

Fertility

Male Fertility

Understanding sperm count

It's generally considered that you need a sperm count of at least 20 million per ml to achieve natural conception and of course it's not just the number important. According to the World Health Organisation, to maximise your fertility at least 30% need to be of normal shape and form, and 50% should be actively moving. Sperm count can vary greatly for an individual, even over just a few days which is why it's important to get at least 2-3 samples analysed, spaced 2-3 weeks apart. The most common cause of male infertility is an obstruction in the tubes that carry sperm or testicular injury. It can also be caused by sperm disorders, genetic irregularities, hormonal problems, erectile dysfunction, disease, ill health and as a side effect of medication. Needless to say, the usual suspects, poor diet, smoking, alcohol and recreational drugs also play a part in lowering sperm count and quality.

Is our environment threatening male fertility?

Numerous articles have suggested that sperm counts are falling and that male fertility is in decline. One of the most widely reported papers in 1992 concluded that the average sperm count had dropped by 42% over the last 40 years, and more recent studies confirm the drop to be as high as 50%. Many scientists are starting to link this to environmental factors such as the proliferation of xeno-oestrogens which are substances that mimic the action of oestrogen in the body. Sources include: PCB's; dioxins used in paper manufacturing; alkylphenols found in industrial and domestic detergents; compounds found in plastics such as bisphenol-A and thalates; lindane a pesticide residue found on cereals, soft fruits and cabbage; and vinclozolin a fungicide used on food.

Improving sperm health

Sperm production is driven by the male hormone testosterone. Being exposed to long term stress can result in adrenal exhaustion, this can suppress testosterone production and result in reduced sperm quantity and quality. Using a simple saliva test called a Comprehensive Adrenal Stress Test, we can assess whether the stress you experiencing is affecting your physiology and production of testosterone.

There are many nutritional factors which influence sperm production. Studies have linked both omega-3 fatty acids and zinc deficiencies to low sperm count. Zinc is needed for healthy testosterone production. The protein arginine has also been shown to be involved with sperm cell

production. CoQ10, a powerful antioxidant involved in cellular metabolism, has been shown to increase sperm count and motility and vitamin C protects sperm from toxic damage and decay whilst actively preventing agglutination or clumping, a condition where sperm cells literally stick to each other.

So you see if you can clean up your lifestyle and reduce your alcohol intake, stop smoking, reduce the amount of stress you are exposed, and eat a healthy balanced diet full of nutrient rich foods, you can start to increase your sperm quantity and quality