

Pin down fertility

Acupuncture can make a difference to IVF success

by Una Rice

Tara O'Sullivan (38) from Malahide Dublin has had acupuncture during IVF to enhance the treatment – and it's had astounding results!

These days many of us know someone who's undergoing the process of IVF to get pregnant. It's a long rollercoaster of a road, with many winding turns and no guarantees either. But imagine if someone told you that a complimentary treatment such as acupuncture could actually increase the success of your IVF working by a massive 46 per cent?

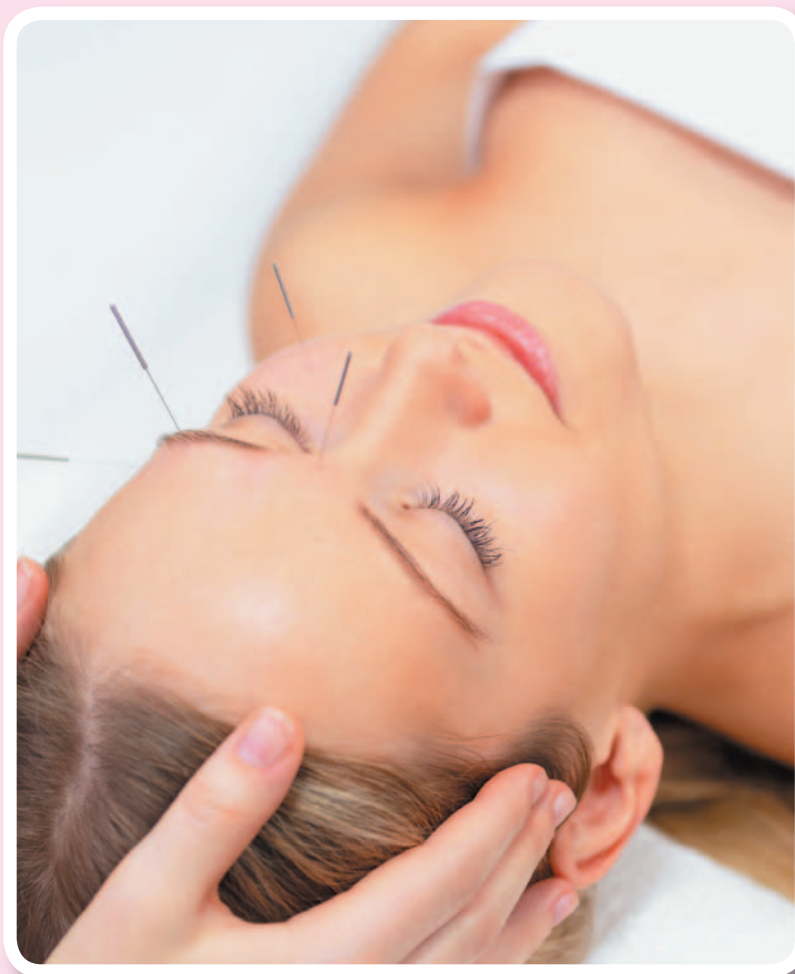
As pregnant mum of twins Tara O'Sullivan says: "If it was a tablet, people would be queuing up outside the door for it!"

Tara is a sufferer of Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS). She tried for a baby for eight years with no success. "IVF was a last ditch attempt," she says.

Fortunately, she produced 12 eggs, nine of which were successfully fertilised and after three days there were six remaining. She now has her beautiful twins, Molly and Jack, who will be three this July.

But Tara wasn't finished her family and she knew she would be undergoing IVF again. Slightly older now and with two lively toddlers to look after, she understood she needed to give her body the maximum chance to embrace the IVF on every level, to give it every chance to work again.

First time round it had been a hugely stressful and highly invasive process; now, she needed something else to help her through. She did a huge amount of reading about acupuncture and its benefits with IVF – all she had to do was find an exceptional practitioner. When she asked around, she found that the same name for a Five Element practitioner (a Japanese system that focuses on healing the body, mind and spirit), Karen Costin, kept coming up again and again. Karen is a Five Element



"The acupuncture helps also with the quality of eggs you produce," she says, "as well as increasing the blood flow to the uterus, to make it the very best environment for the baby."

Taking control during the uncertain time of IVF has paid dividends for Tara. "We would like another baby after this pregnancy," she says. "I will be literally running back to my acupuncturist for more sessions, as I'll be even older then."

And for those who are wary of needles? "They are hair thin," she explains. "For the most part it's very relaxing, though sometimes if you have blocks in your energy it can be painful as the needle is manipulated, but it's easy."

"I can't stress enough to women undergoing IVF how much acupuncture has helped me. The first time undergoing IVF I was so low – I gave myself up to the medics. This time I think to myself, 'I will support myself this way' and it's worked for me."

For more information on Five Element Acupuncture visit www.karencostin.com

What to consider

- Don't accept that any acupuncturist will be able to help, even if they say they can. You need to find a specialist who understands IVF and fertility and is used to treating women undergoing this method of assistance. Be ready to do your homework.
- IVF is lonely and stressful and you need to prepare yourself mentally, physically and emotionally for the journey – and this is also where acupuncture can come into its own. Even just six weeks before you start IVF treatment, acupuncture can be extremely useful.

acupuncture practitioner specialising in pregnancy, fertility and post natal treatment.

Over a period of a number of months, Tara had acupuncture sessions every two weeks.

"IVF is lonely, your dignity goes, and it's stressful," says Tara. "The acupuncture helps with all aspects of it – it helps enormously with the medication that you have to take and it's like a therapy, where you have the chance to talk about how you're feeling and deal with all the emotional stuff too that the medical doctors don't deal with. I would come out of a session completely buoyed up, feeling great."

Tara's acupuncturist suggested she drink more water during the day to help the flow of medication through her body and suggested a couple of other dietary changes – in particular to cut back on sugar, which wasn't agreeing with Tara, and wheat.

This time, bearing in mind Tara's age, she produced five good quality eggs, four of which fertilised. Two were frozen, and two were implanted. Tara is now in her last trimester of a singleton pregnancy.

DID YOU KNOW?

Acupuncture can help with other aspects of pregnancy too, including reducing miscarriage, easing morning sickness, for breech presentation, anxiety, labour induction and pain relief – but check out any concerns you may have with your doctor.