

# BEFORE THE BUMP: A GUIDE ON CONCEIVING BABIES

Expert tips to help you maximise your chances of getting pregnant

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# EDITOR'S LETTER

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One productive couple I know had seven babies in a span of 11 years. On the other hand, a family friend who loves kids struggled for three years before she eventually conceived.

Another couple spent their hard-earned savings on fertility treatments but never got the baby they had always dreamed of.

This begs the question: Why do some couples have more misses than hits when it comes to making babies, while others seem to get pregnant any time?

Rising maternal age is one of the reasons why more women find it harder to conceive. That is why fertility experts often tell couples not to wait too long if they intend to grow their family.

If you're hoping for a baby, understanding how your body works and being in tune with your reproductive cycle can help you to maximise your chances of getting pregnant.

To help you along in your baby-making endeavours, we've put together a guidebook to help you optimise your fertility naturally.

Get tips and advice from Healthway Medical Group's experts on the dos and don'ts of conception, fertility charting and when to seek medical help. In addition, learn to separate the facts from common fertility myths.

For those who are considering pregnancy at a later age, read on to find out how age affects your chances of making a baby and the risks involved. Last but not least, we've also included a section on how traditional Chinese medicine can possibly help to give your fertility a boost.

Wishing you the best in your baby-making endeavour!



Georgia Tan

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# YOUR FIRST BABY STEPS TO FERTILITY

**You're ready to grow your family. Before you jump right in, Dr Claudine Tan, an obstetrics and gynaecology (O&G) specialist from SBCC Women's Clinic, offers tips on how you can boost fertility naturally.**

## **For mummies-to-be**

### **Zoom in on your fertile window**

To naturally boost your chances of pregnancy, time sexual intercourse as close to your ovulation as possible, advises O&G specialist Dr Claudine Tan. The perfect

timing would be 1 to 2 days before ovulation. The downside is that if you have irregular menstrual cycles, it may hard to predict your ovulation period.

That said, having sexual intercourse every 2 to 3 days is your best bet, says Dr Tan. That is because an egg can survive for only up to 24 hours while sperm can live in a woman's body for a few days.

### **Sooner is better than later**

When you are in your early 20s, you may be more focused on making your career work than making babies. However, Dr Tan says women are most fertile between the ages of 20 to 24. So don't wait if you intend to have a big family.

Your fertility declines when you reach 30, and it goes further downhill when you reach 35. While men's fertility also declines with age, the change is more gradual.

According to Dr Tan, the most common causes of female infertility are ovulation problems and blocked fallopian tubes – both of which tend to affect older women. Increasing age means that ovulation becomes more irregular, as well as a poorer quality of eggs. Other conditions that can affect fertility include fibroids which are extremely common in women in their 30s and endometriosis which can cause tubal blockage, says Dr Tan.

### **Watch your weight**

Being overweight or underweight can take a toll on a woman's fertility. According to Dr Tan, this is because it can cause a woman to have hormonal imbalances which may affect ovulation.

Although most overweight women can conceive without trouble, your chances of conception could be adversely affected if your Body Mass Index (BMI) is more than 30. Besides



having problems conceiving, obese women may also develop problems such as gestational diabetes, high blood pressure during pregnancy, as well as a more difficult labour and delivery, warns Dr Tan.

On the other hand, being underweight means you have less body fat, which could affect your ovulation. This could also lead to irregular periods. And if you are underweight during your pregnancy, you have an increased risk of having a low birth weight baby which could lead to future health problems for your child.

Dr Tan says the ideal BMI range for conception is between 18.5 and 22.9, based on the normal BMI range for Singapore adults. To calculate your BMI, divide your weight (in kg) by your height (in metres, squared).

### **Junk the unhealthy lifestyle**

Unwholesome lifestyle habits like cigarette smoking and excessive alcohol are bad enough for any individual's general health. Imagine the havoc it would wreak on your reproductive health.

According to Dr Tan, smoking and excessive alcohol intake are linked to miscarriages, low birth weight babies as well as premature delivery. Furthermore, excessive alcohol intake during pregnancy can lead to malformations in the baby and affect foetal development.

A stressful lifestyle can also affect a woman's chances of becoming pregnant. Dr Tan explains that this is because stress affects the part of the brain that regulates the hormone levels in our body. This part of the brain, called the hypothalamus, controls the hormones that in turn affect ovulation. It can also lower your sex drive and decrease your interest in making love.

Similar to women, a man's fertility may also be affected by stress. Dr Tan says, high levels of stress may decrease the sperm count. However more studies need to be done for more conclusive results.

### **Get off the couch and start being active**

Exercise helps keep excess weight in check, which is important in boosting your chances of conception.

Some moderate physical activities like brisk walking, leisure cycling, golfing and gardening may be able to help give fertility a boost, according to a new study by researchers from the Boston University School of Public Health.

A group of 3,000 women who were trying to conceive participated in the study. The findings revealed that moderate physical activity benefited women of normal, healthy weight but intensive workouts seemed to hinder conception in this group of women.

On the other hand, intensive exercise did not seem to affect the fertility of the group of women who were obese or overweight.

### **For daddies-to-be**

#### **Don't take your time**

Unlike women, men in their 60s or 70s are still able to father children

despite their advanced age. However, if you intend to start a family, this does not mean you should wait because male fertility does gradually decrease with age too.

As with women, the younger the man is, the more fertile he is, says Dr Tan. The quality of sperm is also better in a younger man compared to someone older.

According to Dr Tan, some studies have concluded that if a man is under the age of 25, his chances of conception taking more than a year is only 8 percent compared to 15 percent for someone who is over 35 years old.

### **Treat your sperm well**

In today's high-tech world, most of us are exposed to a gamut of electronic gadgets and bouts of high temperatures every day. For years, researchers have been investigating if such exposure will impair male fertility.

Testicles are located outside of the body and the most ideal temperature for producing the best-quality sperm is at a cooler-than-body temperature of 34.5 degrees Celsius, says Dr Tan.

According to Dr Tan, exposure to high temperature environments such as saunas or hot baths may affect the sperm's ability to mature, which would lead to poorer quality sperm and a decline in sperm production. However, these changes are usually temporary.

Laptop use has also been linked to higher testicular temperature, which may adversely affect sperm. For instance, a study published in Human Reproduction found that temperature in the scrotum

increased in laptop users. However, there is insufficient evidence to conclude that laptop use has an effect on male fertility.

### **Stub out**

Smoking is as devastating to men's fertility as in women.

Researchers from Portugal reviewed

studies on cigarette smoking and fertility, and found that smoking may lower sperm production and possibly damage DNA.

Here's another reason why Daddies-to-be should stub out: Even if a woman doesn't smoke, the ill effects of second-hand smoke can be equally devastating to fertility.

“ A healthy, well balanced diet and keeping alcohol intake in check are helpful in boosting fertility. Keeping a healthy weight can also improve male sperm quality. ”

– Dr Claudine Tan

### **About the doctor**

Dr Claudine Tan is a specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (O&G) practicing at SBCC Women's Clinic (Ang Mo Kio). Trained in gynaecological surgery such as abdominal, laparoscopic (key-hole), urogynaecological and pelvic floor repair, Dr Tan has experience in clinical and surgical obstetrics including antenatal ultrasound, natural childbirth and assisted delivery (caesarean, vacuum and forceps). Apart from regular participation at international O&G conferences, Dr Tan has also written several publications in recognised medical journals. Her other areas of expertise include birth control, family planning, fertility counselling and menopause treatment.

As a mother of two, Dr Tan understands the physical and emotional demands of pregnancy and childbirth. With focused antenatal care and thoughtful childbirth planning, she believes that every woman can enjoy all three trimesters of pregnancy, followed by painless and uncomplicated labour.

# THE BASICS OF CHARTING YOUR FERTILITY CYCLE



**The ideal timing for getting pregnant is 1 to 2 days before ovulation, but how can you tell if you are at your most fertile? Dr Claudine Tan, an obstetrics and gynaecology (O&G) specialist from SBCC Women's Clinic, shows you how to chart your fertility cycle.**

## **You only have one chance per cycle!**

Every month, you only have one chance to make a baby, when your body releases an egg from your ovaries. Unlike sperm which can live up to a few days in a woman's body, an egg has a shelf life of about 24 hours, says O&G specialist Dr Tan. Miss this window of opportunity, and you'll have to wait for another cycle to make a baby.

By charting your ovulation, you will have an idea of when your most fertile period is during your menstrual cycle and plan your baby-making schedule accordingly.

## **Watch the signs**

As every woman has different cycles, ovulation can vary. If you have a regular 28-day cycle, your fertile period would be around the mid-cycle, says Dr Tan. However, if you have an irregular or a longer cycle, your ovulation can occur at a different time.

Not all women will know when they ovulate as some do not experience symptoms. Others may notice certain changes to the body just before ovulation. They include:

- increased vaginal discharge with an egg-white consistency
- increased libido
- lower abdominal discomfort or bloatedness

## **How to track your fertility**

When you ovulate, changes in your body's hormone levels will cause a slight increase in your basal body temperature, says Dr Tan. Charting your body temperature monthly will give you an idea of when you are ovulating.

Your basal body temperature is your temperature when you wake up in the morning or after at least 3 hours of uninterrupted sleep, says Dr Tan. Fertility is at its peak when your temperature rises and in the few days prior to its peak. Do note that the difference in temperature is only less than 1 degrees Celsius.

Here's what you will need to do:

1. You will need to use a thermometer with a finer scale as the changes that you might observe are small.
2. Take your temperature before you get out of bed. This should

be done preferably using the same method and at the same time each morning before you have your breakfast.

### **Chart changes in your cervical mucus**

Another way to keep track of your fertility is to chart changes in your cervical mucus during your menstrual cycle. This will help you to be more in tune with your ovulation period, thereby increasing your chances of conception.

Your cervical mucus tends to be dry in the initial days after your menstruation. Thereafter, you might notice it becoming more wet and slippery.

After a few days, clear mucus strings appear. The mucus can appear stretched and it may seem “springy” between your fingers. Fertility is at its peak when the mucus is at its most wet and slippery. Once your fertile period is over, your mucus will revert to its drier, stickier form.

### **The downside**

According to Dr Tan, how successful you are in conceiving depends on whether you have charted your fertility correctly.

One of the downsides to fertility charting is that it can be a tedious chore to keep daily charts. There may be many factors that can confound your results too, says Dr Tan.

For example, if you are ill with a fever, your body temperature will definitely be high and this can skew your basal body temperature charting. Being too obsessed with fertility charting can sometimes be quite stressful, and that can take a toll on your baby-making activities.

### **About the doctor**

Dr Claudine Tan is a specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology (O&G) practicing at SBCC Women's Clinic (Ang Mo Kio). Trained in gynaecological surgery such as abdominal, laparoscopic (key-hole), urogynaecological and pelvic floor repair, Dr Tan has experience in clinical and surgical obstetrics including antenatal ultrasound, natural childbirth and assisted delivery (caesarean, vacuum and forceps). Apart from regular participation at international O&G conferences, Dr Tan has also written several publications in recognised medical journals. Her other areas of expertise include birth control, family planning, fertility counselling and menopause treatment.

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# YOU'RE 40. NOW WHAT?



**With more women delaying marriage and childbearing, it is no longer unusual to see women in their 40s pushing strollers and changing diapers for the first time.**

At an age when they could be parenting big kids or teenagers, older celebrity mums seem to have no problems popping kids. Actress Kelly Preston got pregnant at the ripe age of 47 while *Desperate Housewives*' star Marcia Cross had twins at 44.

Nearer to home, veteran actresses Zoe Tay and Huang Biren had babies after the age of 40. While it all seems like a breeze for these glamorous celebrity mummies, reality doesn't quite match up.

After all, says Dr Claudine Tan, an obstetrics and gynaecology (O&G) specialist from SBCC Women's Clinic, fertility dips drastically the moment a woman reaches the age of 35. This makes it a challenge for women over 40 years old to conceive naturally.

Even in an age of advanced medicine, age is also a huge factor as to whether assisted reproductive techniques like IVF are successful. An older woman has a lower chance of becoming pregnant through IVF compared to a younger one.

## **Know your risks**

According to Dr Ben Choey, an O&G specialist from SBCC Women's Clinic, women aged 35 and above are considered to be of "advanced maternal age".

Having a pregnancy at an advanced maternal age poses a host of risks to both the mother and foetus. For instance, the mother may experience a higher risk of developing pregnancy complications such as hypertensive disorders and gestational diabetes, spontaneous miscarriage, ectopic pregnancy and uterine fibroids.

Older mums may also have a higher risk of prolonged labour and a C-section delivery, which is also approximately 2 to 3 times more costly than a natural vaginal birth, says Dr Choey.

The developing foetus may also experience a higher risk of chromosomal abnormalities and low birth weight. At age 35, the risk of a woman giving birth to a baby with Down syndrome is approximately 1 in 350. At the age of 40, however, the risk increases to 1 in 80.

## How to cope with the risks

Even so, Dr Choey says there are ways to cope and minimise the risks of being an older mother. They include:

### Early prenatal care

It would be ideal for older women to screen for medical disorders and manage any pre-existing medical conditions early before conception.

### Adopt good dietary choices

Eating a healthy and wholesome diet is always a wise choice for anyone who intends to conceive. Consume food rich in vitamin B (folate) such as leafy vegetables, dried beans, liver and take prenatal folic acid supplements. Folic acid helps prevent neural tube birth defects in a developing foetus.

### Prenatal screening

Be up-to-date with your first and second trimester screening tests as they can screen for chromosomal abnormalities such as Down syndrome. For high-risk cases, further tests like amniocentesis and chorionic villi sampling may then be performed as advised by your doctor.

### Labor and delivery

When choosing a maternity hospital, opt for one with a specialised unit that can manage obstructed labour and provide close continuous fetal monitoring.

## About the doctor

Dr Ben Choey is a specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology practicing at SBCC Women's Clinic (Clementi). He has more than 10 years of working experience in the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology. During his medical career in a public hospital, Dr Choey accrued extensive experience in gynecological surgeries, and clinical and operative obstetrics, including antenatal ultrasound, operative and natural childbirth. His good track records have won him the Best Medical Officer Award and Best Registrar Award between 2005 and 2009. and pelvic floor repair, Dr Tan has experience in clinical and surgical obstetrics, including antenatal ultrasound, natural childbirth and assisted delivery (caesarean, vacuum and forceps). Apart from regular participation at international O&G conferences, Dr Tan has also written several publications in recognised medical journals.

## Older mum, better parent?

As age creeps up on you, your overall health may be affected. Dr Choey says older mums may find it more taxing to deal with a pregnancy especially if they are caring for a younger child at home.



However, latest research from the Institute of Child Health, University College London and Birkbeck College, London, have found that older mums may have better parenting skills despite the health risks of pregnancy.

The study compared 1,000 children born to women aged 40 and over, to children born to younger women in Britain. The findings revealed that children of older mothers were less likely to get into accidents or hospitalised and were no more at risk of obesity than children of younger mothers.

Dr Choey adds that older mothers are generally wiser and have more insights into life experiences, which may make for better parenting.

## Do your sums

Older expecting mothers generally have a higher risk of having a C-section birth and other pregnancy and delivery complications, says O&G specialist Dr Ben Choey. This may translate to a higher hospital bill. For instance, Dr Choey says the hospital bill for a C-section delivery may be 2 to 3 times the cost of a natural vaginal birth because of the higher delivery fees, longer hospital stay, the need for anaesthesia and cost of using the operating facilities. Being financially prepared can offer some peace of mind.

# FERTILITY MYTHS BUSTED!

**Would certain positions or standing on your head after sex really improve your chances of conceiving? If you've had a baby, does it mean you are able to conceive again easily? If you are confused about how the human reproductive system works, you are not alone.**

We got Dr Ben Choey and Dr Claudine Tan, to clear up the fog on fertility facts and myths.

**Infertility is always the woman's problem.**

**X Myth!**

Men, like women, are equally accountable for fertility woes. According to Dr Choey, both men and women each account for 35 to 40 percent of all fertility problems. The rest is due to unexplained infertility or a combination of both male and female factors.

Seek medical advice if you fail to conceive after trying for more than a year. However, Dr Choey says if the woman is above the age of 35, she should consult a gynaecologist if she does not conceive after trying for six months.

**Only older women get fertility problems.**

**X Myth!**

It is not true that fertility problems are limited to older women. Fertility declines when the woman reaches 30 years old and drops even more sharply after the age of 35. However, Dr Choey says younger women can also suffer from ovulation disorders,

pelvic inflammatory disease causing tubal disease, uterine fibroids, ovarian cysts and rarely, premature ovarian failure and congenital abnormalities of the womb, all of which can affect her chances of conceiving.

**I should be able to conceive easily because I am having regular periods.**

**Maybe...**

A woman who has regular monthly cycles is likely to have ovulatory cycles, says Dr Choey. However, having regular periods does not imply that tubal function and womb structure are normal, he adds. Furthermore, the average chance of conceiving in women with regular cycles is only 20 per cent each month.

## Ovulation always occurs on Day 14 of my menstrual cycle.

### **X Myth!**

Ovulation does not always happen on the 14th day of your menstrual cycle as some women have irregular cycles, says Dr Claudine Tan. According to Dr Choey, it can happen anytime between Day 11 and 21 since the last menstrual period, or 12 to 16 days from when you expect the next menstrual period to start. If your cycle intervals are only 21 days apart, ovulation may occur anytime between Day 3 to 11.

## I've had a previous baby. Getting pregnant again should be as easy as ABC.

### **Maybe...**

If you have had a previous baby, fertility problems may be lower on

the list. However, it also depends on when you first had your child. According to Dr Choey, maternal age is a major factor influencing pregnancy rates. Fertility problems are more common with increasing maternal age. If your previous birth was a caesarean birth, the chances of a future pregnancy are slightly lower too, he adds.

## Certain positions during sexual intercourse improve chances of conception.

### **Maybe...**

This remains scientifically unproven although there may be some logic to it. Theoretically, positions that are not anti-gravity or allow closer contact of sperm with the cervix improve the chances of conception, says Dr Choey.

To help sperm swim towards the uterus, certain positions such as

missionary position, hands and knees position, and elevating buttocks with a pillow after intercourse may help.

## You can only make a baby at the time of intercourse.

### **X Myth!**

While an egg can only survive for about 24 hours, sperm can live in a woman's reproductive tract for 2 to 3 days, says Dr Tan. This means that the couple could have intercourse a few days before ovulation, and the woman can still get pregnant afterwards!



Men, like women, are equally accountable for fertility woes. Both men and women each account for 35 to 40 percent of all fertility problems. The rest is due to unexplained infertility or a combination of both male and female factors.

– Dr Ben Choey



### **About the doctor**

Dr Ben Choey is a specialist in Obstetrics and Gynaecology practicing at SBCC Women's Clinic (Clementi). He has more than 10 years of working experience in the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology. During his medical career in a public hospital, Dr Choey accrued extensive experience in gynecological surgeries, as well as clinical and operative obstetrics including antenatal ultrasound, operative and natural childbirth. During his medical career in a public hospital, he was actively engaged in educating undergraduate and postgraduate medical students. His good track records have won him the Best Medical Officer Award and Best Registrar Award between 2005 and 2009. Dr Choey is also trained in medical aesthetics. He was accredited by the Aesthetics Practice Oversight Committee in aesthetic dermatological procedures and has performed aesthetic procedures including laser facial rejuvenation, ablative laser scar treatment, fillers for cheek and facial enhancements and Intense Pulse Light Therapy.

# THE TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE PERSPECTIVE



## **TCM physician Dr Zhang Lei explains how the ancient art of healing can help give your fertility a boost.**

Your health appears to be in tip top condition. Your periods are on schedule, and you are not using contraceptives. Yet, where is your baby?

In Western medicine, common culprits of infertility include medical conditions like endometriosis (a condition whereby tissue from the inner lining of the uterus ends up outside the pelvis, potentially blocking the egg from being fertilised), reproductive tract infections, ovulation problems and sperm disorders.

However, in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), physicians believe that infertility may be more than a physical problem with the reproductive system.

### **A holistic view on fertility**

TCM takes a holistic view at the various systems in the body, including the kidney, spleen, lungs, heart and liver systems. According to TCM philosophy, a married couple is considered to be infertile if they do not conceive after having sexual activity without protection for one year, says TCM physician Dr Zhang Lei of Zhang Lei Oncology & Specialist Centre.

He says that TCM research has shown that more than 80 percent of infertility problems are caused by a weak “shen”(肾虚), which could affect a woman’s natural menstrual cycle. According to Dr Zhang, the term “shen”(肾)in TCM does not only refer to the kidneys. It also takes into account a person’s overall growth and development from childhood, ageing process and reproductive ability – all of which represents one’s general wellbeing.

From experience, Dr Zhang says

common fertility problems among women include irregular periods and fibroids. He notes that many women also have “weak” uterus walls which are not at an optimal thickness for conception.

As for local men, many have poor sperm quality - a condition which Dr Zhang believes could be worsened by prolonged exposure to high temperature activities such as sauna use and wearing too-tight pants, etc.

### **Enhancing fertility with TCM**

According to Dr Zhang, regulating the body’s internal environment and balance can help make it more conducive for conception. One of the advantages of using TCM is that it is less painful, inconvenient and costly compared to artificial assisted-reproductive techniques, he says.

TCM physicians may employ a combination of methods such as tui na (therapeutic massage), acupuncture and medication to enhance fertility.

The benefits of acupuncture enhancing IVF treatment are

not without medical basis. A 2002 German study on women undergoing IVF treatments showed that the group which complemented acupuncture with IVF had a higher chance of becoming pregnant compared to the group which did not.

However in Dr Zhang's view, the most effective method of improving fertility is through the use of TCM herbs, which are specially tailored for each individual by a licensed TCM physician. They are not only useful in enhancing conception but also helpful to one's overall health.

### **Before you see the sinseh...(TCM physician)**

Before you consult a TCM physician, you should first see a Western specialist and have a thorough check up to address any physical problems you might have with your reproductive system. Conditions such as blocked fallopian tubes, ovarian cysts and fibroids should be rectified by a specialist before you attempt any TCM treatments, says Dr Zhang.

The same goes for men, who should also undergo screening tests to check for sperm disorders. While

TCM may possibly help improve poor sperm quality, it is not suitable for men with zero sperm count.

Committed patients with no fundamental physical reproductive issues should be able to see positive effects on their fertility after 3 to 6 months of TCM treatment, says Dr Zhang.

To reap the benefits of TCM fertility treatment, it is also best to consult a licensed and reputable TCM physician for any fertility issues instead of self-medicating as every person's constitution is different.

## **Recipes to boost your baby-making chances**

Enhance your fertility with these Chinese herbal soup recipes\* provided by TCM physician Dr Zhang Lei.

\*It is advisable to check with your doctor and a licensed TCM physician before taking these soups.

### **四物汤 Si Wu Soup**

According to Dr Zhang, this soup recipe can help to regulate menstruation, give the complexion a healthy glow and may also improve conditions such as dizziness as it helps to nourish the blood. Consuming Si Wu soup regularly can help to improve the womb condition. This recipe should not be taken during menstruation and pregnancy.

Ingredients needed:

- Chinese angelica root (当归) 10grams
- ligusticum rhizome (川芎) 10 grams
- White Paeony Root (白芍) 10 grams
- Chinese foxglove root (熟地) 10 grams
- 1 whole chicken

Cooking directions:

- Add the herbs to boiling water and let it brew until fragrant.
- Add the chicken (cut into smaller sections) and simmer it with the herbs. Simmer for about one hour.
- Serve the soup hot. Drink it on an empty stomach.



### **五子衍宗汤 Wu Zi Yan Zhong Soup**

This soup recipe can help to improve libido, as well as sperm quality, says Dr Zhang. It can also enhance general health and has anti-ageing properties. For best, Dr Zhang says both men and women should consume the soup.

Ingredients needed:

- Wolfberry fruit (枸杞子) 12 grams

- Raspberry (菟丝子)10 grams
- Plantago (覆盆子)12 grams
- Dodder seed (车前子)6 grams
- Schisandra (五味子)6 grams
- Tibia 500 grams
- Onion and ginger

Cooking directions:

- Using a clean cloth, wrap the 5 seeds up together.
- Parboil Tibia, and then wash it clean.
- Put all the ingredients and Tibia in a clay pot, add onion and ginger. Boil all the ingredients.
- Add a little salt before serving the soup hot.

\* These recipes are not medications. It is advisable to consult your doctor before consuming these soups.

### **About the doctor**

Dr Zhang Lei is a Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) physician practicing at Zhang Lei Clinic Centre and Zhang Lei Oncology & Specialist Centre. His qualifications include a MBBS degree from Tianjin Medical University (China), Qualification of Medical Doctor's Certification (China) and a Master's Degree from the National University of Singapore. Dr Zhang has had experience working at the department of medical oncology at Singapore General Hospital. Due to his unique TCM and Western medical training and experience, Dr Zhang has given talks on health education and appeared in the media.

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