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Acupuncture helps New Yorker get pregnant



Katia Frishman and her baby, Maya Isabella. (Handout photo / March 5, 2008)

By MAUREEN KER | NYCity News Service
March 6, 2008

Katia Frishman tried for four years to get pregnant and finally underwent in vitro fertilization, only to miscarry after three weeks.

The 37-year-old Upper East Side woman and her husband didn't give up, but decided to supplement their efforts with a method rarely mentioned in Western fertility clinics: Acupuncture.

Sticking needles into a woman to help her conceive may sound like quackery, but a recently published study backs what acupuncturists have long claimed: the ancient Chinese practice may help women undergoing in vitro fertilization become pregnant. The study, published in the British Medical Journal, found that acupuncture before and after embryo transfer increased the chances of pregnancy.

"The fertility drugs my doctor prescribed were really hard on my body," said Frishman, vice president for IT technology procurement at a hedge fund. She decided to try acupuncture after researching the subject on the Internet. Five months later, she was pregnant. "I was really surprised when I got my blood test back," she said.

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Frishman's dream came true on Feb. 20, when she gave birth to Maya Isabella, who weighed in at a healthy eight pounds, one ounce.

"My husband and I are just over the moon now," said the overjoyed mom.

Acupuncture is the practice of inserting fine sterile needles into specific parts of the body known as acupoints. According to Xiu Juan Yang, an E. 55th Street acupuncturist who specializes in treating infertility, the needles stimulate both blood flow and what Chinese medicine identifies as "Qi" a kind of life force flowing through the body.

"Acupuncture works because it increases blood flow to the uterus and ovaries," she contends.

Because the needles are very fine and

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don't pierce the flesh deeply, the treatment is painless. "I used to go in and take a nice nap for 45 minutes," said Frishman. "It was very relaxing."



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The treatment usually spans about 45 minutes to an hour, and after an initial session priced at \$110, patients pay between \$50 and \$100 per visit. Most patients undergo 15 to 20 sessions.



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Laura H., a 44-year-old who works in law enforcement was "very skeptical" when she heard about using acupuncture to treat infertility. "I wouldn't say I was desperate to have a baby but I was very close to it," she said.



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With the help of intrauterine insemination and regular acupuncture sessions, Laura is now into the second trimester of her pregnancy: "For me, I see a clear correlation between acupuncture and pregnancy," she said.



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Despite the recent study, carried out by researchers from the [University of Maryland](#) School of Medicine, [Georgetown University](#) School of Medicine and the VU University in Amsterdam, Western medical research is divided on whether acupuncture can help treat infertility.

Dr. Zev Rosenwaks, director of The Center for Reproductive Medicine and Infertility at [New York-Presbyterian Hospital/Weill Cornell Medical Center](#) warns that it is too early to draw any conclusions. "I am not sure if this completely proves that acupuncture works," he said.

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Still, there is no harm in trying, Rosenwaks added: "We have to keep an open mind."

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