



Self Care: Day 3

BLOOD FLOW AND FERTILITY

"blood, n. the vital principle; life."
--Webster's Dictionary

Where your blood flows, healing goes. **Proper circulation is your fertility friend** and might even be your BFF! It's the number one agent of regeneration in our body, and especially in the reproductive organs. Good blood flow to the ovaries encourages healthy follicle and egg development. Proper uterine blood flow helps support a thick, trilaminar endometrium (uterine lining) at the time of implantation. A good menstrual flow is part of our body's self-clearing mechanism and is also monthly bio-feedback about the health of our uterus (is the blood dark and clotty, bright with good flow, subject to days of spotting, etc.?). And the presence of fibroids and ovarian cysts can 'steal' blood from your reproductive organs, making their normal functioning more complicated and strained.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) has described the correlation between healthy blood flow and reproductive health for thousands of years, noting conditions like:

- ❖ **Blood deficiency** – often the result of poor digestion or an inadequate diet, in blood deficiency the blood isn't providing enough nourishment to support the ovaries and uterus.
- ❖ **Blood stasis** - when a lack of proper circulation creates thin lining, short or absent periods, painful clots, ovarian cysts, tumors and/or fibroids that then lead to a physical blockage; blood stasis is often caused by physical trauma to the uterus or 'cold uterus'.
- ❖ **Cold uterus** - if the endometrium doesn't respond to the warming hormone progesterone, the result is like a seed trying to grow in chilly weather, where neither the seed (embryo) or the soil (uterine lining) can flourish. Women with cold uterus often have cold hands/feet, dark and clotty menstrual blood, low libido, cramps and low back pain (helped by heat), and slow rising and/or early declining Basal Body Temperatures (more on this in tomorrow's article!)
- ❖ **Liver qi stagnation** – Qi is your body's vital energy in TCM, and correlates to blood flow. Chronic emotional stress and irritability can cause qi/circulation to become blocked, interrupting the flow of energy through the system. Irregular periods, a lack of ovulation, and a restriction of energy to the developing eggs or embryo can result from liver qi stagnation.



Let's look more closely at this concept of stress depleting blood flow. When we tense our muscles, slump our shoulders, shorten our breath or clench our abdomen, pressure is exerted on the belly, restricting its movement. More intense levels of stress signals the body to redirect the blood from the abdomen to the legs, an ancient response that aids us in running from danger. Poor circulation can create adhesions and rigidity in our tissue and organs, which in turn blocks blood flow, which creates larger stagnation, leaving us more prone to injuries and scar tissue, which restrict blood flow, and around and around we go.

So how do we encourage healthy blood flow throughout our body, and especially in the pelvic organs? A nutrient dense diet rich in protein, [iron](#), [amino acids](#), fruits, and vegetables; applying heat on the muscles and abdomen, massage, stretching, femoral massage (one of today's self care techniques); and **gentle** exercise are some of our best blood building buddies. These can go a long way towards encouraging good qi, energy and healing.

A word to the wise regarding picking your exercise program: when it comes to your fertility goals, not all workouts are created equal. A no-pain-no-gain mentality can be devastating to a potential pregnancy: the stress hormones high-intensity exercise creates can throw your hormones out of whack (more about this on Day 7), not to mention most forms of cardio will send blood into your limbs, effectively 'stealing' it from your abdomen. Focusing on gentle forms of exercise for your fertility, like brisk walking, swimming, and yoga can help relieve stress, get the blood moving, and can actually benefit your fertility blood flow as you go!



SELF-CARE VIDEOS

For today's self-care practice, you'll learn how to do femoral massage, a powerful TCM blood building tool designed for use before ovulation. By compressing the femoral artery, blood is redirected into the iliac artery, which branches into the uterine and ovarian arteries. In directing more blood toward the ovaries, egg quality may be improved. By sending more blood to the uterus, the endometrial lining may thicken. Even in situations where the lining is too thick, increasing circulation has a cleansing effect, helping to flush out stagnation and toxicity from the uterus.

You'll also learn a fertility yoga sequence created by fertility goddesses Beth Heller and Tami Quinn. It's safe to do anytime in your cycle, creates positive blood flow to your womb, and is a pleasurable and relaxing body-boost and an act of tender loving self care!

FEMORAL MASSAGE

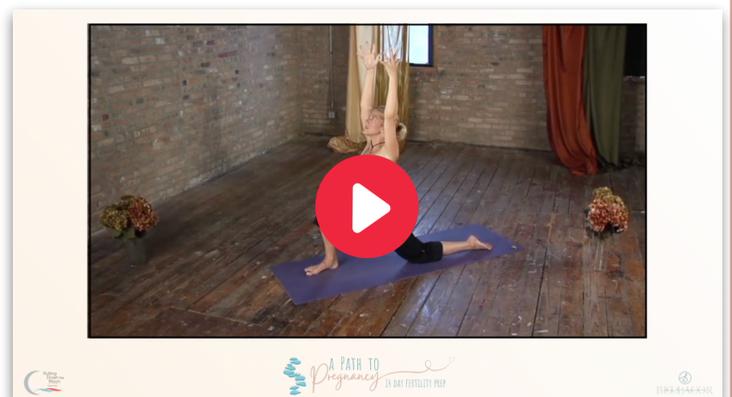
- ❖ Bring your leg into a figure 4 and rest it on top of a pillow
- ❖ Locate the tendinous, hard areas on either side of the inner thigh
- ❖ Come right between those areas to the softer, more comfortable area, just below the bikini line
- ❖ Use your fingertips to apply pressure and find your femoral pulse
- ❖ If you're having a hard time finding the pulse with your fingertips, come into a seated position and use the heel of your palm to apply pressure and find your pulse
- ❖ Hold the pressure for 30 seconds to create a backflow of blood
- ❖ Perform this a total of 3 times on each leg



VIDEO: FEMORAL MASSAGE (7MIN)

YOGA FOR FERTILITY

This fundamental fertility yoga practice created almost 20 years ago flows through a series of yoga postures that create a gentle warming in the body, linking your breath and movement in a fluid vinyasa. This series targets the psoas, lower abdomen, and full body for stretching, toning, increasing circulation, and nurturing your pelvic center.



VIDEO: YOGA FOR FERTILITY:
MOON SALUTES (12MIN)