

YOU DON'T THINK GLUTEN AND DAIRY IMPACT YOUR CHANCES OF TAKING HOME A HEALTHY BABY? THINK AGAIN!

The Real Impact of Gluten and Dairy on Fertility, Miscarriage Risk and Reproductive Outcomes Revealed

The term 'sensitivity' is used to describe the symptoms people experience when they consume foods they react to and whose symptoms reduce after the removal of such foods [1].

You do not need to have coeliac disease to have a sensitivity and react to gluten. The same applies to dairy [1].

Common signs and symptoms of gluten and dairy sensitivity include [2-4]:

- Abdominal pain
- Bloating
- Diarrhoea and/or constipation
- Nausea
- Reflux
- Mouth ulcers
- Skin rashes
- Eczema
- Joint and muscle pain
- Leg or arm numbness
- Tiredness
- Headache
- 'Foggy mind'
- Slowed thinking
- Poor memory
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Anaemia

These symptoms are experienced minutes to many days after ingestion of gluten or dairy [5, 6].

Many people are sensitive to gluten and dairy but simply don't realise it because when frequently ingested, the negative impact of these foods simply becomes "the norm".

THE IMPACT OF GLUTEN CONSUMPTION ON FERTILITY AND REPRODUCTIVE OUTCOMES

Gluten is the main structural protein complex of wheat and other cereals including barley, rye, spelt, triticale and kamut [4].

Coeliac disease is where the small intestine becomes inflamed and unable to absorb nutrients due to gluten consumption [7].

Gluten sensitivity is when symptoms similar to coeliac disease are experienced, but subside after removal of gluten from the diet [8].

Up to 10% of the population experience gluten sensitivity [9].

Up to 50% of people with gluten sensitivity experience an immune system 'overreaction' possibly triggering other autoimmune conditions [10].

The increased inflammation gluten causes can impair absorption of iron, folic acid, vitamin B12 and vitamin D, amongst other nutrients. These key nutritional ingredients are required for healthy blood, immune and digestive function, as well as healthy conception and pregnancy [2].

Increased immunological disharmony due to continual gluten consumption (or anything else you are sensitive to) increases the risk of [7, 11]:

- Polycystic ovarian syndrome
- Endometriosis
- Miscarriage
- Preterm birth
- Low birth weight of the newborn
- Reduced duration of breastfeeding

THE IMPACT OF DAIRY CONSUMPTION ON FERTILITY AND REPRODUCTIVE OUTCOMES

Dairy products (milk, cheese, yoghurt and butter) may aggravate the digestive system and cause immune reactivity [12, 13].

Contrary to common misconception, eggs are not dairy. Some people do react to them also – but only avoid if you truly feel unwell because eggs are a great source of protein and nutrients.

Although some people have difficulty digesting and are even allergic or intolerant to the sugar in milk (lactose)—the A1 casein protein is the greatest culprit in the digestive disturbances caused by dairy [13].

A1 casein may disrupt digestive processes causing nausea, cramping, bloating, gas, diarrhoea and/or constipation [13].

The saturated fat in dairy (also found in vegetable fats such as coconut oil) is beneficial for a healthy heart. However, the A1 casein protein may increase systemic inflammation and the risk of cardiovascular disease [14].

In order to produce milk, a dairy cow needs to be pregnant or lactating. During pregnancy, there is an increase in many naturally occurring growth promoters and hormones including oestrogen, which cross the cow's plasma into the milk [15].

Consuming the hormones from other animals in this way can negatively impact human hormonal balance in many individuals experiencing fertility difficulties [16].

60-70% of the oestrogens found in the average diet come from dairy products [17]. This increased consumption may lead to human reproductive hormonal imbalances through a variety of metabolic pathways.

Oestrogens are absorbed by the body and increase the risk of "oestrogen-driven" conditions in women (such as endometriosis and fibroids), as well as reduce semen quality in men [18-20].

In women, both high-fat and low-fat dairy intake may increase the risk of reproductive imbalances in susceptible individuals. Therefore, if you suspect this may be an issue for you, all dairy is best avoided [21].

The large presence of hormones, makes dairy an inferior food choice for men and women experiencing fertility problems, especially those with increased risk of poor sperm parameters, history of miscarriage and extended time to pregnancy. Women with uterine periods, polycystic ovarian syndrome, endometriosis, irregular fibroids and any other "oestrogen-driven" condition would ideally avoid dairy altogether [21-23].

VITAL CONSIDERATION WHEN WORKING TO OPTIMISE YOUR CHANCES OF TAKING HOME A HEALTHY BABY

Unfortunately, the number one issue that keeps couples stuck on their journey to parenthood, without getting there anytime fast is that they "don't know what they don't know".

Whenever someone says "I've tried everything and nothing has worked" it is a sure fire clue they have exhausted the end of what they knew could help them and they have arrived in the land of "I don't know what I don't know".

The trouble of staying in this place too long is that it can result in no baby.

Overcoming infertility and recurrent pregnancy loss in most instances is a task you are very unlikely to be able to accomplish on your own.

You will need a qualified team, with a proven track record to support you along this journey because under each area addressed here, there are dozens (if not many more) clues leading to different paths—and if you don't know what you are doing and lack a very strong, scientific and objective compass, you will get lost and continue going around in circles until, eventually, you run out of time all together.

Self-prescription and treatment when it comes to infertility and recurrent miscarriage is a recipe for continuing to try with very low (to no) chance of success. Finding the right team for you is of paramount importance.

SCIENTIFICALLY VALIDATED SELF-CARE RECOMMENDATIONS

Fertility is a team sport. Male fertility has a 50% impact on the increased risk of miscarriage and adverse pregnancy outcomes [24].

Hence why it is essential for both prospective parents to optimise their health prior to a conception attempt, and why not doing so could mean the difference between having a baby or not.

Here are some suggestions you and your partner can begin implementing now.

Add more of what actually makes you feel great and ditch what you know simply doesn't.

Be sure to remove any foods from your diet that you are allergic or sensitive to, as this step alone may dramatically increase your chances of taking home a healthy baby.

Avoid gluten but also avoid gluten-free products as they are highly processed and less than health and fertility promoting. In susceptible people, removing gluten from one's diet may [25, 26]:

- Reduce miscarriage risk
- Reduce low birth weight risk
- Improve sperm health
- Increase the chance of getting pregnant
- Increase breastfeeding duration
- Prevent early menopause

If working to overcome infertility, you may choose to avoid dairy products as they may lead to immunological overreaction which could predispose a pregnancy to increased risk of miscarriage and other adverse pregnancy outcomes [22].

Removing gluten and dairy from your diet reduces digestive discomfort associated with irritable bowel syndrome including and not limited to bloating, abdominal cramps, pain and disturbed bowel habits [27, 28].

Ideally, base your meals on organic vegetables and protein (free range and grass fed) as well as organic produce to reduce your toxic ingestion load) [29, 30].

Remember to drink plenty of water, whilst avoiding soft drinks, alcohol and caffeine because when you are well hydrated your bodily functions perform better and you feel great with less effort [31].

Drink 2-3L filtered water daily, stored in a glass or stainless steel flask to avoid dangerous hormone disruptors from unfiltered water and plastics, which disrupt your fertility and the development of a healthy baby [32].

References:

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