on the right track; now we'll see if his fellow Parliamentarians agree.