

Semen Analysis



Does this test have other names?

Semen testing, Sperm count

What is this test?

This is a series of tests that looks at how healthy a man's semen and sperm are.

Male infertility is often caused by low sperm count, abnormal sperm movement, or weak sperm. If you and your partner are trying to conceive, the results of this test can help you figure out the next steps you may want to take.

Why do I need this test?

You may need this test if you and your partner haven't been able to conceive.

You may also need this test if you've recently had a vasectomy. A vasectomy prevents pregnancy by keeping sperm separate from semen during ejaculation. Your healthcare provider can use this test to find out whether the vasectomy was successful.

If you had a reverse vasectomy, your provider can also use this test to see if it was successful.

What other tests might I have along with this test?

Your healthcare provider might also do a physical exam and a detailed health history. You may also have genetic tests or tests on your endocrine glands.

What do my test results mean?

Test results may vary depending on your age, gender, health history, and other things. Your test results may be different depending on the lab used. They may not mean you have a problem. Ask your healthcare provider what your test results mean for you.

The normal ranges for each procedure, according to the World Health Organization, are:

- Volume: Greater than 1.5 milliliters (mL)
- pH, or acidity: 7.2 to 7.8
- Sperm count: 39 million sperm per ejaculate or more)
- Sperm progressive motility, or the ability to move rapidly: Greater than 32% actively moving
- Sperm morphology, or the sperm's shape and size: Greater than 4% normally shaped

If your results are different, you may have decreased fertility. But it's possible for men with lower sperm counts to be fertile, and men with high sperm counts to be subfertile.

How is this test done?

This test is done with a semen sample. The sample can be collected in different ways. The most common and reliable way is to ejaculate into a sterile container in a private room at your healthcare provider's office. You can

also collect the sample at home by ejaculating into a condom that has no additives or lubricants. But the sample must be kept at body temperature and delivered to the lab within an hour after ejaculation.

Other methods may be used to collect the sample. For example, your healthcare provider may use a vacuum device fitted around your penis to increase blood flow to your penis, resulting in ejaculation. If you have a spinal cord injury, a vibrator may be used to encourage ejaculation.

Semen can vary in quality, so you may need to provide two samples within a week or two.

Does this test pose any risks?

This test poses no known risks.

What might affect my test results?

Using lubricants or condoms containing a lubricant can affect the results of your test. Other things that may affect your semen analysis include alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, or other recreational drugs. Some prescription medicines, such as cimetidine, or herbal medicines, such as St. John's wort, can also affect the results of a semen analysis.

How do I get ready for this test?

For the most accurate test results, don't have sex for 2 to 7 days. Be sure your healthcare provider knows about all medicines, herbs, vitamins, and supplements you are taking. This includes medicines that don't need a prescription and any illegal drugs you may use.

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