

ESSEX FERTILITY SUPPORT PACKAGES

The Art & Science of Fertility Support

How We Work & Price List



Essex Fertility & Women's Health
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Who We Are and How We Work

We are two lovely ladies who are passionate about supporting people struggling with fertility issues, we offer physical and emotional support, guidance and a listening ear. We blend our extensive knowledge of infertility from a Western medical perspective with the ancient knowledge about how to support fertility from a Chinese medicine perspective. We offer support for the mind, body and soul and will walk with you as expert guides through this difficult landscape.

We specialise in supporting people who are struggling with unexplained infertility. Most of our clients come to us having been struggling with unexplained infertility for years, many have had one or more unsuccessful IVF cycles.

We gather in all the information we need to unravel the puzzle - blood tests, scans, semen analysis and a whole host of information that we can gather from signs and symptoms of how your system rolls through life. All too often we find that some simple things have been missed or overlooked, often things that are readily resolvable either by us or through our network of medical and holistic fertility experts. Sometimes we find all is in order and all that we need to do is to gently encourage the magic to work.

We have an unusually integrated approach to working in this field, combining our extensive knowledge and experience of resolving infertility through holistic support, with up-to-date, research-driven knowledge about fertility investigations and treatment from a Western medicine perspective. We are two very gentle, supportive women who really do get what you are going through and we offer a safe space to talk about everything.

Unexplained Infertility

This is our main field of practice.

- If you have been told that you need IVF, but have a deeply rooted conviction that you don't but you just don't know what else to do, we should talk!
- If IVF is not on the cards for you on account of budget or principle, and you want to get stuck in to see if you can make this work without IVF, we should talk.
- If you know you need IVF and want to prep for it really thoroughly, working from a holistic support perspective with someone who can also help you to investigate things that come up that might impact your chances of success, we are here for that too.
- If you are very proactive about your fertility, maybe just starting out but you want to approach it seriously, let me guide and support you.

Low AMH

There are a lot of misconceptions about the impact of low AMH on fertility for women under 40. AMH levels after the age of 40 can be used to predict time to menopause, and it is widely recognised that age impacts egg quality, but in women under 40 the issue of low AMH and unexplained infertility is much more complex.

If you are under 40 with low AMH and have been told that you need IVF 'because low AMH means your eggs are running out', or been told that you 'need to use donor eggs because low AMH means your egg quality is poor' - we need to talk.

"I wish I didn't waste 2 years of my life and went to Alex before a fertility clinic, I would have gotten pregnant a lot sooner! [She] made me feel a lot less anxious about my low AMH rather than being told I was running out of eggs"

Previous Client

Essex Fertility & Women's Health

For women under 40, Low AMH has been shown to shorten the time to conception if there are no other fertility limiting issues in the picture. This is the pertinent point - 'if there are no other fertility limiting issues in the picture'. Far too many people struggle to conceive with low AMH, blaming it on low AMH without realising that AMH is low BECAUSE they have other issues that need to be addressed.

The issue of Low AMH is more convoluted than many people realise. Low AMH can be associated with very good fertility, it can be an indicator that there are issues in play that are having a negative impact on the ovarian environment, but it can also also be an indicator that male fertility issues are in the picture.

When unexplained infertility and low AMH coincide, we need to consider if there are any factors that are artificially lowering AMH - factors such as inflammation, poor hormone regulation, infection, autoimmune system issues, poor circulation and nutrient deficiencies. Many of these factors can lower AMH and will also make it more difficult to have a successful IVF cycle without taking a holistic approach to preconception support.

The experience of working with you exceeded all expectations - it's like getting the all round holistic help and support you'd always dreamt of from the medical profession. Acupuncture is magical and I'd highly recommend everyone does it to heal any low level ailments and to support your conception journey."

— Previous client

Endometriosis

We work exceptionally well with cases where endometriosis is part of the picture. The combination of acupuncture and visceral osteopathy has a powerful impact on endometriosis, and in most cases, that is all we need to transform a menstrual cycle. If we feel a case warrants an additional layer of support, we reach out to a Chinese Herbalist who specialises in working with endometriosis, and/or reach out to our network of incredible functional nutritionists for additional support.

- In some cases, we help endometriosis clients achieve a healthy, natural pregnancy after many years of trying to conceive.
- In some cases, we help endometriosis clients to achieve a healthy, natural pregnancy after multiple rounds of unsuccessful IVF before they came to us.
- In virtually all cases, we help people who have a painful, difficult menstrual cycle to achieve a much easier, healthier menstrual cycle (which has a knock on impact on the quality of eggs they can produce).
- In many cases, we find that endometriosis has been blamed for the fertility issues, and signs and symptoms of male infertility have been overlooked or ignored.

Male Fertility

Sperm health is incredibly important. Signs of male fertility issues are all too frequently ignored by IVF clinics, and most GPs don't know enough about male fertility to know what the options are. I pay as much attention to signs and symptoms of male infertility as I do to signs and symptoms of female infertility - and very often we uncover some readily fixable or improvable issues.

I have undertaken some incredible training in male fertility and have a strong referral network for tests and further investigations. Essentially, a good semen analysis should be the place to start when investigating male fertility, but often I see a semen analysis that cuts corners, that fails to report on signs and symptoms that might indicate the presence of infection, the presence of a varicocele or other cause of male infertility. Often the first thing we need to do is to organise a full semen analysis from a lab independent of an IVF clinic. Once we have a fully comprehensive semen analysis, we can start to work out what other tests might be appropriate

Difficult & Unusual Cases

There are always some tricky cases that come our way and we love this work. Using a blended Western/Eastern medicine approach we have been able to crack some really difficult cases that have evaded success for many years and many unsuccessful IVF cycles.

Sometimes with these complicated cases we are looking at hidden infections, sometimes we are looking at the long term impact of environmental toxins, cancer treatment etc. In these cases there is usually a history of multiple failed IVF cycles, often with euploid embryos failing to make it through.

To turn these cases around we usually need a team, one that works well together with mutual respect and knowledge sharing. Depending on the case in front of me, I may recommend inviting a functional nutritionist, Chinese herbalist, Western medical herbalist, reproductive immunology consultant, or urologist or other holistic or medical expert to the team. I need you to understand that there are limitations to my scope of practice, and be prepared to trust me if I say we need to invite in specific expertise. Sometimes it really does take a village!

CURRENT PRICE LIST (Sept 2024)

A 360° Fertility Review (Online or In Clinic)

360` Fertility Review with simple list of recommendations £250

360` Fertility Review with detailed written report (5000+ word) £350

A 360` Fertility Review is the place to start for anyone considering working with us. This also works really well as a standalone option for someone who simply wants to talk everything through with someone who really understands this stuff.

When I prepare for a Fertility Review, I look for areas where there are indications that further investigation is warranted. I also look for areas that simply need a bit of support and improvement to increase your fertility potential.

I look at things that influence egg quality and your ability to carry a pregnancy . . .

- **Your Menstrual Cycle.** So much useful information can be gleaned from the fine details of your menstrual cycle and your body's response to menstrual hormones.
- **Digestion.** This plays a far more important role than many people realise as it influences the whole of our internal environment, our egg quality, hormone regulation, our immune system function, systemic inflammation levels and mood.
- **Sleep.** How you sleep, the quality of your sleep and your underlying energy as you move through the day can all influence your fertility.
- **Infection, inflammation, immune system dysregulation.** I look for signs of all of these things as they can all play a part in infertility and pregnancy loss.
- **Underlying health issues.** I help people to avoid IVF if possible and prepare well for it if they really need it. Underlying health issues cannot be ignored.

“Just do it, and go all in - you will be pleasantly surprised. It's worth the time and financial investment to prepare yourself for a successful pregnancy.”

— Previous client

I also look at sperm health and things that can influence male fertility.

- **Semen Analysis.** We start with this. Far too often signs of potentially resolvable male fertility issues can be found in a semen analysis and are often overlooked by people who assume IVF will fix everything (top tip - it often won't, and even if it does, it may not be necessary).
- **Semen Microbiome.** This is an increasingly important test that has been a game-changing test for many of my clients.
- **Sperm DNA Fragmentation Test.** A semen analysis is not sufficient evidence of male fertility, sometimes we need to look at the DNA fragmentation to see that there is an issue with the fertility of the sperm.
- **Testicular health.** I look out for any sign that there may be a need for further investigation (testicular aches and pains, heaviness or heat, erectile issues)
- **Sleep patterns.** The quality and length of sleep can have a significant impact on sperm health.
- **Digestion.** This plays a surprisingly important role in sperm health as it has such a strong influence on the internal environment, inflammation, hormone balance etc.
- **Environmental and lifestyle issues.** Sperm are incredibly sensitive to toxicity so I look for anything that can help minimise the impact of toxins on sperm health.

I ask you to send me through previous test results, scan reports and a potted history of your journey so far. The more information I can gather in, the clearer the picture I can build as I am looking for patterns and threads through the information to give me a clue about what to prioritise.

"Alex is really passionate and knowledgeable about what she does. She will leave no stone unturned to get to the bottom of why you aren't getting pregnant, rather than blindly push you down the IVF route. You may not need IVF, please, save your money and go through further testing with Alex first."

— Previous client

Then, once all the information is in, we hold a consultation to discuss it all in depth . . .

Then we talk. We get stuck in. We talk about all the detail, what you have been through, what signs and symptoms stand out for me, what your plans are and how we can help you to move forward.

- In some cases we have all the information we need to get going with holistic support, but often we identify tests that ought to be run.
- In some cases we find nothing worryingly significant and are able to turn things around with a combination of acupuncture with me, and visceral osteopathy with my colleague Gill.
- In some cases we find things that require an onward medical referral, and we will help you to find the best route through.
- In some cases we find there are holistic health issues that would benefit from additional support through functional nutrition, through Chinese herbs, talking therapy. If so, we help you to find a good practitioner to work with.

After the consultation I send you my recommendations for what to focus on, what investigations to prioritise. There is an option for me to write up a long 5000+ word report which steps you through my thoughts about different aspects of your case. In the full report I use a traffic light system to clearly indicate to you which areas to pay attention to, and conclude by offering you clear direction on what to focus on, next steps to take.

Essex Fertility Support (in Clinic)

In my clinic I offer mentoring, advice, support, acupuncture and massage, mostly we have a 30 minute fertility mentoring and information gathering session, followed by a 30 minute acupuncture appointment.

Fertility Acupuncture & Mentoring (single session)

£115 for a 1hr appointment in Danbury & Burnham on Crouch, Essex

£170 for 1hr appointment in Scrutton Street, Shoreditch

Fertility Acupuncture & Mentoring (12 sessions, 10% discount)

It takes 12 weeks to have a significant positive impact on fertility. It takes this length of time for follicles to grow, improvements to the ovarian environment and to follicle development can influence egg quality; it takes around 9 weeks for sperm to develop. My advice would be for new clients to be prepared to stick it out for 12 weeks to get the most out of what we are doing. We see such a difference our outcome statistics for people who commit to regular treatment that we offer a reduced price to clients who are prepared to commit up front to a package of 12 treatments.

Danbury:

£1242 for 12 acupuncture appointments in Danbury & Burnham on Crouch (prepaid)

£1174 for 9 acupuncture appointments and 3 visceral osteopathy appointments

Shoreditch:

£1836 for 12 appointments in Scrutton Street, Shoreditch (prepaid)

£1728 for 9 acupuncture appointments and 3 visceral osteopathy appointments

Any sessions remaining after a positive pregnancy test can be converted into pregnancy, prebirth or post natal support from either Alex or Gill or gifted to a friend.

Fertility Osteopathy

In which situations is visceral osteopathy especially useful?

There are certain issues that crop up in a client's history that flag that there are issues that would benefit from some sessions with Gill.

- Previous surgery (abdominal, keyhole, investigative or traumatic).
- History of pelvic pain (are these signs of endometriosis, fibroids, cysts, pelvic tension or issues with circulation or tissue fluid movement through the pelvic region).
- History of trauma, illness or an event in your past after which 'nothing has ever felt the same since'.
- Bladder and bowel issues (irritable bladder, UTIs, long term constipation, IBS etc)
- Irregular periods.
- Unusually light periods.
- Unusually heavy periods.
- Periods that stop mid bleed for a day or two before the bleed resumes.
- Pain with sex, discomfort from using a mooncup or tampon, extreme pain during a HyCosy procedure.
- Previous pregnancy, especially if followed by a difficult or protracted labour or a Cesarean section.
- If one ovary is always considerably more active than the other.

The benefits of treatment are cumulative, so it is best to be prepared to attend treatment once or twice a month over a few months in order to give enough opportunity for significant change.

£90 for 1hr in Danbury & Burnham on Crouch, Essex

£130 for 1hr in Scrutton Street, Shoreditch

Essex Fertility & Women's Health

IVF is often not an easy or obvious choice for women with Low AMH on account of the small number of follicles that are likely to be available on any particular month. The majority of our clients with Low AMH go on to achieve natural pregnancy, especially women with low AMH under the age of 40.

“Alex was so supportive in the process of us exploring our fertility. Whenever I felt unsure or scared I could reach out to her for a comforting and pragmatic chat. That was so invaluable. I felt so reassured that Alex has a strong network of experts that she can refer you to should anything out of her expertise pop-up.”

— *Previous client*

What are the costs of some of the additional tests that we work with?

We will recommend additional tests if signs and symptoms suggest to us that tests have been overlooked, if we feel the data from existing tests is unreliable or if the results are out of date (blood tests, microbiome tests, ultrasounds and advanced male fertility tests).

Here is a list of some of the tests we frequently refer clients for and guide prices you can expect to pay for these. We use some of these very frequently, and some much less often, we assess the potential value of tests on a case-by-case basis. The tests written in bold are nearly always run, unless a recent test has been done.

£195	Comprehensive Semen Analysis
£450	COMET Sperm DNA Fragmentation Test
£230	Vaginal Microbiome Test
£230	Semen Microbiome Test
£79	Medichecks Male Hormone Panel (great for female day 2/3 test)
£79	Medichecks Advanced Thyroid Test
£325	Trans Vaginal Pelvic Ultrasound of ovaries, uterus and pelvic cavity
£545	HyCosy with Saline 3D Ultrasound of uterus
£225/£125	Cycle Monitoring (initial scan £225, subsequent scans £125)
£900+	NK Cell testing

These prices are guide prices, these tests are provided by 3rd party companies.

How Long Does It Take To See Results

Supporting fertility if there is nothing much standing in our way, should take around 12 weeks. This allows time for the improvements to your underlying health and fertility to filter through to the eggs and sperm being produced.

If you start with no cycle, have a very irregular cycle or an incredibly painful cycle it takes time to restart or to stabilise the cycle before we can really start polishing fertility in the way that we need to. You should start to see cycle symptoms shift after the first menstrual cycle, bleed symptoms and pain symptoms can be very quick to change, and things should continue to improve from there. When it comes to cycle length, the follicular phase can be relatively quick to change, but changing the luteal phase length can sometimes take 2-3 months if we need to wait for improvements to follicle development to filter through. When you get to a point where the cycle is running well, and the BBT chart is great, fertility would continue to improve for the next 12 weeks so you may need to consider extending regular treatment beyond 12 weeks (but once the cycle looks good, we would reduce the frequency of treatment).

If the semen analysis is poor, and there are no issues with infection or varicocele, we would usually see the semen analysis improve within 2-3 months.

12 treatments can be enough time to turn things around and to lift fertility, but in many cases things take longer because we tend to work with complex cases. We work with clients who have been through unsuccessful IVF cycles, with clients with extensive endometriosis, low AMH or significant male factor infertility. If we need to run investigations to work out what the problem is first, if we need to clear infections, if there is a call for surgery or varicocele embolism etc, then it can take considerably longer than 12 weeks to see the full extent of the improvements we are looking for.

It is important to realise that while we can promise you commitment and effort, we cannot promise a successful pregnancy. We can, however, promise to support and encourage you as you navigate this journey, and that along the way you will feel empowered and well informed about your situation and your options.

There are always some more complex cases that roll on beyond the 12/15 week point. When we work on more complex cases, these are usually in conjunction with a multidisciplinary team (including Functional Medicine Practitioners, Chinese Medicine Herbalists, Urologists and IVF Clinics).

How To Get The Most Out Of Treatment

- Be prepared to attend treatment weekly - especially at the beginning of our time working together - it really makes such a difference to rate of response to treatment.
- Partners are welcome to attend on any sessions for acupuncture too for no extra charge.
- If possible it is best to pick a regular time and day so we can block it off in the diary. Alterations can be made as we go along if the diary permits.
- We are likely to recommend additional tests and investigations which will be organised through third party companies at additional cost.
- If we feel it would significantly improve your prospects, we will recommend you consider working with a Functional Nutritionist or Chinese Herbalist. In some cases, if we feel that ought to be your priority but your budget is tight, we will recommend you step away from working with us to free up budget to use elsewhere for a while.

Qualifications & Training

Alex O'Connor MBAcC, LicAc, Fertility Support Trained

Degree in Acupuncture BSc(Hons)

Advanced Diploma in Fertility Support Acupuncture

Member of the British Acupuncture Council

Member of the Fertility Support Trained Practitioner Network

Alex has undertaken innumerable specialist courses in different aspects of fertility such as:

- Spermageddon (male factor infertility with Olivia Krammer-Pojer)
- Female Ecology Mastercourse (vaginal microbiome with Moira Bradfield)
- Vagiversity (a deep dive into the vaginal microbiome with Moira Bradfield)
- The Reproductive Microbiome (Leah Hetchman)

Alex has an excellent reputation for her understanding of Low AMH. She writes Ebooks on interesting fertility issues, including one on Low AMH, has been invited to speak on podcasts and insta-lives, and to speak at conference about her approach to the low AMH client.

Gill Hind M.Ost

Degree in Osteopathy M.Ost

Post Graduate Diploma in Paediatric Osteopathy

Registered with the General Osteopathic Council

ScarWork®

MommyMot®

Disclaimer

We do not claim to be able to 'cure' infertility, but we are both experienced holistic practitioners who know how to recognise many of the things that can impede natural fertility. We are able to support you holistically, and to help you to navigate through the complex world of medical fertility investigations and assisted fertility interventions.

Our knowledge of unexplained infertility comes from experience of working in this field and not through any specific qualification. Alex has had extensive training in how to investigate infertility and support fertility in a more East/West integrated manner through the Advanced Diploma in Fertility Acupuncture and through her active engagement with the Fertility Support Trained Practitioner network. Gill has spent years deepening her knowledge and skills of women's pelvic health assessment and treatment.

We cannot promise success, even for clients that fully commit to working with us. We can promise to try our best, and for more difficult cases we will work with our network of fertility experts to try to help you to reach a satisfactory outcome.

Neither Gill nor I are medically trained doctors and if we notice anything that we feel warrants medical input we will ask you to contact your doctor and explain why so that you can advocate for yourself.

Essex Fertility Support & Guidance

Unexplained infertility is not a diagnosis, it is a term too easily handed out as a result of a lack of investigation and poor understanding of the causes of infertility.

- Low AMH in women under 40 cannot be used to predict poor egg quality or time to menopause - but yet that is often the interpretation you will be given.
- Male fertility is woefully underserved by the IVF clinics.
- Holistic support for Endometriosis can improve fertility to the point that natural conception is possible, and IVF much more likely to succeed.

Alex and Gill work together in Essex and in the City to support and guide people struggling with infertility. They merge current, evidence-based knowledge of the mechanics of fertility from a Western medicine perspective with a deep understanding about how to support fertility from a holistic perspective.

Alex brings her knowledge of fertility from a Chinese Acupuncture perspective, Gill brings her knowledge and understanding of the structures and tensions in the body and how these can impact fertility. Together they work to support and guide people through the maze of unexplained infertility and through the anxious weeks of early pregnancy, through birth preparation and post natal recovery.

