

## Chapter Two

### FEMALE INFERTILITY

When Julius Caesar first steps on the stage in William Shakespeare's play, his first words are commands regarding his wife's infertility:

Calpurnia! . . .

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Stand you directly in Antony's way

When he doth run his course. Antony. . .

Forget not, in your speed, Antony

To touch Calpurnia; for our elders say,

The barren, touched in this holy chase,

Shake off their sterile curse. (*Julius Caesar* 1.II.1-11).

The ritual Caesar describes is that of the Feast of Lupercal, a very ancient fertility rite. Priests would take strips of skin from a sacrificed goat, an animal reputed for its virility, and run around a course with it. Barren women would place themselves in position on the course to ensure that they would

be struck by the strip, because anyone so struck miraculously had her fertility awakened.

Today, the way we treat female infertility has changed. The fact that it never occurred to Calpurnia's husband that he might be partially responsible has not! But more about that in the next chapter.

Having your body do what you want it to do with ease, and not with dis-ease, is always about having a healthy body that has everything in balance. This simple rule is true of moving without arthritis, thinking without Alzheimer's, our heart beating without cardiovascular disease, and getting energy from our food without diabetes. It is just as true for having a baby. And since balancing the body into a state of harmonious, flourishing health always starts with what we eat, it should come as no surprise—though it does, because we rarely think of it this way—that fertility is greatly affected by diet. If you're trying to have a baby, then, while you're getting your house ready, get your baby's first house ready, too—and the best way to do that is through diet.

Though it may be a surprise to find that there is a fertility diet as much as there is a diabetes diet or a cholesterol diet, the diet itself holds no surprises. And that's not surprising. Being fertile is an offspring of being healthy, so the diet that's good for your body is the diet that's good for fertility. As with virtually every specialty diet, we can honestly say that the fertility diet is the very same diet you—and everyone else—should be on anyway.

## **Eating for Two**

So what's the diet? Starting in 1989, Dr. Walter Willett, Dr. Jorge Chavarro, and their colleagues at Harvard followed 18,555 women who were trying to become pregnant to see how what they ate affected their chances of becoming pregnant (the Nurses' Health Study). What they found was nothing short of . . . not surprising at all! When we got our first highly anticipated look at their research, Linda's first response was, "Yeah. That's exactly what I've been telling people in my clinic for years." What is ground-breakingly important about these researchers' work is not what they proved, but that they proved it. Up to now there has been an unbelievable scarcity of research on how what you eat affects fertility. So what natural healers have believed about food