



Helping Your Fertility

Male

How is Male Fertility Evaluated?

A semen analysis is the initial step. The semen is normally collected in a sterile container by masturbation. The semen test gives important information about the number, movement and shape (known as morphology) of sperm.

If the semen analysis reveals problems with the sperm count, movement and/or shape, a repeat test is generally arranged to confirm the problem. Illness or medications three months prior to the test can impair sperm ejaculated on the day of examination. If the repeat is abnormal further tests may include:

- A blood test to check your fertility hormones.
- Ultrasound scan of the scrotum to detect any possible blockage.
- Genetic tests in some cases, which will help assess any potential additional “heritable” risks to your children.

Results of the relevant selected tests, along with a discussion of your medical history and personal wishes will help the doctor to guide you to the best treatment options.

Improving Your Chances

Lifestyle Factors

Quit Smoking/Recreational Drug Use

- Smoking is associated with reduced sperm quality and men who are trying to conceive should consider stopping immediately.
- Recreational drugs and anabolic steroids are associated with impaired sperm function and should be avoided.

Cut Back on Alcohol

- Avoid excessive alcohol intake as it can cause erectile dysfunction, reduce your libido and affect semen quality. Do not regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week (6 pints of beer, 6 glasses of wine (175ml per glass) or 14 single measure spirits (25ml per measure)).
- Consuming more than 6 standard drinks in one sitting is considered binge drinking. Visit drinkaware.ie for more information.

Keep Cool

- The testes should be a couple of degrees cooler than the rest of the body for maximum sperm production.
- Some studies suggest that wearing tight underwear may raise the temperature around the scrotum and cause a decrease in sperm quality.
- Avoid frequent hot baths, heated car seats, saunas or laptops on the lap.

Regular Exercise

- Whether you are overweight or not, regular exercise improves the likelihood of a healthy pregnancy. A 45-minute walk/8000 steps per day is recommended along with some vigorous activity a few times per week e.g., running and playing sport.

Other Lifestyle Factors

- There are other lifestyle factors you should think about, including your stress levels and sleep. It's important to notice when you are feeling stressed or anxious and to have your own coping mechanisms, e.g., running, lifting weights and meditating.
- Sleep hygiene involves creating an evening routine to allow yourself to become tired and fall asleep.
 - Turn off your screens an hour before bed.
 - Go to bed at a reasonable time.
 - Do not drink caffeine after a certain point in the day.
 - Be mindful that the ambient temperature in your bedroom is not too high.

A man's fertility reflects his general health. Men who live a healthy lifestyle are more likely to produce healthy sperm. Additionally, it's also very important to remember that it can take just three months to improve sperm.

Dietary Factors

Healthy Diet

- Research shows that obesity is linked to impaired sperm production and can affect the health of the foetus. This is because obesity can create changes in the genes that are passed onto your child.
- Recent studies suggest that antioxidants have a beneficial effect on male infertility by protecting sperm from damage. Antioxidants such as vitamins E and C are found in most multi-vitamins. Fruits and vegetables also provide a natural source of antioxidants and should be part of a balanced and healthy diet.

Nutrition Recommendations from our Dietitian

Nutritional Do's

7 portions of fruit and vegetables each day. Eating different coloured fruits and vegetables offers different vitamins and minerals.

Shellfish, white fish and oily fish. Eating more seafood increases intake of important nutrients for sperm health.

Plant proteins. Eating more beans, peas, lentils, nuts and seeds helps to increase both protein and fibre intake.

Healthy fats. Eating unsaturated fats e.g., nuts, seeds, oily fish and olive oil helps to improve sperm health.

Antioxidant-rich foods. Eating more berries, nuts, seeds, herbs and spices will help to protect and improve fertility.

Vitamin D. Take a supplement (5-10mcg) from October – March as low levels of vitamin D have been associated with reduced sperm quality.

Nutritional Don'ts

Saturated fat. Lower intake of takeaway foods, fatty cuts of meat, biscuits, crisps and sweets.

Processed meat. Reduce consumption of ham, rashers, sausages, chorizo and salami.

Added sugars. Try to avoid snacking on cakes, buns and chocolate.

Caffeine. Watch caffeine intake e.g., tea, coffee and energy drinks.

For more information/advice from a registered dietitian that specialises in fertility please email the team at info@orlawalshnutrition.ie

