



'Acupuncture delivered the goods'

Jeanie Gordon and her husband Nick had been trying to have a baby for years without success, until a natural therapy helped them to achieve their dream

WORDS Rebecca Speechley PHOTOGRAPHS Simon Warren

Nick and I had been married a year when we started trying for a baby in 2001,' says Jeanie Gordon, 38, from East Sussex. 'We didn't expect things to be instant, but after two years of trying, and with all our friends around us producing kids at a rate of knots, we started to feel frustrated.

'Every time a friend announced she was pregnant, I'd be thrilled for her, but later I'd cry my heart out. The worst moment was when a friend confessed she was pregnant with twins. It didn't seem fair – why couldn't she have just one baby so that I could have one too?'

'In July 2003 Nick and I went to see our GP who referred us to a specialist. We had a lot of tests and discovered that things weren't great on either side: Nick's sperm had low motility [the ability of the sperm to move and swim] and I had a big fibroid – a benign growth – that was twisting around my Fallopian tube.

'I felt so relieved that we had found the reason why we weren't conceiving. In January 2004 I had my fibroid removed and took a month off from my job as a food buyer, to give me time to heal. The doctors told us to go away and keep trying and come back in six months if we still weren't pregnant. Now I was even more desperate, because there was less of a reason not to conceive.

'But nothing happened. Every time I got my period I'd just crawl under my duvet and cry. All through this I was still working, doing long hours in a stressful job. I just got on with things and threw myself into work as a distraction.

'In December 2004 we went for our first round of IVF. I hated pumping all those drugs into my body. I found it so draining. I also felt like I was doing all of the work. It was me who had to have all the injections and me who had to cope with the hormonal roller coaster. Sure, Nick had to watch me go through

it and that was hard for him, but that was all he had to do.

'Nick smokes and drinks and I remember asking our GP and the consultant if he should give up to improve our chances of having a baby, but they both said it wouldn't really make any difference. It just seemed wrong

– Nick wasn't expected to make an effort at all. All the burden was on me.

'Despite all this, our relationship stayed strong. We knew we might argue more and that IVF could be a negative experience,

so we made a special effort with each other. We both understood that I would be snappy because of all the hormones raging through my body.

'Then we found out I was pregnant. The blood tests confirmed it, and I was so excited. But when we went for a scan at four weeks, there was nothing there. ❧

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For three weeks we went back every two or three days to get scanned. There was an embryo, but it wasn't growing properly.

'At nine weeks into the pregnancy, in January 2005, I miscarried at my sister's house – just after she had made the announcement that she was pregnant. I was devastated.

'We tried IVF again in July 2005 and got pregnant again. I was pumping my body full of hormones to try to keep this baby. At our six-week scan nothing showed up. This time I'd really believed there was a baby, but there wasn't. I cried all the way home in the car.

'The doctors at the hospital assumed that we'd go for another round of IVF in six months' time, but I'd had enough and was determined to try other things. I did a lot of research into natural therapies and found that acupuncture might be able to help. A friend recommended Gerard Kite at the Kite Clinic, so I booked an appointment. And the best thing was, Nick had to have an appointment too.

'Gerad didn't tell Nick that he had to give up smoking or stop drinking completely, but he did tell him to have a bacon sandwich for breakfast every day. Nick has never eaten breakfast or lunch so his energy levels weren't balanced – no wonder his sperm were lazy. I felt so happy that Nick had to finally do something to help make our baby, other than the obvious, of course!

'Gerad uses classical five-element acupuncture, a holistic treatment that doesn't treat symptoms but looks for the underlying cause of your problem and



'Acupuncture has not only given me Tom, but it's also given me a better outlook on life'

works on that. Often it's not something specific, as in my case, but Gerard worked hard to bring my body into balance, physically, mentally and emotionally.

'After my first acupuncture session I felt like I'd been on holiday. For four years getting pregnant had been my sole aim, but two days after my first appointment with Gerard I woke up and thought, "Even if I don't manage to have a baby, life will be OK."

'I began to sleep much better, my digestion problems eased, I'd had a dry

Happy result: Jeanie became pregnant with Tom after just two months of acupuncture

scalp and that cleared up too. Nick was also having acupuncture and he was amazed at how great it made him feel. He was eating much more healthily, too.

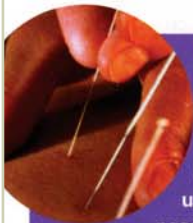
'I had acupuncture once a week at first, then fortnightly and monthly. After just two months of sessions I got pregnant naturally. I was so happy. I wasn't nervous like I had been when I'd got pregnant before. Somehow I knew it would be OK this time.

'I kept having acupuncture throughout my pregnancy. It helped me emotionally and physically. I felt very healthy and didn't even get morning sickness.

'Tom was born in June 2006 – a gorgeous, healthy 7lb baby boy, yelling his head off. It was the best moment ever. He's a really happy baby, always very calm and contented.

'Acupuncture has changed my life. Not only do I have Tom, but it's given me a better outlook on life. I can deal with the rubbish it throws at me a lot easier now. It's made me want to help other women in my situation, so I'm training as a five-element acupuncturist at Gerard's new school, LIFEA [London Institute of Five-Element Acupuncture]. It's hard work, but so fascinating.

'I'd advise any couple having fertility problems to try acupuncture. Even if you choose to have it alongside IVF, it could help you cope with the whole experience a lot better. Just don't give up hope.'



What is acupuncture?

Your essential energy or 'qi' is rebalanced using fine needles which

are inserted into your energy pathways or 'meridians' and left there briefly to stimulate your body's healing process. The number of needles varies, but sometimes it could be as little as two or three.

Your practitioner will look at your whole lifestyle to discover the right treatment for you. 'At the heart of five-element acupuncture is the

belief that many physical ailments that we suffer from today are the product of emotional distress as much as any physical cause,' says Gerard Kite of the Kite Clinic.

WHAT CAN IT HELP?

Acupuncture can help to ease aches and pain, and alleviate digestive problems, headaches and even low energy levels.

WHY IS IT GOOD FOR FERTILITY?

Having acupuncture while you're going through IVF could improve your chances

of getting pregnant by 65 per cent, according to a new study in the *British Medical Journal*. And although there is little hard scientific evidence, it has been used for centuries to treat fertility problems by rebalancing the body.

WHERE CAN I GET IT?

To find a traditional acupuncture practitioner in your area, call 020 8735 0400 or visit www.acupuncture.org.uk. For five-element acupuncture, contact the Kite Clinic on 020 7408 0341 or visit www.kiteclinic.co.uk.