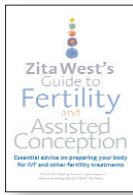


Book Review



Guide to Fertility and Assisted Conception

by Zita West

Prior to reading this book, I knew little of Zita West's background, but even from the short interviews that I had watched of her on television through the years, I felt that this was a book that I would want to read. When I think back to those excerpts on television, the impressions that I was left with of her are as follows – common sense, caring, knowledgeable and easily understood. I am delighted to write that those impressions are in abundance throughout this book and made it a joy to read.

Zita West has been a midwife for 30 years and has specialised in fertility for the past 15 years. Her approach is medical based, but also acknowledges acupuncture and nutritional therapies. Apart from her own opinions in the book, by including interviews with several of the country's top doctors, one gains further and more in depth knowledge.

The book is well set out in four main parts – Understanding your Fertility, Getting ready – preparing your mind and body for pregnancy, If you're not getting pregnant naturally and Understanding IVF. The four main parts really set out Zita West's own beliefs which are that the couple must understand themselves and know the reasons of why they have not produced a child yet, and not go down the IVF route too quickly without looking at every aspect of their life first. She believes that it is important to explore as many low-tech ways to conceive as possible before starting IVF.

In Part One 'Understanding your Fertility', Zita West looks at the medical tests which a couple can have and lifestyle factors. In some other books, the medical sections can contain bewildering language, here it is clear and easy to understand. Of particular note, the man's fertility section is excellent – like the rest of the book it is clear, straight to the point and well set out. This is the only book my husband has ever looked at on the subject of fertility and Zita's Tips on Improving Male Fertility and the section on How to Increase Chances of Conception in Your Partner, were particularly good. She

manages to keep the writing light and tip one will probably be liked by many – 'The good news first – have lots of sex. Forget about the big focus on her 'fertile' time. You need to be having sex at least every two or three days. You do not need to 'store' up the sperm'.

Part Two concerns preparing the mind and body for pregnancy and this looks at the mind, the relationship, nutrition, fertility, IVF and complementary therapies. Zita West writes, 'A positive mind-body connection, I believe, is the key to conceiving, no matter what stage of the process you are at'. Several case studies are included in this chapter and useful in that readers may identify with the experiences that other people have gone through. With regard to the complementary therapies, Zita West states that, 'While I believe there is a place for complementary therapies in the treatment of fertility problems, they should be used in conjunction with mainstream medicine'. She does however give a very balanced view throughout the book and the reader wanting guidance and knowledge on acupuncture and Chinese medicine will certainly find useful information in this book.

Parts Three and Four of the book outline what can be done if the individual is still not getting pregnant and examine in depth the subject of IVF. Zita West gives excellent advice on subjects such as choosing a clinic - consider it's location; you cannot compare like for like; find out how much treatment costs; if you are unhappy, move; use the internet, and other subjects perhaps not covered in many other books – the male perspective of IVF, coping strategies for each day following transfer and other forms of assisted conception such as IVM, Mild IVF and Natural IVF.

In summary, this is a well set out, easy to read, comprehensive book. Zita West states early on in the book that she wants, 'this book to help you no matter what stage you are at'. I believe that she really does achieve this. It contains valuable advice and any book on fertility that I can get my husband to read is well worth a recommendation!

Emma Palmer
Former I N UK member