

Eastern medicine approaches to male infertility.

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Abstract

Male factor is a common cause of infertility and the male partner must be systematically evaluated in the workup of every infertile couple. Various Eastern medical strategies have been tried with variable success. This article describes the clinical effects of Eastern medicine approaches including acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, massage, yoga, tai chi, and qi gong, which could improve the sperm parameters and motility, genital inflammatory conditions, as well as immune system disorders, sexual dysfunction, and varicocele. Acupuncture reduces inflammation, increases sperm motility, improves semen parameters, modulates the immune system, and improves sexual and ejaculatory dysfunction in male infertility. The clinical effects may be mediated via activation of somatic afferent nerves innervating the skin and muscle. Chinese herbal medicines may also exert helpful effects in male infertility, and it is worth noting that some herbal drugs may result in male infertility. Massage also exerts positive effects in male infertility. Nevertheless, the mechanisms of clinical effects are unclear. Tai chi, qi gong, and yoga have not been investigated in male infertility, but it has been reported to regulate endocrine and central or autonomic nervous systems. In conclusion, Eastern medical approaches have beneficial on reproductive effects in male infertility. However, future well-designed, randomized, clinical control trials are needed to evaluate the safety, efficacy, and mechanisms of Eastern medical approaches for male infertility.

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