The Treatment of Infertility with Chinese Medicine

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Introduction

Infertility is defined as any woman who is of reproductive age with normal gynecological function, has not used any contraceptive methods for at least two years after marriage and still does not achieve pregnancy; or a woman who has previously been pregnant and cannot conceive again after two years of trying. The former condition is called primary infertility; the latter is secondary infertility.

It can also be classified as absolute or relative infertility. Absolute infertility means that one cannot achieve pregnancy by any means, because the man or woman in the couple has an anatomical or physiological defect that prevents conception. Relative infertility points to those who can achieve pregnancy with treatment.

Infertility is a very real problem within families and society as a whole. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), infertility rates in different countries range from 5-15%, with higher rates being found in Western nations. In the U.S., a large percentage of women delay marriage and childbearing; many women do not begin trying to conceive until age 35. In my two years of practice in the U.S., the majority of infertility patients I treated were women in the 35-40 year age range. Women of this age often have decreased reproductive abilities, increased incidence in genetic diseases that become more prevalent with age, and ova with increased mutations. These combined factors lend a particular urgency to those who seek help for infertility, which is an added hurdle during treatment.

I learned Chinese medicine from my father. As a fourth-generation practitioner in my 36th year of practice, I have a clear grasp on medicinal therapy for internal medicine and gynecology, and acupuncture techniques. My father is a famous “old Chinese practitioner” with a keen interest in infertility and 70 years of practice. He has helped a multitude of women achieve precious pregnancies, and has been given an appropriate title of “Guanyn or Quanyin [1], [she] who gives [the gift of a] child”. I have followed my father in the clinic for many years, immersing all my senses in the learning of the family trade. I have gathered the experiences into a set of infertility treatment methods, “The Li [Family] Total Balance Treatment for Infertility”, as summarized below:

Infertility was recognized over two thousand years ago in the classical texts. Su wen: gu kong lun – Elementary Questions: Chapter 60 says, “An illness in the du mai – governing vessel may manifest in a woman’s infertility.” Thereafter, many generations of medical practitioners have written about infertility, under names such as "seeking a successor", "planting a child", "a successor / inheritor", and "giving birth to a successor / inheritor".
The reasons for a woman’s infertility are complex. The *shi shi mi lu zi si lun* - Secret Records of the Stone Chamber: treatise on children says, “women who cannot bear children, [may] have ten illnesses.” These include: dampness in the uterus, cold in the spleen and stomach, dai mai tension, liver qi depression, exuberant phlegm, effulgent fire, kidney water debilitation, diseases of the du mai, inhibited bladder qi transformation, and qi and blood vacuity. *Su wen: shang gu tian zhen lun* - Elementary Questions: Chapter 1 says, “by age seven, a girl’s kidney qi starts to fill. By age 14, the heavenly tenth a.k.a. menstrual flow (*tian gui*) matures and courses through the ren mai, menstruation begins, and seeds may be implanted.” *Fu ke yu chi: qiu si* - Jade Measure of Gynecology: Seeking a successor writes, “in men, essence is primary; in women, blood is primary. It is appropriate for yang essence to pour forth without depletion, and for yin blood to descend without there being fault. Yin and yang join smoothly, essence and blood combine and congeal, forming an embryo and giving rise to offspring." These passages indicate that the foundation for reproduction is the kidneys qi, *tian gui*, male essence and female blood. "The uterine network vessel (*bao luo*) ties to the kidneys. The kidneys govern hibernation and are the root of banking and storing the essence." (*Su wen: chapter 9*) “The kidneys govern the chong and ren mai; the chong is the sea of blood; the ren governs the uterus.” Infertility is intimately linked to viscerai and bowel (*zang fu*) imbalance (for which kidney vacuity is the dominant cause), chong and ren mai vacuity and damage, qi binding with stasis blockage, and external evils (cold, dampness, phlegm, heat, stasis, etc.). Clinically, many different root factors result in an individual's unique presentations. These factors effect pathological changes in the kidneys, chong, and ren, but do not always cause infertility. Infertility needs to be designated as an illness unto itself, as well as a part of many different diseases. Because its pathogenesis is varied, the engendered presentations are unique and vary in severity. All cases can be differentiated by means of cold, heat, vacuity, and repletion. The following particular treatments employ systematic symptom differentiation; they take advantage of [my] former family members’ experience as well as modern medical theories. To treat infertility one should begin with a holistic view of the patient, following the adage “to treat an illness, one must seek the root.” The practitioner needs to pay vigilant attention to supplementing the kidneys, boosting the liver, and fortifying the spleen, nourishing the chong and ren, regulating menstruation and reinforcing pregnancy; [however,] regulating menstruation and growing the seed are the dominant treatment principles. But one should not become bogged down by the presenting symptoms; each [presentation] must be thoroughly examined; and because each patient is unique, the medications must follow the twists and turns of the illness. The disease symptoms [must be] examined and formulas must target the cause of disease in order to achieve pregnancy. It is impossible to use one formula to treat all infertility cases. One needs to incorporate many treatment ideas to address the viscera and bowels (*zang fu*), yin and yang, qi and blood, and to rebalance and harmonize the chong and ren to eventually achieve the goal of pregnancy.

Explanation of formulas:
1. Regulate the menses and grow the child formula 1 (kidney yang vacuity formula):
Main signs: woman has not become pregnant after many years of marriage, delayed menstruation with scant bleeding; the blood's consistency is clear, thin and watery; its color is pale; or there is menstrual block with a cold feeling in the lower abdomen, a dark, lusterless complexion, limp aching lumbus and knees,
cold extremities, fear of cold weather, fatigue with lack of strength, dark spots around the lips and on the cheeks, darkened eye orbits, low libido, dark, stagnant-looking and non-clear conjunctiva, frequent, long voidings of clear urination, possibly sloppy stools; the tongue is pale and tender [2], a white and wet tongue fur, and the pulse is deep and slow or deep, thin, and forceless, with the chi position being exceptionally weak.

Treatment principle: warm the kidneys and uterus, boost the chong and nourish the ren, grow the child.

Rx: Modified you gui wan (Right restoring pill), wu zi yan zong wan (Five seed progeny pill), er xian wan (Two Immortals Decoction), and suan guan wan (Stream-reducing pill)
Formula contains: fu zi (Radix Lateralis Aconiti Carmichaeli preparata) 5g, rou gui (Cortex Cinnamomi Cassiae) 5g, shan [zhu] yu (Fructus Corni Officinalis) 10g, du zhong (Cortex Eucommiae Ulmoidis) 10g, shu di huang (Radix Rehmanniae Glutinosae Coquita) 15g, shan yao (Radix Dioscoreae Oppositae) 15g, gou qi zi (Fructus Lycii Chinensis) 15g, tu si zi (Semen Cuscutae Chinensis) 20g, dang gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 10g, fu pen zi (Fructus Rubi Chingli) 10g, wu wei zi (Fructus Schisandraceae) 10g, xian mao (Rhizoma Curculiginis Orchiodis) 10g, yi zhi ren (Fructus Alpiniae Oxyphyllae) 15g, wu yao (Radix Linderae Strychnifoliae) 10g, rou cong rong (Herba Cistanchis Deserticolae) 10g, [bu] gu zhi (Semen Psoraleae Corylifoliae) 10g, and ai ye (Folium Artemisiae Argyi) 10g.

2. Regulate the menses and grow the child formula 2 (kidney yin vacuity formula):
Main signs: woman has not become pregnant after many years of marriage; the menses are either early or late with scant menstrual blood or menstrual block; the blood is bright red in color; there is five-hearts vexatious heat, restless sleep or in severe cases, insomnia, dizziness, flowery vision, dry mouth; or there is night sweats, emaciation, limp aching lumbus and knees, possible constipation; the tongue is tender and red with scant or no fur or completely peeled; the pulse is thin, weak, and slightly rapid.
Treatment principle: enrich the kidneys, replenish essence, boost the chong and nourish the ren, grow the child.
Rx: Modified zuo gui wan (Left restoring pill), wu zi yan zong wan (Five seed progeny pill), and er zhi wan (Double supreme pill).
Formula contains: shan [zhu] yu (Fructus Corni Officinalis) 15g, shu di huang (Radix Rehmanniae Glutinosae Coquita) 15g, shan yao (Radix Dioscoreae Oppositae) 15g, gri ban jiao (Gelatinum Plastri Testudinis) 10g, xian mao (Rhizoma Curculiginis Orchiodis) 10g, xian ling pi (Herba Epimedii) 15g, yi zhi ren (Fructus Alpiniae Oxyphyllae) 10g, wu yao (Radix Linderae Strychnifoliae) 10g, rou cong rong (Herba Cistanchis Deserticolae) 10g, [bu] gu zhi (Semen Psoraleae Corylifoliae) 10g, and ai ye (Folium Artemisiae Argyi) 10g.

3. Regulate the menses and grow the child formula 3 (qi and blood dual vacuity formula):
Main signs: woman has not become pregnant after many years of marriage, delayed menses or menstrual block; if the signs lean more towards blood vacuity, there is scanty menses; if the signs lean more towards qi vacuity, then there heavy bleeding, in either case the blood is pale and thin; or there is dull lower abdominal pain after the menses with dizziness, flowery vision, heart palpitations with fearful throbbing, and dry skin; the complexion is white and without luster, the body is fatigued with numbness of the limbs; the tongue is pale with thin white fur; and the pulse is thin and weak.

Treatment principle: supplement the qi and blood, boost the chong and nourish the ren, grow the child.

Rx: Modified *yu lin zhu* (Unicorn-rearing pill), *wu zi yan zong wan* (Five seed progeny pill), and *dang gui huang qi tang* (Tangkuei and astragalus decoction).

Formula contains: *dang gui* (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 15g, *chuan xiong* (Radix Ligustici Wallichii) 10g, *shu di huang* (Radix Rehmanniae Glutinosae Coquita) 20g, *bai shao* (Radix Paeoniae Lactiflorae Albcae) 15g, *dang shen* (Radix Codonopsitis Pilosulae) 20g, *bai zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae) 10g, *dang gui* (Radix Paeoniae Lactiflorae Albcae) 15g, *zhong qi* (Cornu Cervi) 15g, *wu si zi* (Semen Cuscutae Chinensis) 20g, *du zhong* (Cortex Eucommiae Ulmoidis) 15g, *mi zhi huang qi* (Honey stir-fried Radix Astragali) 30g, *gou qi zi* (Fructus Lycii Chinensis) 15g, *fu pen zi* (Fructus Rubi Chinli) 15g, *che qian zi* (Semen Plantaginis) 10g (wrapped in cloth), *he shou wu* (Radix Polygoni Multiflori) 15g, and *ji xue teng* (Radix et Caulis Milletia seu Spatholobi) 30g.

4. Regulate the menses and grow the child formula 4 (liver depression qi stagnation formula):

Main signs: woman has not become pregnant after many years of marriage, the menstruation is sometimes or sometimes late with no fixed periodicity; there are clots or an inhibited flow; there is premenstrual breast distension; the blood is dark red with lower abdominal distention and pain, vexation and agitation with easy anger, emotional repression and depression with heart vexation, an unquiet spirit-mind, and severe sadness with tendency to weep. The tongue color is dull-dark red with thin white fur; and the pulse is bowstring and thin.

Treatment principle: soothe the liver, disinhibit the qi, regulate the chong and nourish the ren, regulate the menses and grow the child.

Rx: Modified *kai yu zhong yu tang* (Depression-opening and jade-planting decoction), *jia wei wu yao tang* (Added flavors lindera decoction), *qing gan jie yu tang* (Liver-clearing and depression-resolving decoction), and *suan zao ren tang* (Spiny jujube decoction).

Formula contains: *dang gui* (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 15g, *bai shao* (Radix Paeoniae Lactiflorae Albcae) 10g, *bai zhu* (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae) 10g, *dang gui* (Radix Paeoniae Lactiflorae Albcae) 10g, *fu ling* (Sclerotium Poriae Coccos) 10g, *mu dan pi* (Cortex Radicis Moutan) 10g, *xiang fu* (Rhizoma Cyperi Rotundii) 10g, *tian hua fen* (Radix Trichosanthis Kirlowii) 15g, *wu yao* (Radix Linderae Strychnifoliae) 10g, *sha ren* (Fructus Amomi) 5g, *yin hu suo* (Rhizoma Corydalis) 10g, *mu xiang* (Radix Aucklandiae Lappae) 10g, *zhe bei mu* (Bulbus Fritillariae Thunbergii) 10g, *chao yuan zhi* (stir-fried Radix Polygalae Tenuifoliae) 10g, *zhi ke* (Fructus Citrii Aurantii) 10g, *suan zao ren* (Semen Zizyphi Spinosae) 15g, *zhi mu*
5. Regulate the menses and grow the child formula 5 (qi stagnation and blood stasis formula):
Main signs: woman has not become pregnant after many years of marriage; there is abdominal pain with menstruation; there is irregular menses and the blood is dark with clots with abdominal pain that eases after passage of clots; also breast distension, fixed hypochondriac distending pain or tingling, and abdominal conglomerations. The tongue is dark along the sides with purple spots and engorged sublingual veins; the pulse is bowstring or bowstring, rough and inhibited.
Treatment principle: disinhibit the qi and quicken the blood, regulate the chong, unblock the ren, transform stasis and grow the child.
Rx: Modified 

6. Regulate the menses and grow the child formula 6 (coldness congeals blood formula):
Main signs: woman has not become pregnant after many years of marriage and has a pale complexion with cold extremities; there is coldness and pain in the lower abdomen; the menstrual blood is pale and dull with clots, frequently accompanied by painful menstruation; the tongue is pale and dull and the pulse is bowstring and rough.
Treatment principle: warm the menses and scatter cold, warm chong, unblock menses and transform stasis and grow the child.
Rx: Modified 

7. Regulate the menses and grow the child formula 7 (Heat toxins binding with stasis formula):
Main signs: woman has not become pregnant after many years of marriage; fixed lower abdominal pain with feeling of scorching heat or tidal fever, accompanied by profuse fishy-smelling yellow vaginal discharge, dry mouth with a bitter taste in the mouth, dry bound stools; the tongue is dark red with yellow fur and the pulse is bowstring, somewhat restricted and rapid or bowstring, slippery, and rapid.

Treatment principle: quicken the blood, transform stasis, cool the chong, clear the ren, clear heat and grow the child.

Rx: Modified da huang zhe chong wan (Rhubarb and wingless cockroach pill), qing bai san (Clear the white powder) and wu wei qing du yin (Five flavor toxin-clearing drink).

Formula contains: da huang (Radix Et Rhizoma Rhei) 10g, zhe chong or tu bie chong (Eupolyphagia seu Opisthoplatia) 10g, tao ren (Semen Pruni Persicae) 10g, fresh xing ren (Semen Pruni Armeniacae) 10g, shui zhi (Hirudo) 10g, fresh gan cao (Radix Tenuis Glycyrrhizae) 5g, chi shao (Radix Paeoniae Rubrae) 15g, ze lan (Herba Lycopi Lucidi) 10g, sheng di huang (Radix Rehmanniae Exsiccata Seu Recens) 10g, huang qin (Radix Scutellariae) 10g, dang gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 10g, chuan xiong (Radix Ligustici Wallchihii) 10g, pao jiangel (Rhizoma Tostun Zingibers) 10g, huang bai (Cortex Phellodendri) 10g, chun gen pi (Cortex Radicis Toonae) 10g, mu dan pi (Cortex Radicis Moutan) 10g, jin yin hua (Flos Lonicerae Japonicae) 30g, pu gong ying (Herba Cum Radice Taraxaci Mongolici) 30g, ye ju hua (Flos Chrysanthemi Indici) 20g, zi hua di ding (Herba Cum Radice Violae Yedoensis) 20g.

8. Regulate the menses and grow the child formula 8 (qi vacuity, blood stasis formula):
Main signs: woman has not become pregnant after many years of marriage; she has a pale lusterless complexion, a fatigued spirit and lack of strength; the lumbus and abdomen have a sagging/dragging pain, profuse menstrual bleeding with clots, shortness of breath, laziness to speak; the tongue is pale and dull with thin white fur and the pulse is deep, thin, and weak.

Treatment principle: supplement the qi and boost the blood, supplement the chong, secure the ren, transform phlegm and grow the child.

Rx: Modified dang gui bu xue tang (Tangkuei Blood-supplementing decoction), bu yang huan wu tang (yang-supplementing five-returning decoction), and ju yuan jian (Origin-lifting brew).

Formula contains: huang qi (Radix Astragali) 30g, dang gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 10g, chi shao (Radix Paeoniae Rubrae) 10g, chuan xiong (Radix Ligustici Wallchihii) 10g, tao ren (Semen Pruni Persicae) 10g, hong hua (Flos Carthami Tinctorii) 10g, dang shen (Radix Codonopsis Pilosulae) 15g, bai zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis Macrocephalae) 10g, sheng ma (Radix Cimicifugae) 10g, he shou wu (Radix Polygoni Multiflori) 15g, ji xue teng (Radix et Caulis Milletia seu Spatholobi) 20g, dan shen (Radix Salviae Miltiorrhizae) 10g, shan yao (Radix Dioscoreae Oppositae) 10g, zhi gan cao (honey stir-fried Radix Glycyrrhizae) 5g.

9. Regulate the menses and grow the child formula 9 (phlegm and dampness obstructing the network vessels formula):
Main signs: woman has not become pregnant after many years of marriage; she is overweight with a lot of phlegm; has irregular menstruation and profuse white vaginal
discharge, a pale complexion like nasal mucous with chest and abdominal oppression and
distention, fatigue and lack of strength, a heavy head, indifferent expression, low libido,
inhibited menstrual flow, scant blood or blocked menstruation, and a poor appetite; the
tongue is pale with slimy white fur and the pulse is deep, moderately slow, or slippery.
Treatment principle: fortify the spleen and dry dampness, warm and transform the chong
and ren, transform phlegm, grow the child.

Rx: Modified cang fu dao tan tang (Atractylodes and Cyperus phlegm-abducting
decoction) and si wu tang (Four agents decoction).

Formula contains: cang zhu (Rhizoma Atractylodis) 15g, xiang fu (Rhziza Cyperi Rotundi) 10g, fu ling (Sclerotium Poriae Cocos) 15g, ban xia (Tuber Preparata Pinelliae
Ternatae) 10g, chen pi (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae) 10g, fresh gan cao (Radix Tenuis Glycyrrhizae) 5g, dan nan xing (Pulvis Arisaemae Cum Felle Bovis) 10g, zhi ke (Fructus
Citrri Auranti) 10g, shen qu (Massa Medica Fermentata) 10g, sheng jiang (Radix
Zingiberis Officinalis Recens) 5g, ai ye (Folium Artemisiae Argyi) 10g, dang gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 10g, chuan xiong (Radix Ligustici Wallichii) 10g, chi shao (Radix Paeoniae Rubrae) 10g, and zao jiao ci (Spina Gleditsiae Chinensis) 10g.

Formulas to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle and Grow the Child
“Formulas to regulate the menstrual cycle and grow the child” are based on the principle
that root imbalances vary throughout the menstrual cycle of an infertile woman. There
may be a time when kidney vacuity will predominate (e.g. follicles develop but never
fully mature), and other times when there is a primary blood stasis (e.g. thickening of the
ovarian envelope). Thus “supplementing kidneys, invigorating blood and transforming
stasis, supplementing kidneys, and invigorating blood and regulating menses” should be
done in a stepwise manner as foundational principles throughout a menstrual cycle.

Week one: Kidney-supplementing and follicle development assisting formula.
Formula contains: gou qi zi (Fructus Lycii Chinensis) 15g, fu pen zi (Fructus Rubi
Chingli) 10g, che qian zi (Semen Plantaginis) 10g (wrap in cloth bag), tu si zi (Semen
Cuscutae Chinensis) 10g, wu wei zi (Fructus Schisandrae) 10g, dang gui (Radix
Angelicae Sinensis) 10g, shu di huang (Radix Rehmanniae Glutinosae Coquita) 10g, bai
shao (Radix Paeoniae Lactiflorae Albae) 10g, rou cong rong (Herba Cistanchis
Deserticolae) 10g, sang ji sheng (Ramulus Loranthi Seu Visci) 10g, and e jiao
(Gelatinum Asini Corii) 10g (dissolved into cooked decoction)
Modifications: if kidney yang vacuity predominates, add xian mao (Rhizoma
Curculiginis Orchidis) 10g, xian ling pi (Herba Epimedi) 10g, ba ji tian (Radix
Morinde Officinalis) 10g, and lu jiao shuang (Cornu Degelatinatum Cervi) 10g.
If kidney yin vacuity predominates, add nu zhen zi (Fructus Ligustri Lucidi) 10g, han lian
cao (Herba Ecliptae Prostate) 20g, gui ban jiao (Gelatinum Plastri Testudinis) 10g
(dissolved in the cooked decoction), and sang ji sheng (Ramulus Loranthi Seu Visci) 10g.
Usage: take for 4-7 days after menstruation ends.

Week two: Menstruation-regulating, blood-invigorating and ovulation-promoting formula.
Formula contains: dang gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 10g, dan shen (Radix Salviae
Miltiorrhizae) 10g, chi shao (Radix Paeoniae Rubrae) 10g, xiang fu (Rhizoma Cyperi
Rotundi) 10g, hong hua (Flos Carthami Tinctorii) 10g, yu jin (Tuber Curcumae) 10g, tao ren (Semen Pruni Persicae) 10g, ai ye (Folium Artemisiae Argyi) 10g, wu yao (Radix Linderae Strychnifoliae) 10g, yan hu suo (Rhizoma Corydalis) 10g, mei gui hua (Flos Rosae Rugosae) 10g, chuan xiong (Radix Ligustici Wallichii) 10g, xiao hui xiang (Fructus Foeniculi Vulgaris) 3g, and rou cong rong (Herba Cistanchis Deserticolae) 10g.

Modifications: if kidney yang vacuity predominates, add chuan duan (Radix Dipsaci) 15g, tu si zi (Semen Cuscutae Chinensis) 20g, and du zhong (Cortex Eucommiae Ulmoidis) 10g.

Usage: after completing formula 1, use formula 2 for 4-6 days (this is the pre-ovulatory phase).

Week three: Kidney-supplementing, corpus luteus maturation-promoting formula
Formula contains: shu di huang (Radix Rehmanniae Glutinosae Coquita) 15g, shan yao (Radix Dioscoreae Oppositae) 15g, chuan duan (Radix Dipsaci) 10g, he shou wu (Radix Polygoni Multiflori) 15g, dang gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 10g, e jiao (Gelatinum Asini Corii) 10g (dissolved in the cooked decoction), rou cong rong (Herba Cistanchis Deserticolae) 10g, sha yuan zi (Semen Astragali Complanati) 10g, tu si zi (Semen Cuscutae Chinensis) 20g, gou qi zi (Fructus Lycii Chinensis) 15g, fu pen zi (Fructus Rubi Chingli) 15g, che qian zi (Semen Plantaginis) 10g (wrapped in cloth), and wu wei zi (Fructus Schisandraceae) 10g.

Modifications: if kidney yang vacuity predominates, add xian ling pi (Herba Epimedii) 10g, [bu] gu zhi (Semen Psoraleae Corylifoliae) 10g, and ba ji tian (Radix Morindae Officinalis) 10g.

If kidney yin predominates, add han lian cao (Herba Ecliptae Prostate) 20g, nu zhen zi (Fructus Ligustri Lucidi) 10g, sang shen zi (Fructus Mori) 10g.

Usage: after completing formula 2, use formula 3 for 6-8 days (this is the corpus luteus maturation phase).

Week four: Blood-invigorating and menstruation-regulating formula
Formula contains: dang gui (Radix Angelicae Sinensis) 10g, chi shao (Radix Paeoniae Rubae) 10g, ze lan ye (Herba Lycopi Lucidi) 10g, chuan xiong (Radix Ligustici Wallichii) 10g, yi mu cao (Herba Leonuri Heterophylli) 10g, dan shen (Radix Salviae Miltiorrhizae) 10g, du zhong (Cortex Eucommiae Ulmoidis) 10g, sheng di huang (Radix Rehmanniae Exsicatae Seu Recens) 10g, chen pi (Pericarpium Citri Reticulatae) 10g, xiao hui xiang (Fructus Foeniculi Vulgaris) 3g, yan hu suo (Rhizoma Corydalis) 10g, rou cong rong (Herba Cistanchis Deserticolae) 10g, wu yao (Radix Linderae Strychnifoliae) 10g, huang qin (Radix Scutellariae Baicalensis) 10g, and stir-fried wu zei gu (Os Sepiae seu Sepiellae) 10g.

Usage: do not use immediately before menstruation (if taking herbs specifically for infertility); after the menses begin, take formula 4 for 3-5 days.

Factors to Note When Using Formulas to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle and Grow the Child
The central focus of using Formulas to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle and Grow the Child is to promote ovulation. If signs indicate that the follicle is maturing / ripening, such as changing vaginal cytology or cervical mucous changes, the possibility and incidence of ovulation can be increased. The Formulas to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle and Grow the Child method is fairly versatile; it not only benefits infertility cases, but is also effective in treating irregular menstruation and painful menstruation / dysmenorrhea. The Formulas to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle and Grow the Child method mainly treats anovulatory infertility conditions, such as polycystic ovarian syndrome, anovulatory irregular menstruation, hyperprolactinemia, anovulatory luteinization syndrome, and non-responsive ovarian syndrome.

The Formulas to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle and Grow the Child method and the Li Family “Regulate the Menses and Grow the Child Prescription Series” method should both be used in a stepwise manner. The infertility case should be differentiated using the Li Family “Regulate the Menses and Grow the Child Prescription Series”; when the presenting symptoms improve, and the irregular menstrual cycles revert to normal, then it is appropriate to use Formulas to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle and Grow the Child method.

Additional Thoughts on Using Formulas to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle and Grow the Child

The Kidney-supplementing and follicular development-promoting formula is used to enrich kidney yin, assist kidney yang, nourish fluids and blood, and regulate the chong and ren in order to promote follicle development. The Menstruation-regulating, blood-invigorating and ovulation-promoting formula works on the foundation of nourishing fluids and blood; however, it also helps regulate the qi, invigorate the blood, and course the liver to promote ovulation. The Kidney-supplementing and corpus luteus maturation-promoting Formula mainly enriches kidney yin and reinforces kidney yang in order to sustain normal corpus luteus development and functioning. The Blood-invigorating and menstruation-regulating formula used during menstruation principally quickens the blood and regulates the menses to promote a normal menstrual cycle. Although there are many ways to induce ovulation with Chinese medicinals, none deviate from the basic tenets of regulating kidney yin and yang. Kidney vacuity-type infertility treatments should always apply, regulation of kidney yin and yang, as the overarching principle; and regulating qi and invigorating blood as the secondary treatment method. Most women who experience obstructed ovulatory functioning have varying degrees of kidney vacuity and blood stasis. Thus, even for one who has no obvious signs of blood stasis, supplementing the kidneys as a primary measure and invigorating blood stasis as a secondary measure can significantly increase ovulation rates. Currently, both in China and abroad, clomiphene is considered an effective means of stimulating ovulation; but these treatments have unpredictable results, the effects are not long lasting, and there are many undesirable side effects. Chinese medicinals that supplement the kidneys and regulate menses have no negative side effects and are long lasting. Some patients who use a base of Chinese
medicinals, and then also incorporate Western pharmaceuticals to assist ovulation, increase the rate of ovulation, of pregnancy, and lower miscarriage.

The main reason for anovulatory infertility is loss of regulation of the hypothalamus-pituitary-ovary axis. Clinically this may manifest as many conditions, including polycystic ovary syndrome, anovulation with irregular menstruation, hyperprolactinemia, anovulatory luteinization syndrome, and nonresponsive ovarian syndrome. Chinese medicine thinks that the kidneys govern reproduction. The way that the kidneys connect to the reproductive system is via the brain-kidney-chong/ren-uterus-axis, which resembles what current science recognizes as the hypothalamus-pituitary-ovarian axis role in reproduction. Formulas to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle and Grow the Child basically supplement the kidneys to assist the ability to become pregnant; it simulates hormones to manually regulate menstruation. Chinese medicinals manually establish a normal gynecological cycle by consecutively using the week 1, 2, 3, and 4 formulas. Repeated clinical usage of these formulas has established that supplementing the kidneys does indeed assist in ovarian follicle development. Invigorating blood, moving the qi and transforming stasis helps to promote ovarian function; and consistent kidney supplementation promotes corpus luteus development. Kidney supplementation to promote ovulation, kidney supplementation to promote corpus luteus [maturation] and menstruation regulating and stasis transforming form the Chinese medicinal man-made regulation of menstruation [method] that clinical practice has shown to be effective.

The Formulas to Regulate the Menstrual Cycle and Grow the Child, [can also be scheduled] according to basal body temperature acting as a rough approximation of the phases of the cycle, [or according to] ongoing observation of hormonal levels, [or according to] follicular changes, [or according to] accurately determined distinct phases (postmenstrual, intermenstrual, premenstrual, and menstrual), [or according to] cervical mucosal observations or [according to] ultra-sound B ovarian examinations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formula Number</th>
<th>Primary Pattern</th>
<th>Treatment Principle</th>
<th>Prescriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kidney yang vacuity</td>
<td>Warm kidneys and uterus, boost the chong, nourish the ren, and grow the child.</td>
<td>Modified <em>you gui</em> wan (Right restoring pill), <em>wu zi yan zong wan</em> (Five seed progeny pill), <em>er xian wan</em> (Two Immortals Decoction), and <em>suo guan wan</em> (Stream-reducing pill).</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kidney yin vacuity</td>
<td>Nourish kidneys, replenish essence, boost the chong, nourish the ren, and grow the child.</td>
<td>Modified <em>zuo gui</em> wan (Left restoring pill), <em>wu zi yan zong wan</em> (Five seed progeny pill), and <em>er zhi wan</em> (Double supreme pill).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Qi and blood dual vacuity</td>
<td>Supplement both qi &amp; blood, boost the chong, nourish the ren, regulate menses and grow the child.</td>
<td>Modified <em>yu lin zhu</em> (Unicorn-rearing pill), <em>wu zi yan zong wan</em> (Five seed progeny pill), and <em>dang gui huang qi tang</em> (Tangkuei and Astragalus decoction).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Liver depression qi stagnation</td>
<td>Course the liver, disinhibit the qi, regulate the chong, calm the ren, regulate menses and grow the child.</td>
<td>Modified <em>kai yu zhong yu tang</em> (Depression-opening and jade-planting decoction), <em>jia wei wu yao tang</em> (Added flavors lindera decoction), <em>qing gan jie yu tang</em> (Liver-clearing and depression-resolving decoction), and <em>suan zao ren tang</em> (Spiny jujube decoction).</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Qi stagnation and blood stasis</td>
<td>Disinhibit the qi, invigorate blood, regulate the chong, unblock the ren, transform stasis, and grow the child.</td>
<td>Modified <em>xue fu zhu yu tang</em> (House of blood stasis-expelling decoction), <em>hu po san</em> (Amber powder), and <em>ze lan ye</em> (Lycopus decoction).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Cold Congelation and blood stasis</td>
<td>Warm the menses and disperse cold, warm the chong, unblock the ren, transform stasis, and grow the child.</td>
<td>Modified <em>xiao fu zhu yu tang</em> (Lesser abdomen stasis-expelling decoction) and <em>wu zhu yu tang</em> (Evodia decoction).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Heat toxins binding with stasis</td>
<td>Invigorate blood, transform stasis, cool the chong and clear the ren, clear heat, and grow the child.</td>
<td>Modified <em>da huang zhe chong wan</em> (Rhubarb and wingless cockroach pill), <em>qing bai san</em> (Clear the white powder) and <em>wu wei qing du yin</em> (Five flavor toxin-clearing drink).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Qi vacuity, blood stasis</td>
<td>Supplement the qi and boost the blood, supplement the chong, secure the ren, transform stasis, grow the child.</td>
<td>Modified <em>dang gui bu xue tang</em> (Tangkuei Blood-supplementing decoction), <em>bu yang huan wu tang</em> (Yang-supplementing five-returning decoction), and <em>ju yuan jian</em> (Origin-lifting brew).</td>
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<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Damp-phlegm obstructing the network vessels</td>
<td>Fortify the spleen, dry dampness, warm and transform the chong and ren, transform phlegm, grow the child.</td>
<td>Modified <em>cang fu dao tan tang</em> (Atractylodes and Cyperus phlegm-abducting decoction) and <em>si wu tang</em> (Four agents decoction).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[1] Quan Yin or Guan Yin is the Buddhist bodhisattva called the Buddha of Compassion
天癸  tiān guī – Heavenly tenth is defined as that which allows pregnancy to occur; it is sometimes translated a synonymously as heavenly waters

子  zǐ means both a seed to be planted in the ground and a child

嫩  nèn  tender: Dr. Li defines this as a tongue that looks like chicken flesh after the skin has been removed, shiny and glossy