

Boosting male fertility

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Conversations around fertility are often centered around women. Infertility is not just an issue occurring among females; males also experience infertility. A Baylor College of Medicine urologist explains the factors affecting male fertility.

"With fertility, you can't finger point. It's not a male or female problem as much as it needs to be considered a couple's problem," said Dr. Larry Lipshultz, professor in the Scott Department of Urology and member of the Dan L Duncan Comprehensive Cancer Center at Baylor. "Both partners need equal evaluation, not just the woman, which is usually where the focus is placed."

Symptoms

Infertility in men does not present symptoms. There is no real way to know about infertility unless you experienced an accident involving the testicles or specific surgeries. The only sign for infertility is not being able to get someone pregnant. A fertility test can determine this.

Age

A gradual decrease in fertility occurs in men, typically over the age of 50. The decrease in fertility is not equivalent to a cessation in fertility (menopause) among women. Men do not experience [infertility](#) immediately, but subfertility, which indicates a delay in conceiving.

Producing healthy sperm

Anything that is good for overall health is good for [sperm production](#), and anything detrimental to health has a negative effect on it. No specific vitamins are required to make an effect on fertility, but antioxidants are good and helpful, according to Lipshultz.

Obesity is not good for sperm production, so specialists might put patients on weight loss programs in an effort to improve their hormone production.

"The issue with obesity is that fat metabolizes testosterone to estrogen, which is bad for sperm production," he said. "Generally, trying to maintain a good bodyweight through exercise and proper diet is going to be helpful."

Risk factors

While testosterone is necessary for sperm production, it must be your own testosterone. If you take outside testosterone in any form, it turns off the hormones that stimulate sperm production. If you need testosterone, there are ways to take it under a specialist's care to not harm sperm production.

Avoid direct heat to testicles, such as a hot tub, heating pad or a cell phone in your pocket. Environmental heat is not a problem that affects fertility.

Chemotherapy, radiotherapy and new drugs called biologics can be detrimental to sperm production.

Men who have problems with fertility are at a much higher risk of all comorbid conditions, including cancer and even mortality.

"If you're in the reproductive age group and you have some type of problem that requires medication, check with your physician that this is not going to hurt your sperm production. If you are in a situation that this is going to be permanent, make sure you bank your sperm," Lipshultz said.

Fertility test

A semen analysis will show whether you have the correct number of

sperm and if they move sufficiently. Newer tests can also see if the [sperm](#) are functionally normal to determine if they have the capability of fertilizing. At-home tests are also available, but they can be misleading.

If a male is infertile and trying to reproduce, he should visit a urologic specialist in the area of male reproductive health.

"Men need to take better care of themselves. Women have a doctor from their [teenage years](#) for the most part for menstrual health, birth control and more," Lipshultz said. "Men often don't regularly see a physician, and by the time we see them for urologic problems, reproductive problems or men's health in general, it may be too late."

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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