

Is fish the food of love and babies?

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Trying to have a baby? Eating fish might help.

Researchers interviewed 501 couples who were trying to get pregnant without medical assistance. All kept diaries on their diet and other health and behavioural habits, including fish consumption and frequency of sexual intercourse. They followed the pairs for a year or until pregnancy.

They found that men who had

who ate fish twice a week or more were pregnant, compared with 79% among those who ate less.

The study, in the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism, controlled for age, education level, smoking, alcohol intake, physical activity and other factors. The mechanism remains unclear.

"Seafood may help in semen quality, ovulation and other markers," said the lead author,

Audrey J Gaskins, a research associate at Harvard. "Or maybe these couples are the ones spending more time together. But if it's fish that's bringing them together, that's still causal, although through a behavioural pathway, not a biological one."

"Women have been scared off fish because of the concerns about mercury, but there are low levels of contaminants in the seafood we commonly eat — canned tuna, salmon, shrimp and other shellfish." NYT NEWS SERVICE

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of eating fish with pregnancy persisted even after controlling for frequency of lovemaking.

By 12 months, 92% of couples