

Fertility Solutions Offers Free Educational Seminars

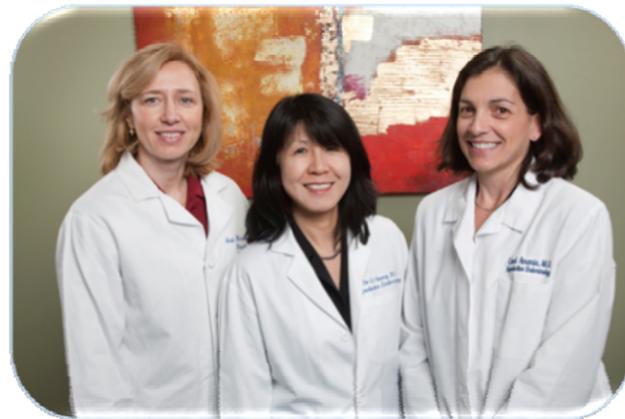
The internet can be an empowering tool for patients to gather information about infertility and the most up to date treatments available. It also helps connect patients and their families with others who may be suffering from the same condition, share stories, and even offer suggestions on what did or did not work for them. Unfortunately, sometimes the medical information is inaccurate or outdated. Imagine if you could ask questions and get answers in real time from board-certified physicians? Fertility Solutions™ has made it possible! Fertility Solutions™ physicians host periodic online inter-



877-813-0159

active seminars and educational seminars at their Dedham location, available to any and everyone who has questions about infertility-for free. Each month the topic changes, from ovulatory disorders to IVF, to tubal reversals and more, the doctors' at Fertility Solutions know you have questions, and want to give you answers...100% free. Whether you choose to tune in from home or would like to RSVP to one of our live seminars, join us, ask questions and meet other people venturing down similar paths. To join in or learn more, visit our website at www.fertilitiesolutionsne.com.

Fertility Solutions™ is dedicated to helping women and couples overcome infertility. Founding Doctors' Anania, Kowalik and Huang are all board certified in Reproductive Endocrinology and OB/Gyn. Together, these "top doctors" have more than fifty years of clinical experience and have helped build thousands of families.



"Having a child is one of life's greatest gifts; we aspire to bring that joy to each and every one of our patients"

The doctors at Fertility Solutions are accepting new patients. Call 877-813-0159 to schedule a consultation with a board-certified specialist.

The information contained herein is not a substitute for medical advice from your doctor, as it is for informational purposes only. This newsletter is written and maintained by Amy DaSilva, MLT with edits and medical review by Carol Anania, M.D. Your feedback or article suggestions are welcome, email amy.dasilva@yourfertilitiesolutions.com

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The Male Factor: What You Should Know When You're Trying to Conceive

When you've been trying to conceive for longer than you anticipated, you should turn to your doctor. While many pregnancies are achieved with little or no medical assistance, many couples do have difficulty. Seeing your OB/GYN early in the game is your best bet for reassurance, or for the recommendation to see a fertility specialist sooner. While you may be inclined to dance your way back to your car after getting a thumbs-up from your OB/GYN and a refill on your prenatal vitamins, remember it does take two. So if it continues to take months upon months of trying without success, you may consider an evaluation for male factor infertility. Male factor infertility can be fairly easy to diagnose once a semen analysis is performed, but this important step is sometimes overlooked or put off. Anxiety and embarrassment about the test itself, or fear of the results may delay diagnosis or treatment. Many men fear that a lack of fertility affects their masculinity (so not true!). Many people still view infertility as a woman's problem, but it is clearly not. According to the CDC, one third of all infertility cases are related to female problems, one third are comprised of male factor conditions, and the remaining third are due to a combination of both or unexplained (idiopathic) infertility. While women can track their menstrual cycles and try at-home ovulation predictor kits, it may be harder to 'suspect' male issues, but there may be subtle clues. Smoking, excessive alcohol use and obesity can negatively impact male fertility. In addition, some clues that may lead you to suspect a male factor are:

- **Low libido or difficulty maintaining an erection.** While both can be caused by stress if experienced only rarely, these problems could also indicate a hormonal or anatomical problem that could be causing infertility if they are experienced often.
- **Sparse body hair, low muscle tone, breast growth (gynecomastia) or small testicles.** While some men are naturally hairier or more muscular than others, being less so doesn't mean infertility per se, but some genetic and hormone abnormalities can cause a lack of hair, muscle and smaller testicles. Think of testicles as ovaries- they need to contain the cells

Cont'd, Please see *Male Infertility* on pg 2



Myths and Facts about Male Fertility

MYTH: Wearing briefs causes infertility.

FACT: While underwear choices don't play a role in fertility, heat does. Restrictive clothing that increases body temperature can have a negative impact on sperm. Testicles hang outside the body for a reason- sperm cannot withstand high temperatures. Avoidance of hot tubs or other unnecessary exposure to high temperatures is necessary to optimize sperm quality.

MYTH: Once a man has a vasectomy, he is sterile for life.

FACT: Vasectomies are indeed reversible. Surgery to reconnect the vas deferens is available, as are procedures to extract sperm directly from the testicles (TESA procedure).

MYTH: Paternal age doesn't affect fertility.

FACT: While it is true that men make new sperm every day, even late in life, the quality of the sperm produced can be poorer. After age 40, testosterone levels tend to decline, and lower motility and a higher number of abnormally shaped sperm can be present. In addition, the older the man the higher the risk for disorders such as autism and schizophrenia in their offspring.

Male Infertility (From Page 1)

necessary for reproduction and they need to secrete hormones, if they seem abnormally small there could be a problem. Another clue is gynecomastia, or male breast growth that can indicate hormonal imbalances.

- **Absence of ejaculation with orgasm.** While a normal ejaculate is only a 2 -3 milliliters it should contain millions of sperm. If your partner is able to orgasm without releasing seminal fluid, or only releases a super-small amount (a drop or two) it could be an anatomical factor such as retrograde ejaculation (the ejaculate goes into the bladder instead of outward).
- **Unusual lumps, bumps, pain or swelling in the genital area.** It is possible to have an infection or a varicocele (a varicose vein) in the genital area that will result in increased inflammation and/or heat and cause damage to the sperm being produced.
- **A prior infection or surgery in the genital area.** Surgery, such as correcting a(n) undescended testicle(s) can leave behind scarring (which can prevent sperm from making its way from the testicles into the seminal fluid). Prior inflammations or infections (like STD's, mumps or a traumatic injury to the testicles) can result in anti-sperm antibodies-which affect the ability of the sperm to swim well-making it difficult to penetrate an egg and create a pregnancy.
- **Inability to conceive a child after a year of regular, unprotected intercourse.** Especially if there is no known female factor (this doesn't rule out idiopathic, or 'unknown' infertility, however).

You may or may not have 'symptoms' of male factor infertility, but if any of the above apply to you a referral to a specialist is warranted. Dr. Carol Anania, a board-certified fertility specialist at Fertility Solutions™ tells us, "Advances in the area of male infertility have brought about dramatic changes in the ability to diagnose and treat infertile men, offering hope to many couples." Fertility Solutions™ physicians have treated hundreds of couples with male factor and combination issues, and are able to offer fertility testing at their in-house state of the art laboratory. The first step is pin-pointing the problem, and then creating a plan to fix it.

Testing and Treatment

Testing for a male factor fertility problem typically starts with a semen analysis. Semen will need to be provided to the lab in a sterile container provided by your doctor. Many labs allow at-home collection for privacy, as long as the sample is transported to the lab (and kept warm, by keeping the cup in your waistband or underarm) within an

hour. Many labs offer private on-site collection rooms to eliminate falsely decreased results due to transport of the sample. Once in the lab, the sample will be analyzed for the presence of sperm and a sperm count will be performed. Fewer than 15 million sperm per milliliter of semen or a total sperm count of less than 30 million per entire ejaculate is considered a "low sperm count". The technician will also analyze how well the sperm are moving and if they are shaped normally. Problems can come in many different varieties. There may be plenty of sperm, with only a small percent moving (low motility). There may be only a small amount of sperm present, but with good movement (low sperm count). There could be no sperm present (azoospermia) or there could be many sperm that move well, but contain a high percent of sperm that are shaped abnormally (abnormal morphology). The results of the semen analysis will help you and your doctor decide which treatment will be right for you and your situation. If the results are abnormal, your physician may choose to order hormonal and/or genetic blood testing or refer you to a Reproductive Urologist for an evaluation. Testosterone, FSH and LH are hormones that may be measured and medication can be provided if there is a hormone imbalance, which may or may not improve sperm counts and quality. Anatomical problems, like a varicocele, can be corrected through surgery or assisted reproductive technologies can be used to help with conception. Genetic disorders, such as Klinefelter's Syndrome or congenital absence of the vas deferens, may be treatable using sperm aspiration techniques in conjunction with IVF/ICSI (more on that later).

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-Carol Anania, M.D.

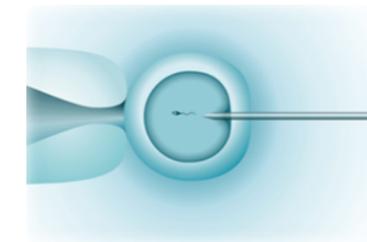
For slightly low sperm counts, low motility or difficulty with intercourse, a more conservative insemination treatment for the female partner may help conception. Placing the sperm directly in the uterus around the time of ovulation helps bring sperm closer to the egg, which can be essential if the motility of the sperm is low, or if there isn't a high number of sperm present (many die en route to their destination, so bringing them closer increases the odds one will make its way inside of the egg). This procedure is known as an IUI (intra-uterine sperm insemination) and is performed out-patient at your doctor's office. For more severe cases, such as no motility or a markedly decreased sperm count, IVF with intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) is a great option. ICSI is a fertilization procedure used during IVF; with this option, a single sperm is injected into an egg. During a

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traditional IVF cycle, the sperm and eggs are placed next to each other in a laboratory dish in order to achieve fertilization, but with ICSI, because the sperm is injected directly into the egg, the process has a much higher likelihood of being successful.

Once fertilization has occurred, the embryo is typically transferred back into the uterus around day 3. In cases in which there are no viable sperm present in the semen analysis, a TESA (Testicular sperm aspiration) or TESE (Testicular sperm extraction) procedure may be performed by a specially-trained urologist. These procedures remove fluid or tissue from the testicles in an effort to obtain sperm. If sperm are present in the fluid or tissue aspirate, it can be frozen and used for an IVF procedure. Should there be no sperm present following a

An illustration of ICSI: a sperm cell being injected directly into the female oocyte (egg)



ICSI can assist fertilization and increases success in male factor infertility cases.

Take Care of Your Emotional Health

Just like your physical health, your emotional health plays an important role in your life, in fact, the two are linked. If you suffer from many physical ailments, you are at a high risk for depression, and if you are depressed or overly stressed, you are more likely to suffer from physical ailments such as high blood pressure, insomnia and a weakened immune system. There are actions you can take to improve your emotional health. First, you should be familiar with resources in your area that are available for mental health. Many employers, schools and religious organizations have or provide a referral to a counselor. Your primary-care physician is also a great resource for information and referrals to mental health professionals. Counseling isn't just for the depressed, it is an effective tool that will increase your awareness on how to handle the problems, stressors or losses that are inevitable in life. The World Health Organization defines mental health as "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community". Aside from counseling, here are a few tips that can help keep you emotionally healthy:

- Take care of yourself. Eating well, getting enough exercise and enough rest will give you the energy you need to stay emotionally strong and physically healthy.
- Connect with others. Surround yourself with friends and family that are supportive. Avoid others who put you down or make you feel negative about yourself or your life.
- Do what you love, and involve others. While work and keeping a home can take up most of your time, it is crucial you find time to do things you enjoy, and enjoying activities with others can bring a sense of connection, team work and belonging. If you love to read, join a book club. If you've always wanted to learn meditation, participate in a yoga class; if you love art- take an art class. All are great ways to unwind and connect, bring a friend along or enjoy making new ones!
- Help others. Every day we should challenge ourselves. When we succeed, it brings pride and accomplishment. Helping others succeed has the same effect. Visit elders in a nursing home or head up a local food drive. By helping others we feel good about our actions, which is great medicine for our emotional health.

TESA/TESE procedures, or if multiple IVF cycles fail, some couples choose to use a sperm donor or consider adoption. Your physician can help you navigate all of your options, and provide you with resources for agencies and support groups while you and your partner decide what is best for you. There are many treatments available to help overcome male factor infertility. Fertility Solutions™ physicians understand the difficulties-emotionally and physically-one has to cope with when facing any type of infertility, and can provide the expert, compassionate care you need, when you need it most.

If you are or think you may be facing infertility, call Fertility Solutions™ at 877-813-0159 for a consultation to discuss the fastest and most affordable way to build your family.