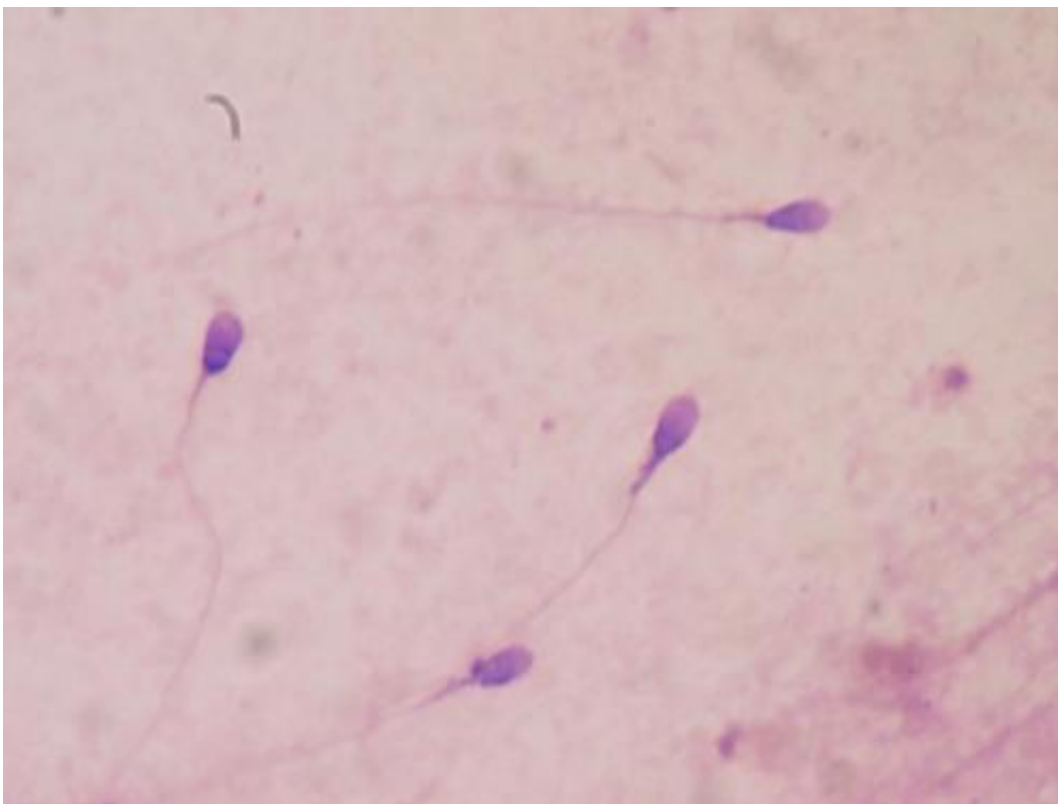


What men need to know about planning a family

October 3 2017, by From Mayo Clinic News Network, Mayo Clinic News Network



Human sperm stained for semen quality testing in the clinical laboratory. Credit: Bobjgalindo/Wikipedia

Having children can sometimes be a crapshoot. Some couples achieve pregnancy on the first try, while other can try for years with no success.

Mayo Clinic urologist and fertility specialist Dr. Landon Trost says there are things men can do to improve their odds.

"In general, the lower the [sperm count](#), typically, the harder time you'll have to achieve a pregnancy," Trost says.

He says you can now get over-the-counter sperm count tests. Ideally, you want more than 55 million sperm.

To improve your sperm count, he says lay off tobacco and alcohol. They can have a modest impact.

You should definitely avoid drugs like cocaine and marijuana, as they can significantly decrease your [sperm count](#).

Some legal drugs can too.

"So, either [prescription medicines](#), or even ones that you can now get over the counter for reflux diseases or heartburn-type conditions," Trost says. "Those often impair fertility as well."

The best thing you can do is improve your overall health.

"Getting yourself, of course, in the best fitness, in shape and losing weight, those probably have some impact as well," Trost says.

He says men should also consider intriguing new research about the impact of a person's choices on their future children.

"So, you may still be able to achieve a [pregnancy](#), but if you take high levels of alcohol, for example, or are morbidly obese or other things, you children often will face some of those same issues," Trost says.

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Citation: What men need to know about planning a family (2017, October 3) retrieved 4 June 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-10-men-family.html>

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