

Further information



Get in touch

If you have any questions or concerns about any of the issues mentioned in this leaflet please contact the unit on 0114 226 8050.

Further useful information can be found at NHS Choices - www.nhs.uk

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Factors affecting men (cont)

Medication

Some drugs prescribed by your doctor may affect your fertility, so it is very important that you let us know if you are on any medication. If you are taking prescribed drugs and you are worried that they may be affecting your fertility do not stop taking the medication without first consulting your doctor. Please let us know if you think that your medication may be having an effect on your sperm.

Steroids

Studies have shown that using anabolic steroids can have a severely harmful effect on sperm quality. Depending on the duration and dose of anabolic steroid used, sperm production may return to normal. This is likely to take several months and in severe cases the damage may be permanent. It is extremely important that you let us know if you are taking, or have taken in the past, anabolic steroids, protein shakes or muscle-building supplements, even if you have bought them from a reputable gym and you do not think they contain steroids.

Recreational drugs

Some recreational drugs can severely damage sperm quality and numbers. We strongly advise anyone trying to achieve a pregnancy not to use such substances.

Illness

Sperm are stored within the testicles, which are situated outside the body so that they do not overheat. If sperm become too hot over a long period of time then they may not survive.

Therefore, if you have been ill and have had a high fever, the number of healthy sperm may decrease, but after a few weeks the levels should return to normal. More serious illnesses, and the methods used to treat them, may have more lasting effects on sperm quality. Please inform a member of staff if you have been unwell during the 3 months prior to your semen analysis test or treatment cycle.

Occupation

Over the years scientists have been trying to find out if certain chemicals used in the workplace can have a harmful effect on sperm. Currently it is known that some pesticides, solvents and heavy metals may cause sperm count to decrease. Men most likely to be at risk of infertility due to their work environment are those who have been exposed to very high levels of these substances without sufficient protection.

Men who have jobs that involve sitting down for most of the day (eg. taxi or long distance lorry drivers) may have a reduced number of healthy sperm due to the testicles becoming too warm for long periods of time and their fertility may be reduced as a result.

Other factors

In recent years it has been suggested that boxer shorts may be the best type of underwear to maximise fertility, since they may keep the testicles cooler than other types. However, there is little evidence that this is actually the case.

It was also thought that taking showers rather than long hot baths may help fertility but, again, there is little evidence to support this idea.



Jessopfertility

Bringing hope to life

**Preconception
advice**

*Making the best
of your fertility*

Look after yourself

Looking after yourself

A healthy body is more likely to produce healthy sperm, eggs and embryos.

There are things that you can do to make the best of your fertility:

- Eat a healthy, balanced diet, especially foods high in antioxidants (eg. fresh fruit and vegetables, including berries, broccoli and tomatoes; decaffeinated green tea; whole grains)
- Take regular exercise
- Stop smoking and avoid using e-cigarettes
- Cut down on your alcohol intake
- Do not use recreational drugs including exercise performance enhancing drugs

We advise women to take folic acid and vitamin D while trying to conceive and throughout their pregnancy. For men, there is some evidence that selenium, folic acid, zinc and vitamin E can improve sperm quality.

If you decide to take any diet supplements then it is vital that you do not exceed the recommended daily dose. We also strongly advise that you do not take any unlicensed preparations (for example herbal supplements) that claim to help fertility because there is little scientific evidence that they are effective and in some cases they may be harmful. If you are not sure please ask a member of our team for advice.

Factors affecting women



What factors can affect eggs, embryos and pregnancy?

There are several factors which may affect egg and embryo quality as well as having an effect on the health of your baby.

Folic acid

Folic acid reduces the risk of Spina Bifida in babies. We recommend you take 400 micrograms of Folic acid daily for three months before conception and up to the 12th week of pregnancy. There are some circumstances where we recommend a higher dose of folic acid (5mg per day). We will discuss this at your consultation if it is applicable to you. There are special formulations of tablets for women wanting to become pregnant - these often contain other vitamins, which can be useful. We recommend that you take 10 micrograms of Vitamin D per day.

Rubella

Rubella (German Measles) can cause harm to your baby in early pregnancy. You should therefore make sure that your immunity to Rubella has been checked recently. Your GP will usually be able to arrange this test.

Cervical Smear

You should make sure that you are up to date with your cervical smear tests.

Weight

Women who are under or overweight may have a reduced chance of the treatment being successful. Before treatment you should try and make sure your weight is within the normal range. Calculation of your body mass index (BMI) is a good way to check if you are a healthy weight. If you are unsure about your BMI then ask and we will calculate it for you.

Smoking and e-cigarettes

Smoking not only reduces the chance of treatment working but it also affects the health of your baby. Partners are also advised to stop smoking due to the passive effect of smoking. For help and support contact the Sheffield stop smoking service on 0114 226 5627 or the NHS Pregnancy Smoking helpline on 0800 169 9169.

At the moment very little is known about the effects of e-cigarettes on conception and pregnancy, so we recommend that you do not use them.

Alcohol

The Department of Health recommend that you should completely avoid drinking alcohol if you are trying to become pregnant and during pregnancy.

Medicines

If you are taking any medicines, whether prescribed or not, you must tell us before treatment. We would want to make sure that any medication taken does not interact with any of the drugs used during your treatment.

Alternative therapies

Whilst there is little evidence that alternative treatments are beneficial we are happy for you to have acupuncture, reflexology and hypnotherapy. Caution is required with aromatherapy. Some essential oils should be avoided if you are trying to conceive. Do not take any herbal or 'alternative' remedies without checking with a member of the medical team.

Factors affecting men



What factors can affect sperm quality?

There are several reasons why sperm quality may be reduced and these include:

Smoking

If you are a smoker then your sperm can be affected in many ways. Although your body may still produce a good number of sperm, those that are produced are more likely to be poor swimmers and may contain abnormal genetic material. Until we have more information on e-cigarettes and the effect on sperm quality we would advise that you do not use them.

Alcohol

Moderate alcohol intake is unlikely to have a harmful effect on your sperm. However, if you are a heavy drinker then your sperm may be more likely to be abnormal and to be poor swimmers. The current recommendation is that you should not regularly drink more than 3-4 units of alcohol per day.

(continued overleaf)