

WEEK 3

the goodness
of grains

BEFORE BABY

how to improve
your financial future

PRE-PREGNANCY
PILATES
STRENGTH

What you need
to know about
fertility treatment

understanding
success rates

emotional health:
self compassion



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welcome

Something we're very conscious of at Virtus Health is the emotional aspect of what we do. Although fertility science is clinical, we never want to lose the human side of this valuable work. When you come to see us, we make sure your individual needs and wants are at the forefront. It's also important to us that you understand the treatment options available, which will help you make the decisions that are right for you. Our aim is to help people achieve their goal of successful pregnancy as quickly as possible, and personalising care helps us achieve that.

Another key part of the puzzle when it comes to fertility is getting yourself emotionally ready for your pregnancy journey. Like many aspects in life, there can be a sense of uncertainty

as you embark on your journey to parenthood. So in this issue, we explore how to work through some of the worries that can arise along the way.

To help you better understand what sorts of fertility treatments are available, in this issue of Before Baby we explain the difference between Ovulation Induction, IUI, IVF and ICSI. We also share the amazing fertility preservation options available in case it's needed. To give your finances a boost, we look into tops for improving your financial future and explore the impact of wholegrains on fertility (including a delicious recipe on page 8).

Take a few minutes, make yourself a cuppa, and settle in with this issue. We loved putting it together for you.

“Our aim is to help people achieve their goal of successful pregnancy as quickly as possible, and personalising care helps us achieve that.”

Kate Munnings,
Virtus Health Group CEO



what you need to know about fertility treatment

What's the difference between artificial insemination, IVF and ICSI? And what is ovulation induction? Let us explain.

Sometimes we need a little help to fall pregnant. Some of the most common fertility treatments are artificial insemination, IVF (in vitro fertilisation) and ICSI (intracytoplasmic sperm injection), but even if you've already done a ton of research, you might be feeling confused about which is which and what does what. And how does ovulation induction fit into the picture?

To help prepare you for your journey to parenthood, it's worth understanding what these treatments do and how they could potentially help make your baby dreams come true.

Ovulation induction

This is a form of medication that brings on ovulation, encouraging eggs to develop in the ovaries and be released. It's designed to improve your chances of conceiving – both naturally and through artificial insemination. Ovulation induction can be used for women who are producing low levels of hormones for ovulation, or are not ovulating at all (but have normal fallopian tubes and a male partner with a normal semen analysis).

Artificial insemination

Also known as IUI (intrauterine insemination), artificial insemination is where sperm is inserted into the uterus close to the time of ovulation, to enhance the chances of pregnancy. It's one of the simpler, less invasive forms of fertility treatment, and is often used when there's a diagnosis of unexplained infertility, what's known as hostile cervical mucus or minor sperm abnormalities. It's also used when the male's sperm has been frozen previously (due to cancer treatment, for example). In the case of single women or same-sex couples, artificial insemination can also be used with donor sperm. .

IVF

This is probably the most well-known fertility procedure, but that doesn't mean we all necessarily have a good understanding of what it involves. In vitro fertilisation (IVF) is where a woman's ovaries are stimulated for around two weeks to create more eggs, which are then surgically removed. In a laboratory, those eggs are joined with sperm, and the fertilised egg (also known as an embryo) grows in a protected environment before being transferred into the woman's uterus later.

ICSI

Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) is a procedure done as part of IVF, but only in certain cases. It involves a single sperm being injected into each egg to assist fertilisation, using very fine micro-manipulation equipment. It can be recommended when there's been a diagnosis of male fertility issues, such as low sperm count or motility, anti-sperm antibodies or after a vasectomy. It can also be used when poor (or no) fertilisation has occurred during standard IVF



If you're concerned about your fertility and want to explore your options, give us a call on

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or click [here](#) to make an appointment.

your guide to understanding success rates

If you're currently starting IVF treatment or are considering choosing a fertility clinic, it's natural to take an interest in a clinic's IVF success rates to help you determine your own chance of falling pregnant with IVF.

But what do these figures really mean and how do you compare them between clinics? Let us explain.

When it comes to IVF, there is no agreed standard for reporting 'success'

Sometimes, IVF success rates are quoted per completed IVF treatment cycle - a complete IVF collection and treatment cycle can involve multiple transfers of embryos collected from one egg collection. Success rates measured this way will therefore naturally be higher than success rates measured per embryo transfer.

At Virtus Fertility Centre Singapore, we report our success rates per embryo transfer as we want to give you the most realistic understanding of your chance of success following each individual embryo transfer.

However, it is important to understand that unfortunately, not every treatment cycle will result in an embryo transfer. For some women, no eggs will be collected and sometimes after the eggs have been collected, there may be no transfer because embryos have not developed.

Age remains the most important factor

We previously talked about the importance of the woman's age on fertility, and this impacts both the chance of spontaneous conception as well as the success of IVF. A woman's fertility starts to decline slowly from her early 30's onwards but declines rapidly after the age of 40. When comparing statistics, be sure to look for a clinic that is transparent with its success rates and breaks them down into age bands. This will help you determine what is applicable to your own chances of success.

Make it about you

Whether you are embarking on fertility treatment for the first time, or seeking a second opinion after previous unsuccessful cycles, the best way to understand the likelihood of success for you and your partner is to have a consultation with a fertility specialist. Our role is to give you a thorough understanding of where you are now, and to work with you to develop the most suitable treatment plan moving forward.

Remember bar graphs are not always what's important - achieving a pregnancy and delivering a baby is the definition of success. Focus on finding a fertility specialist you are comfortable with and who is

caring for you, constantly refining your treatment to maximise the chance of success.

When it comes to choosing a fertility clinic, here are a few things to look out for:

- Does the clinic offer a range of fertility treatments and assessments?
- Have you found a doctor you connect with, and who has the right specialty area for you? Do they listen to your concerns, understand your goals and answer your questions?
- Is the clinic in a convenient location?
- Does the clinic have leading technology, particularly in the laboratory?

Remember, every fertility journey is unique, just like you!

The first step is to have a consultation with a fertility specialist.

Contact us today.



the goodness of grains



Forget keto and low carb diets, when it comes to fertility, research consistently shows us that eating wholegrains regularly improves your chances of pregnancy.

Fertility and Pre-natal Dietitian, Wendy Fedele, says that many couples she sees have cut grains from their diet under the false notion that they're bad for us. She would like to change this notion, explaining, "while it's true that we all want to be limiting refined grained products with a high glycaemic index (think white bread/ pastries/ cakes/ highly processed breakfast cereals etc.), whole grains have so many benefits.

They provide sustained energy, are a great source of dietary fibre to promote gut health and contain many fertility-supporting nutrients such as folate and other B vitamins: iron, choline, magnesium."

One study even found that women with the highest intake of whole grains also had the highest implantation and clinical pregnancy rates, which appeared to be associated with a thicker uterine lining.

Some examples of whole grains are oats, quinoa, brown rice, wild rice, bulgar, buckwheat, freekeh, barley, millet, sorghum, whole rye; as well as products made from whole grains such as bread, crackers, and wholemeal pasta.

To boost your whole grain intake, try these tips:

- Swap white bread for wholegrain bread
- Swap refined wheat and rice crackers for wholegrain crispbreads/grainy crackers
- Use whole grains like quinoa, barley, freekeh, brown, or wild rice as a side to your meal (and in place of refined grains like short-grain white rice)
- Replace highly processed breakfast cereals with whole oats, natural muesli, and other wholegrain cereals
- Alternate regular pasta with wholegrain pasta
- Try our Freekeh and mince stuffed capsicums recipe!

Everyone's dietary needs are unique. Be sure to discuss any recommendations with a physician or other healthcare professional.

black bean, corn & quinoa salad



Ingredients

- 1/2 cup Quinoa (dry)
- 2/3 cup Frozen Corn
- 1 cup Black Beans (cooked and rinsed)
- 1 Red Bell Pepper (diced)
- 1/4 Red Onion (finely chopped)
- 3 tbsps Lime Juice
- 1 Garlic (clove, minced)
- 1/2 tsp Chili Powder
- 1/4 tsp Sea Salt
- 1/4 tsp Cumin

Instructions

1. Cook the quinoa according to package directions. Let the quinoa cool slightly.
2. Cook the corn according to package directions. Drain and rinse under cold water to cool.
3. Combine the lime juice, garlic, salt, chili, and cumin in a large mixing bowl. Add the black beans, red pepper, red onion, quinoa, and corn to the bowl and stir to combine. Season with additional lime juice and salt if needed. Divided between bowls and enjoy!

Notes:

Leftovers:

Refrigerate in an airtight container for up to four days.

Serving Size:

One serving is approximately two cups.

More Flavor:

Use taco seasoning or add other dried herbs and spices.

Additional Toppings:

Avocado, cilantro, green onion, tomatoes, salsa.

More Fat:

Add avocado oil.

More Protein:

Serve with tofu, tempeh, cooked chicken, or cooked shrimp on top.

pre-pregnancy pilates

strength

In this week's Pilates class, Professional Specialist Pilates and Movement Instructor, Fiona Malone, is focusing on building strength using a theraband for resistance.

In addition to strengthening our pelvic floor muscles, Pilates strengthens the whole body and assists in gaining awareness of your movement patterns. It also helps

to build that mind-breathe-body connection, keeps your body nimble, reduces lower back pain and improves posture – which can all be very useful tools as your body prepares to carry the added weight of a baby.

Working with a resistance band will help you gain more strength. It is important to maintain 'good

technique' throughout the exercises. Fiona adds, "If you feel you are unable to keep your core connected during these exercises, or you feel pain other than in your muscles, don't be afraid to stop and go back to previous classes to continue building the correct technique and strength."

Read on below for a snippet of some of the exercises for this week.



seated pelvic floor exercise with bi-cep curl

This exercise is an extension of the seated pelvic floor exercise described in previous classes. Fiona explains, "This move is a great multitasker, as it helps to gain breathe and pelvic floor connection, core strength and control, postural strength, connection to lats, and strengthening of biceps." Watch the workout video for a full explanation of this movement.



quadruped with thera-band

The objective of this exercise is to keep the torso still and centred, while building deep core stabilising strength, and improving your lats, triceps and shoulder strength. Using the Theraband will add extra resistance and create more of a challenge to keep your body stabilised throughout the core and the diagonal slings. "See if you can keep your body horizontal throughout the exercise and remember to breathe!" Fiona says.



thoracic extension with thera- band

Why add this move to your workout? Fiona explains, "Building the strength between your shoulder blades is extremely important to aid in posture and in preparation for feeding your little one. Also ideal for hours spent sitting!" To enable these muscle groups to work, we need to be able to move the spine. And spine articulation exercises and rotation are key to keeping your spine supple.



emotional health mindfulness podcast: self-compassion

When it's your time to become a parent, you would never make your child feel inadequate. Yet, says psychotherapist, social worker and fertility counsellor Judith Krause, many of us have no hesitation in treating ourselves as less than. Self-compassion, she says, is a great way to improve our relationship with ourselves so we can model that behaviour to our children. Here are her tips:

Communication is key

"Imagine that your best friend is standing in front of you – think about what you'd say to them," advises Krause. "And then when the inner critic kicks in, think for a moment: Would I say that to my best friend if she was standing in front of me? No, of course you wouldn't."

Remember you're human

Krause advocates 'common humanity', which means: "If someone else was experiencing exactly what I'm experiencing right now, it's not unreasonable for me to think that they wouldn't be experiencing it in exactly the same way I am. So I'm not going to give myself a hard time for what I'm experiencing."

Write it down

"Embrace the fact that you're enough," advises Krause. "You're enough being who you are right here right now, doing the best you can with what you've got available to you."

Disregard unhelpful thoughts

Not all thoughts are based on fact, says Krause, so if you're dealing with a painful thought, question what your mind is telling you. "If that thought was, 'I can't do this', or 'it's never going to happen for me', it doesn't mean it's true. It just means that I've had that thought, and I can move through that and defuse it by coming back to my breath, concentrating on my breath."

Listen to the podcast [here](#)



finance

how to improve your financial future

As you embark on your parenting journey, smart money practices can help. Check out these expert tips.

Adulting successfully isn't only about the parenting decisions you make, it's also about the financial decisions you make for your family. To set you up on the path to a fruitful future, Tilly Money says it's important to start early.

"There are two reasons why people don't get rich – they work hard instead of working smart and they don't curtail their spending enough to acquire the savings to invest."

Click [here](#) to read more of Tilly Money's helpful finance tips.

Check out these great tips to improve your financial position in the future:

- Build up a reserve of money. Make sure you do a budget – "Cutting lifestyle costs saves you much more than you think," they suggest.
- Avoid department store credit cards. "There are cheaper credit cards."
- Don't over-insure or under-insure. "Check out your insurance coverage, its cost and compare alternatives."
- Buy the worst house in the best street. "If you can't afford to buy a house you can live in, then you could become a landlord owning a house in an area where you want to live in the future."
- If you renovate, don't overcapitalise your real estate asset (meaning don't spend more than the value you're adding).
- Never invest in something you don't understand.
- Open a baby bank account. Deposit regular amounts that you can either use for your child's future or as an emergency fund.
- Check any government entitlements you're eligible to receive from Centrelink such as Parental Leave Pay and Partner Pay.



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