

Men have a lot to learn about their own fertility

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The first large-scale study of its kind has revealed that Canadian men generally lack knowledge about the risk factors contributing to male infertility. Research led by Dr. Phyllis Zelkowitz, head of psychosocial research at the Lady Davis Institute of the Jewish General Hospital, found that men could only identify about 50% of the potential risks and medical conditions that are detrimental to their sperm count and, thus, their prospects to father children. While risk factors such as cancer, smoking, and steroid use were more commonly known, other modifiable risks like obesity, frequent bicycling, and frequent use of a laptop on your lap, were not on their radar.

This study, published in *Human Reproduction*, highlights the fact that this general lack of knowledge was true for men across all age groups, education and income levels.

"Men aren't as inclined to ask questions about their health, so it stands to reason that they would be less well informed about their fertility," explains Dr. Zelkowitz, the Director of Research in the Department of Psychiatry at the JGH and Associate Professor of Psychiatry at McGill University. Nonetheless, about a third of the men surveyed expressed concerns about their fertility, and almost 60% wanted to learn more about this issue.

Most men express the desire for fatherhood at some point in their lives. "Infertility can be devastating for people," Dr. Zelkowitz says. "When men can't have children, or have to undertake very expensive treatments,

it can have a grave psychological impact. It can lead to depression and put severe stress on relationships." With rates of infertility having increased in the past 20 years, greater awareness of [risk factors](#) and [medical conditions](#) associated with infertility can lead to early and preventive interventions to enable men to achieve their reproductive goals.

By shedding light on the issue, the researchers hope to stimulate a dialogue about male fertility and inspire health educators and health care practitioners to provide universal public education to promote reproductive health among men from a young age so that they can take the necessary steps to protect their fertility.

This study can be found in the November issue of *Human Reproduction*.

Provided by McGill University

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