

## HEALTH AND FERTILITY ENHANCING SUPPLEMENTS

### Safeguarding our Health, Fertility and the Health of Our Children

*By Julia Indichova*

In the last decade and a half of my work as a reproductive health educator and activist, I've encountered a great deal of controversy and confusion around the subject of supplements. It seems almost daily I receive questions ranging from brand recommendations to dosage of specific nutrients. Many of my clients have wondered whether supplements can make any measurable difference in their overall health and their ability to carry a full-term pregnancy.

The next few paragraphs hope to offer a few simple guidelines and suggestions, and cite relevant research.

#### **A Holistic Approach**

Ours is a culture that loves the promise of the quick and easy, the salvation of pills and magic potions that will do the job without any effort on our part. A subliminal message behind the advertising slogans of supplements is that if we find the right brand we won't have to fret about the food we eat or the lives we lead.

In both of my books, *Inconceivable* (Broadway Books 2001) and *The Fertile Female* (Adell Press 2007), I speak about my conviction, born out of personal experience and my work with clients in the last fifteen years, that deep change doesn't happen without our full participation in the healing process. On a physical level, there is nothing that can match the reparative power of whole, fresh, nutrient-filled food. Not to mention that much can be done simply by eliminating a few of the chief culprits that tax our digestion, burden our liver and other organs of elimination. The liver is one of the key cleansing organs that not only sweeps out toxins, but plays a central role in instructing the pituitary as to the release and regulation of estrogen, FSH, prolactin and testosterone. A weekly twenty four, or forty eight hour green juice fast with some supplemental support can do wonders for an overburdened liver. (See Ally in the Cupboard chapter in *The Fertile Female*, and Cleaning the Refrigerator in *Inconceivable*, for a more detailed discussion of this subject).

Having said all that, when it comes to overall health, pre-conception and fertility related difficulties, pretty much everyone-whether it's a holistic practitioner or mainstream physician-agrees that supplementation is necessary, and can increase our ability to prevent degenerative disease and certainly increase the chances of a full term pregnancy. Mark Hyman, MD, an integrative health practitioner and author of several books, makes an observation worth noting. Doctor Hyman speaks about the difference between preventing a disease, and maintaining optimal health. "Long-latency deficiency disease," he says, is caused by less than optimal levels of nutrients over decades. For example, an acute deficiency in folic acid will cause anemia in a few months. A lesser deficiency over 30 years might appear harmless, except that it doubles the risk of Alzheimer's.

Doctor Hyman's observation validates my view of reproductive challenges as the great opportunity to discover latent depletion on physical, emotional and spiritual levels, which, if ignored, might lead to much more serious health issues.

The overall intention of a holistic approach to fertility difficulties, is to use food, supplements, and tools that help increase one's overall physical and emotional health to the point when the body's internal self-healing mechanism kicks in and re-establishes hormone balance and more efficient organ function.

### **Research Supports Supplementation**

A study published in the April 2004 issue of the *Journal of Reproductive Medicine*, showed a correlation between supplements and pregnancy rates. The double blind study (in which neither the researchers nor the subjects knew who was taking placebo and who was taking the supplements) conducted at Stanford University, involved thirty women between the ages of twenty-four to forty-six, who had not been able to conceive. After five months, five of the fifteen women taking supplements conceived, while there were no pregnancies in the placebo group.

In fact, research and clinical practice come down on the side of supplementation for both aspiring parents. Regardless of which one of you has been diagnosed with an imbalance, increasing both partners' level of health has been linked with higher pregnancy rates. This is of course common sense-the healthier the genetic material, the healthier the child. To cite just one of the studies that validates this theory: A 1962 study published in the *International Journal of Fertility* found that miscarriage was more common with low sperm counts.

### **Brand Recommendations**

I remember being particularly meticulous in my supplement regimen when I was trying to conceive, and I do believe that consistency and a high quality product can make a measurable difference. (Also see the article by Dr. Machel Seibel, *Fertility and Sterility* Oct. 1999 on the role of nutritional supplementation in women's reproductive health on FertileHeart.com)

Several months ago, searching for a reliable supplement brand for my clients with impaired immune function, I confided in one of my physician colleagues, and spoke about my frustration of seeing people take as many as twenty to thirty supplements that seemed to do not much more than disrupt their digestion.

My colleague, a seasoned integrative health practitioner with many years of clinical practice, suggested I research USANA health sciences, which she has been recommending to her clients for over a decade. Perhaps the best recommendation was the fact that my colleague was using the supplements herself, was nearing sixty, had a very active professional life and looked radiant.

The first step in my research was extensive reading on the history of USANA, their manufacturing practices and quality control. USANA's manufacturing facility complies with pharmaceutical grade Good Manufacturing Practices, and has been certified to be in

compliance with GMP requirements. A number of government agencies conduct periodic inspections, requiring strict control and documentation. What this means is that what you read on the product label is consistent with the ingredients in the product. It was an important step in my education to learn that in fact most supplements on the market cannot make this claim. The supplement industry is only required to follow food grade manufacturing practices (Food GMP's.) The Essentials™ have been recognized as the *Gold Standard* for Nutritional Supplements in North America, rated #1 out of 500 in the *Comparative Guide to Nutritional Supplements*.

I also looked at USANA's affiliations with research organizations such as the Linus Pauling Institute at Oregon State University, one of the world's leading institutions for nutrition research.

I read *Invisible Miracles (Medicis, S.C. 2002)* a most magnificent and accessible primer on cellular nutrition, written by the founder of USANA, the microbiologist and immunologist, Dr. Myron Wentz. Among other things I learned that Dr. Wentz established the definitive test for the Epstein Barr virus and was one of the first non Europeans to be accepted into the European Society for Clinical Virology. (Whether or not you choose to use the formulas he developed, you owe it to yourself and your loved ones to read this fascinating account of his work. If you're a healthcare provider you owe it to your patients.)

I read endorsements by top athletes, who need to be the most cautious consumers of all ingestibles. USANA is the first company to guarantee 100% potency and offers a \$ 1 million to any athlete who tests positive for stimulants when using USANA products

Finally, I interviewed and read statements by a number of nutritionists, physicians, and other healthcare providers with extensive reproductive health experience-among them New York Times bestselling author and women's health pioneer Christiane Northrup, practicing pediatrician and author Christine Wood, M.D. FAAP, Dr. Ray D. Strand, the author of another useful book: *What Your Doctor Doesn't Know About Nutritional Medicine May be Killing You*, and several other physicians.

And most importantly, I used my body and my family as a lab. For the first time in years, my children and husband are taking their daily dosage of vitamins and minerals without a word of complaint. They actually like it. As for me, *thankfully*, I've had few health challenges in the last fifteen years, and didn't expect to see much change, to my surprise, after taking the supplements for the last seven weeks, I am witnessing deeper sleep, increased energy levels, stronger nails and my skin feels smoother.

Of the many supplements made by USANA I created a list of a few formulations which are widely recommended for enhancing reproductive health.

USANA also manufactures a wonderful formula for children and teens, and a line of gentle and personal care products that are free of paraben and harsh chemical preservatives traditionally found in skin-and personal care products. Giving ourselves permission to engage in impeccable self-care, can do wonders for our sense of self-worth and our ovarian function.

Below see additional supplement recommendations not offered by USANA

### **USANA and the Fertile Heart™ Ovum Approach**

Below are a few general comments about why the USANA line of supplements is a particularly good match for the Fertile Heart™ Ovum Approach to Conception, followed by specific formulation recommendations, which, based on my research and experience, can be useful for enhancing endocrine function. Again, please note that all of the supplements listed are just as important for maintenance of optimal health after you conceive.

Please note: there are several formulas in the USANA line that contain soy protein and compounds I do not recommend to anyone with fertility issues. (For more detailed discussion of the pros and cons of soy, you may refer to the practice section on food in *The Fertile Female*.)

- **Potency and Purity of Active Ingredients**-As outlined above, the quality of ingredients and the mode of production can make all the difference. USANA quality systems are modeled after pharmaceutical Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP), standards that are generally higher than nutritional product manufacturers are required to meet.
- **Absorption**-The US Pharmacopoeia manufacturing guidelines suggest that in order to be effective, any supplement tablet should break apart in 30 to 60 minutes. USANA supplements are provided in their most bioavailable form and dissolve in water within 20 minutes.
- **Key Fertility Enhancing Nutrients without Specific Hormonal Properties**-In the last decade, a number of formulations with strong hormonal properties have been touted as fertility boosters. Though some women find them useful, I've also seen such formulas wreak havoc with hormonal balance, even when they're prescribed by seasoned clinicians. Even popular organic-food-based multivitamin/minerals often contain Dong Quai, or Red Clover, both of which are estrogen enhancers. In general, I have found that compounds that target specific hormones need to be ingested with great caution and only under the supervision of a qualified healthcare provider. Which is why USANA is a perfect fit for the Fertile Heart™ philosophy. Rather than focusing on specific hormone levels, these formulations aim to increase overall health and energy, and allow the internal pharmacist to attend to the delicate task of balancing the endocrine system.
- **No Iron**-USANA Essential™ mineral (a USANA product, see recommendations below) is formulated without iron for maximum safety. This is especially useful for women with irregular menstrual cycles. Periodic blood loss in women who menstruate regularly protects them from excessive iron accumulation. In my consulting practice, I've seen women with irregular cycles suffer from severe elevated iron levels from taking supplemental iron at their doctor's recommendation. Having said that, iron is an important mineral. Scientific literature recommends 18-30mg daily as a safe dosage for women with monthly menstrual cycles. It should be taken in conjunction with USANA Essentials™ and an adequate amount of protein (2.5 ounces of protein from fish, eggs, lentils, beans, quinoa, nuts and seeds, and meat for non-vegetarians). It's also important to

remember that once pregnancy occurs, iron supplementation becomes vital. Liquid Floravital, made by Floradix is a gentle iron formula.

### **Health and fertility enhancing USANA recommendations for both partners\***

Below is a list of specific USANA formulations, which, when taken consistently can enhance reproductive health, by increasing immunity, and organ function.

- **Essentials™**, a potent combination of two products packaged as one: Mega Antioxidant and Chelated Mineral - These two products work synergistically, protecting the cells from oxidative damage, and providing a broad spectrum of essential nutrients.

The Mega Antioxidant offers advanced levels of nutrients for efficient energy metabolism. The complete carefully proportioned Vitamin B Complex, with optimal levels of B12, supports the health of nerve cells, red blood cells and DNA, the genetic material of all cells.

Minerals come from the earth, they can't be made by our cells and yet without them we would be unable to efficiently use the carbohydrates, proteins and fats in our food. Many vitamins and enzymes need to bind with a mineral in order to function properly. The Chelated Mineral supplement provides a balance of essential minerals and ultra trace minerals such as Manganese and Vanadium. To give an example: A manganese deficiency can cause impaired reproductive function, Vanadium supports healthy thyroid function.

- **Proflavanol** - When it comes to immune health, what most of us are not aware of, is the kind of chronic inflammatory response that ages your entire system, and sets the stage for a number of degenerative diseases without visible symptoms of acute inflammation. The Proflavanol formula acts as a potent anti-inflammatory agent, providing a combination of high potency grape seed extract, magnesium and zinc. This formula also helps retain capillary strength, healthy circulation, protects plasma LDL from oxidation. It is a useful formula for everyone, and especially important for women and men with impaired immune function. This is also a must for anyone who has been overtreated with antibiotics. A wonderful formula for implantation support. (Poor implantation is sometimes linked with uterine inflammation)
- **CoQuinone 30** - A combination of CoQ10 and alpha lipoic acid. Both compounds are involved in mitochondrial energy metabolism. CoQuinone 30 is a uniquely bioavailable form of CoQ10. CoQ10 has been widely researched and known for its role in producing cellular energy. I have found that it's particularly useful to begin supplementing with CoQ10 when healing after a miscarriage. CoQ10 is not recommended for pregnant or lactating women.
- **OptOmega** - A blend of cold pressed organic oils intended to re-establish an optimal balance of Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs). EFAs are key nutrients for healthy endocrine function.
- **BiOmega** - Produced from cold-water, deep-sea fish oil, this formula delivers a balanced daily dose of two key Omega-3 fatty acids in 2 capsules a day. Each capsule also contains 2mg of mixed natural tocopherols, which minimize

oxidation of the Omega-3 fatty acids. The added lemon flavoring saves you from fishy aftertaste.. If you suffer from hypothyroidism or severe soy allergies, the OptOmega is a better choice. The minute amounts of soybean oil should not be a problem for anyone else. (Even the most ardent soy critics seem to agree on this point) This is one of the most pleasant and palatable Omega-3 supplements I've come across.

- **Active Calcium**™ - this is a formula designed to complement the Essentials™ by providing a blend of calcium, magnesium, and vitamin D. Calcium is key to producing and activating enzymes and hormones that regulate digestion, energy, and fat metabolism. Vitamin D functions both as a hormone and a vitamin, influencing the utilization of phosphorus another mineral important for strong bones. Vitamin D deficiency is implicated in a host of immune and nervous system disorders. Spending 20 minutes in the sun without sunscreen will also boost your body's production of vitamin D. This is a most useful formula for anyone over 35 or women with lower estrogen production. Studies have also shown vitamin D deficiency implicated in sperm related difficulties.
- **Hepasil** - An excellent comprehensive Liver Support Formula. The liver is the main organ responsible for sweeping out toxins and disposing of excess estrogen, thus playing a key role in establishing hormone balance. For women, I recommend using Hepasil during the pre-conception detoxification stage of their healing regimen. Hepasil can be most useful for men who have been smokers, or consumers of alcohol, sugar, white flour and other depleting foods.

### **Additional Supplements and Brands**

Depending on your diagnosis, digestive and immune health, you may want to consider reviewing the supplements listed below which are not available through USANA, I have listed brand recommendations next to each formula for anyone seeking guidance on that front.

- **A Heavy Metal Detoxifying Agent** - This is perhaps the most important supplement to add to all of our healing regimens, but especially for people suffering from allergies, and chronic ailments, and people who have had amalgam fillings for a long time.

Heavy metal contamination, present in the air, water, soil and thus in our bodies, has been implicated in a host of serious health conditions. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, some 70,000 chemicals are used commercially in the US, the majority of them potentially hazardous to our health. Analyzing data from a recent study published in Human Reproduction, a European reproductive medicine journal\* a team of UCLA scientists have reported an alarming link between toxic Teflon chemical PFOA (perfluorooctanoic acid) and reproductive problems, fetal development, and increase of cancer risk.

Environmental working group (EWG) scientists noted that we should expect to discover more and more links between chemical exposures and impaired reproductive function, childhood cancers, dementia, asthma, among others. Zeolite - is a powerful, naturally occurring detoxifying agent, which I discovered when searching for a remedy for a client with recurring painful herpes symptoms.

Zeolite has been used for 800 years throughout Asia as a remedy for overall health. It has a chelation-like effect in removing heavy metals, pesticides, herbicides, and other positively charged toxins from the system. It acts as a complement to traditional antioxidants, since it traps free radicals in its complex structure, inactivating and eliminating them.

(A traditional antioxidant works by absorbing excess free radicals into its system because it has an unpaired electron) Zeolite is commercially available in the product Natural Cellular Defense. There are no reports of side effects, except one: because of its natural action to absorb water, Zeolite can cause dehydration. It is therefore important to drink sufficient water (approximately eight glasses a day) both before and while taking Natural Cellular Defense to ensure adequate hydration. Zeolite is included on the Food and Drug Administration's GRAS list (generally recognized as safe). Natural Cellular Defense comes in an easy to use dropper bottle. You can order it online at <http://www.mywaiora.com/healthinpeace> or by calling, 1-866-699-2467. You'll be asked to provide an ID number 604547. I am in the process of researching other products containing Zeolite and comparing them with Natural Cell Defense and will report my findings on <http://www.fertileheart.com/>

- **A Full Spectrum Enzyme Support** - some people with digestive difficulties, bloating, gas and other symptoms may benefit from a supplement with a broad range of enzymes. Although if you are taking Proflavanol, I would give that some time to balance your body's production of detoxification enzymes before adding more supplements. Your digestive health will also benefit from including some enzyme rich food such as avocado, lacto-fermented vegetables, or olive oil with each meal. And of course, all digestive difficulties are rooted and should be approached with the awareness of the "Human Loaf" (See Human Loaf Chapters in *The Fertile Female*. Anything less than that is turning a deaf ear on the body's call for help. If after following these guidelines you still feel a need to take extra enzyme support Active Digestive Enzyme made by Global Health Trax, a company specializing in digestive health supplements, is an excellent choice. You can order Active Digestive Enzyme through the following link: [www.ghthealth.com/167807](http://www.ghthealth.com/167807) or by calling 1-800-305-5710 ID number 167807. Enzymedica Diget Gold is also a reliable brand.
- **A Comprehensive Probiotic** - people who suffer from digestive difficulties can also benefit from replenishing the beneficial bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract. ThreeLac is one of the most effective probiotics, since it not only supplies 1.5 billion live bacteria in each serving, it also acts as an **antifungal agent**, helping to reduce occasional yeast and fungal overgrowth. Particularly helpful to anyone suffering from endometriosis, recurring yeast infections, or irregular bowel function. ThreeLac is also made by GHT and you can order it through the following link: [www.ghthealth.com/167807](http://www.ghthealth.com/167807) or [www.ghthealth.com/167807](http://www.ghthealth.com/167807) or by calling 1-800-305-5710 ID number 167807. Another reliable brand is UDO's Probiotics. When taking a probiotic, it is imperative to include extra fiber with your meals for efficient release of toxins. Probiotics are not recommended for pregnant or lactating women.
- **Iron** - a gentle, non-constipating formula is essential for anyone with regular menstrual cycles as well as pregnant and lactating women. Floravital, made by

- Floradix is a wonderful product, originally recommended by many holistic gynecologists and pediatricians.
- **L-arginine** - this is an amino acid widely prescribed by holistic practitioners specializing in reproductive health. It has been shown to enhance the secretion of growth hormones by the pituitary gland, and to relax the blood vessels, thus increasing blood flow. L-arginine, unlike other supplements, should be taken on an empty stomach. Note: The herpes virus utilizes L-arginine; therefore, supplementation may re-activate the virus.
  - **Note:** There is much enthusiasm in both the allopathic and holistic world about L-arginine and DHEA, a growth hormone. Any responsible caregiver will agree that supplements that tamper with growth hormones should be approached with caution, and discontinued after a reasonable trial. I strongly recommend DHEA levels be tested before choosing to ingest it as a supplement. You may want to be aware that in some women **DHEA might have a thinning effect on the uterine lining and therefore effect implantation. So be sure to have your lining checked if you are using DHEA.** I have seen lots of healthy babies, including mine, whose moms did not take DHEA or L-arginine. There are many other ways to encourage blood flow, and relaxing our blood vessels.

### **How and When- Safety above All**

- **Go slow.** With supplements as with any other medicinal remedies, it's best to introduce one compound every couple of days and observe your body's response. If you wish to start with only a few of the formulas, I'd suggest the Essentials<sup>TM</sup>, and OptOmega or BiOmega, Active Calcium and CoQuinone 30, If you suffer from allergies and immune deficiencies, consider Proflavanol and give Natural Cell Defense a fair try
- **These are potent and high levels optimal nutrients that most people might not have had before.** The body will be using most of the antioxidants and minerals to rid itself of toxins which have been accumulating for years (detoxification) This is especially true in people who have been suffering from chronic illness, or have taken medication. It's important to understand the possible signs of detox so that you can welcome them with confidence. (More on that later)
- **Please read the label carefully and take the dose written on the label.** Many people misread the dose on the Essentials<sup>TM</sup> It's 2 of each twice a day. That's 4 with breakfast and 4 with dinner - unless otherwise instructed by a health care practitioner or unless you find you are detoxing too quickly on this dose in which case you could take half the dose until you body catches up with the cleansing process.
- **Vitamins are considered nutrients and nourishment and are best assimilated when taken with food.** Always take supplements with a meal. In fact it's ideal to take them with a complete meal that contains protein, fiber, carbs and fat. Fat is especially important for the absorption of fat soluble nutrients such as D and E.
- **Drink eight to ten glasses of distilled water daily.** As noted above this is especially important if you are detoxifying with a product that contains Zeolite.
- **Include plenty of fiber with your meals,** optimally you should be having three bowel movements a day. (For inspiration on cleansing read the Spring Cleaning Chapter of *Inconceivable*)

## Possible Signs of Detox

I have been eating mostly organic foods for the last eighteen years, and I've been doing a pretty good job at taking care of myself and yet a couple of weeks into my USANA regimen I began to observe signs of detox. It was as if my body was being gently nudged toward a higher level of health.

- **Common detox** - muscle aches and/or mild headache - usually passes within a few weeks
- **Detox skin rash** - the skin is an important route for ridding the body's toxins. It might look like a dry, red rash similar to a mild sunburn. Some people confuse this with an allergic reaction to the supplements. That is rarely the case. If other types of skin condition develop, please consult a trustworthy healthcare provider
- **Loose stools/diarrhea** - the GI tract is another prime route for eliminating toxins from the body. This is an important part of the detox and healing process, try to continue but if it's too much to handle, most holistic practitioners recommend stopping the dosage until symptoms disappear and starting back up with half a dosage and building up eventually to a full dose.
- **Relaxation response** - Although usually we expect to have more energy when absorbing minerals, some people might feel more fatigued. If this is the case, take all minerals with a light bedtime snack and take advantage of the body's response while getting a good night's sleep.
- **The general recommendation of healthcare practitioners is that it is safe to take the supplements along with your medication, unless you are on thyroid medication.** Take thyroid medication on an empty stomach at least 1 hour prior to meals and supplements. Thyroid medication should not be taken with food or with supplements because calcium can block the absorption of the medication.

Note: The above statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. Julia Indichova is not a medical doctor. The products listed on this site are not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease. The information is shared with the understanding that each reader takes full responsibility for her/his well being.

Copyright © Julia Indichova and FertileHeart.com 2009 Special thanks to Dr. Christiane Northrup for her input on detox symptoms

### ***About Julia Indichova:***

Julia Indichova is the author of *Inconceivable* (Doubleday 2001) and *The Fertile Female* (Adell Press 2007), the creator of the Ovum Birthing Practice, and the founder of <http://www.fertileheart.com/>, She is also the director of the Fertile Heart Studio in Woodstock, New York and leads an international weekly teleconference as well as a monthly Open Circle in New York City. A Fertile Heart™ chapter has recently opened in London, UK and plans are on the way to open similar chapters this spring in a number of US cities. Indichova's work and story have been featured on the The Oprah Winfrey Show, Good Morning America, Oxygen, NPR's 51%, in Natural Health, San Francisco Chronicle, *Health* magazine and other outlets.

Reprinted by permission of Julia Indichova and [www.fertileheart.com](http://www.fertileheart.com)

---

### A Message from Sue Dumais

I want to thank **Dr. Christiane Northrup**, author of *Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom* and *The Wisdom of Menopause* as well as **Julia Indochova**, author of *The Fertile Female* and *Inconceivable* for introducing me to USANA products and inviting me to be part of Team Northrup.

I have personally used these products and have found them to be superior to any others I have taken. In just 8 weeks my menstrual cycles have improved dramatically, my skin and nails are healthier and my energy levels have increased significantly. I have never experienced such a deep level of nourishment for my body and skin in such a short time. It is through my personal experience using the product as well as their superior standard that I have gained the trust in USANA Health Sciences and decided to distribute their products through Family Passages.

If you would like more information or would like to order USANA products please visit <http://www.suedumais.usana.com>

Feel free to contact me at 604-266-6470 if you need some guidance on which product would be best for your individual needs.

Namaste,

Sue