

Is reflexology the new cure for infertility?

by ANDREA PERRY, femail.co.uk

Infertility can be an emotionally exhausting, not to mention expensive, condition.

But according to a growing number of people, the key to overcoming the problem for many couples could be far simpler than they think - thanks to reflexology.

An increasing number of women claim this popular type of foot massage has helped them conceive. Now a medical study has been launched to discover if the claims are true.

Reflexology, a traditional healing art dating from the ancient Egyptians and Chinese, involves manipulation of pressure points in the hands and feet and is often used to ease period pain, headaches, sinus and back problems as well as the effects of chemotherapy.

Practitioners claim the soles of the feet are like a mini map of the inside of the body and are linked to our inner organs and systems, including the fallopian tubes and ovaries. By massaging different points on the feet therapists claim they can unblock energy pathways in the body and so help the body to regain its natural balance and heal itself.

Some points on the foot are associated with a woman's egg production and by manipulating these areas reflexologists claim they can correct the imbalances which can hamper pregnancy.

The latest research, a two year clinical trial at the IVF unit at Derriford Hospital in Plymouth, is the brainchild of reflexologist Jane Holt. She approached the unit after 13 of the 23 women she treated with a range of fertility problems fell pregnant last year.

Beccy Wellington, 34, an auxiliary nurse, from Kingsbridge, in Devon, is convinced that her trip to see Jane in November 1999 resulted in the birth of her son Luke, who is now five months old.

'We had been trying for a baby for just over a year and had begun to look at other ways that would help me conceive when someone recommended reflexology,' she said.

'I had four treatments and was pregnant within three weeks. I am convinced that the reflexology got my body in working order so I was ready to conceive. I also felt ten times better, more positive and a lot happier in myself.'

'I went in there with an open mind, but was totally shocked to find myself pregnant so soon,' she said. 'I would definitely advise other women to try reflexology. It may not work for everyone, but it worked for me and it is worth trying.'

Jane Holt, a reflexologist for 12 years, claims one woman she helped had been trying to get pregnant for 20 years.

'Infertility is a complex problem and I think that often what is needed is something that gives the system a bit of a kick start and that's what reflexology can do,' she said.

'At least this gives women the option to try something else while they are going through hospital procedures and even if it works for some of them that's a bonus.'

Cathy Shipton, who plays nurse Duffy in the BBC TV series Casualty, is also convinced that reflexology on the set of the show in Bristol helped her to become pregnant.

She had been trying to have a baby for four years, but four months after having twice weekly reflexology sessions she became pregnant.

In the new study, 150 volunteers will be offered reflexology rather than the fertility drug clomifene, which is usually used to induce ovulation. This drug works in about 70 per cent of patients, but the drug's main drawback is it can increase the likelihood of a multiple pregnancy.

The volunteers will each receive eight treatments over a two to three month period. In order for the trial to be conducted in a scientific way, patients and hospital staff will not know whether true reflexology or a 'dummy' version has been given. Only the reflexologist will know who has had the real treatment.

One in seven couples suffers with infertility. Last year the Plymouth IVF unit saw over 900 patients. Thirty per cent of these were not producing eggs.

The hospital has already pioneered the use of acupuncture - the insertion of fine needles into the body to unblock energy channels - in pregnancy and routinely offers it to women who might benefit.

Dr Jonathan Lord, clinical lecturer in reproductive medicine at the hospital, is co-ordinating the new trial.

'At the moment there is no evidence to say whether reflexology works or not,' he said. 'Although there are several reports of patients in whom it has worked, this is not sufficient evidence to enable it to be routinely recommended.'

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-20980/Is-reflexology-new-cure-infertility.html#ixzz3xUMNEp4m>