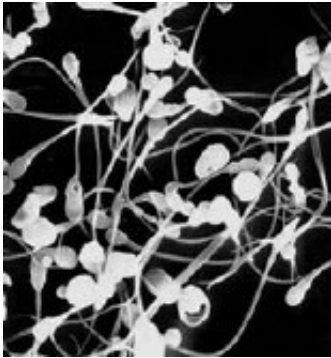


Coming soon: At-home sperm test for couples trying to conceive

March 9 2012, By Madonna Behen, HealthDay Reporter



But experts say that in some cases, it may give men false sense of their reproductive health.

(HealthDay) -- Women who are trying to conceive often use at-home products such as ovulation predictors and pregnancy tests, but the newest do-it-yourself test to help couples have a baby is for their male partners: A 10-minute test that can determine if a man's sperm count is normal or not.

SpermCheck Fertility, which retails for about \$40, is currently sold online at Walgreens and CVS, and is scheduled to hit drug store shelves in April.

The manufacturers say the product fills an important need since many men may be reluctant or unwilling to see a doctor. But some experts in

[male infertility](#) say the [test](#) is no substitute for a complete medical evaluation, and they worry that it may give some men a false sense of security.

"What this test is simply telling you is if you have enough sperm in the sample to trigger a chemical reaction," explained Dr. Joseph Alukal, director of male reproductive health & benign diseases of the prostate at NYU Langone Medical Center in New York City. "What it's not doing is looking at how well those sperm are moving or the shape or appearance of those sperm, and these factors can be important as well."

An estimated 15 percent of couples are considered infertile, which is defined as failing to conceive a child after a least a year of well-timed intercourse. According to the American Urologic Association, a male factor is solely responsible in about 20 percent of infertile [couples](#) and contributes to another 30 percent to 40 percent of cases.

To do the test, a man mixes his semen with a solution and then drops the mixture onto a test strip. If a reddish line appears in the result window, his sperm count is at least 20 million per milliliter, which is considered normal. If no line appears, his [sperm count](#) is below 20 million per milliliter, or low.

Alukal added that a full medical evaluation for infertility is also an important window into a man's overall health.

"Women who are trying to get pregnant usually see their ob-gyns at least once a year, but a lot of guys don't have a primary doctor, and I might be the first doctor they've seen in 10 or 15 years." he said. "We're fighting an uphill battle when it comes to getting men to go the doctor, and I'm concerned that this may be just one more barrier."

Another male infertility specialist agreed. "There are a lot of other

medical conditions that are often found in the process of working up male infertility, such as cancer, diabetes, low testosterone levels or thyroid disorders," said Dr. Pravin Rao, director of reproductive medicine and surgery at the Johns Hopkins James Buchanan Brady Urological Institute in Baltimore.

"Just in the last four months, I've had four patients who presented with infertility and were then diagnosed with testicular cancer," Rao added. "Delaying that doctor visit could be a life-changer.

"For a small subset of men who haven't been trying for a year and are concerned that there might be a problem, this test may be beneficial because it has the potential of finding a problem earlier," Rao noted. But he added that men who get a normal result but are still not successful at getting their partners pregnant should see a doctor for a comprehensive [medical evaluation](#).

"What I often tell my patients is that the female side of [infertility](#) treatments can be invasive, time-consuming and expensive, and that's why we need to make sure we get the most useful data we can in order to help guide those treatment decisions," Rao said.

More information: For more on male infertility, go to the [U.S. National Library of Medicine](#).

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