

## Male Infertility



### What is Male Infertility?

Men are often astounded to discover that they have reproduction problems which may be affecting their ability to father a child. **Reproductive problems in men** such as the poor quality or quantity of sperm being produced, hormone disorders, reproductive anatomy trauma, obstruction and sexual dysfunction can all prevent conception from taking place.

Infertility is defined as the **inability to achieve a pregnancy** (impregnating a woman) after one year of well-timed, unprotected intercourse. It is estimated that **male infertility** is involved in about 40% of the 2.6 million married couples in the United States who cannot conceive.

As many as one-half of these men experience irreversible infertility and cannot father children at all, while a small number of these cases are caused by a treatable medical condition. A combination of both male and female factors is responsible in about one-third of cases.

The **signs and symptoms of male infertility** are not always obvious. In most instances, intercourse, erections and ejaculation will usually happen without difficulty. The appearance and quantity of the ejaculated semen would also appear normal to the naked eye. Some **signs of hormonal problems** such as changes in hair growth or sexual function may indicate infertility.

**Coping with male infertility** is extremely difficult. Men often see infertility as a failure which brings about a number of negative emotions such as guilt, depression, anger, stress and frustration. Today, however there are various **treatment options that can help infertile men become fathers.**

### Diagnosing Male Infertility

A couple who have had well-timed, unprotected intercourse for a year should consult their doctor for a fertility evaluation. In the case of men, a thorough physical examination will be performed. Certain tests such as semen testing will determine the number, movement and shape of the sperm in the ejaculate.

Blood tests will be able to check if **hormone levels that control sperm production are normal** or if there may be a genetic problem. In addition, urine is also tested to check for retrograde ejaculation in men who produce low volumes of ejaculate. A testicular biopsy may be performed to ascertain whether there is an obstruction in the testicular reproductive tract or a sperm production problem is present.

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# What Causes Male Infertility?

The most **common causes of male infertility** involve abnormal sperm production, the way in which sperm is delivered, lifestyle and health issues. These causes may include:

**Abnormal sperm production** - One of the most **common causes of infertility in men** is as a result of the sperm production process in testes. If the shape and structure of sperm is hampered, sperm may not be able to reach the egg.

**Low sperm concentration** - Low sperm concentration, known as sub-fertility, is defined as 10 million or less sperm per milliliter of semen. The count for **normal sperm concentration** is greater than or equal to 20 million sperm per milliliter of semen.

**Blockage of sperm delivery** - Obstructions that occur in the tubes leading sperm away from the testes to the penis can cause a total lack of sperm in the ejaculated semen.

**Testicular Varicocele** - A varicocele is a dilated or varicose vein and when it occurs in the scrotum it may prevent normal cooling of the testicle. This leads to **reduced sperm count** and motility

**Undescended testicle or testes** - Undescended testicle or testes is the term used **when one or both testicles fail to descend from the abdomen** into the scrotum during fetal development. Because the testicles are exposed to the higher internal body temperature, compared with the temperature in the scrotum, sperm production may be affected.

**Hormonal problems** - If the pituitary gland, which is situated at the base of the brain, does not send the correct signals to stimulate the testes, **low testosterone levels** may be caused. Because of this sperm cannot be produced.

**Sexual problems** - Sexual problems such as erectile dysfunction, ejaculation difficulties, low libido or lack of sex drive can prevent a couple from conceiving.

**Underlying medical conditions** - An existing medical condition such as thyroid disease, diabetes or Cushing's syndrome may also affect fertility.

**Genetic defects** - In the genetic defect Klinefelter's syndrome, a man has two X chromosomes and one Y chromosome instead of one X and one Y. This causes **abnormal development of the testicles**, resulting in low or absent sperm production.

**Risk factors that affect male infertility** - There are several risk factors that may affect male infertility - some of which can be avoided.

**Age** - A man's fertility declines as he ages. It has been estimated that the amount of semen ejaculated and sperm motility begins to slowly decrease in men or from the age of 37 years.

**Tobacco smoking** - Smoking tobacco is believed to affect the quality of semen.



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## Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

Not only does smoking pose a health risk to the smoker but a larger number of birth defects have been found in the children of men who smoke.

**Alcohol** - Drinking large amounts of alcohol can have negative effects on the reproductive system. It is also detrimental to your liver and general health.

**Recreational drugs** - Drugs such as anabolic steroids, generally used by athletes, reduce sperm production by stopping the hormones made by the pituitary gland. Other drugs such as cocaine or heroine also affect sexual performance and health.

**Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)** - Sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea and genital herpes can affect sperm production and damage the epididymis, preventing sperm from passing from the testes to ejaculate. If you have an STD, seek immediate treatment from your health practitioner. **Practice safe sex and make sure that you are tested for STD's** before planning a family.

**Tight underwear** - Research has suggested that tight underwear can decrease sperm counts. **Wear loose boxer shorts** to reduce the chances of heat stress on sperm production.

**Hot baths, saunas and spas** - Men should avoid hot baths, saunas and spas because the body temperature, especially around the testes, can **reduce sperm production**. Sperm require a cool environment to develop.

## Help for Male Infertility

Research has shown that up to one-half of male infertility can be corrected. Treatment options depend on the severity and the **cause of the infertility**. There are a number of treatment options such as drug therapy, surgery and assisted reproductive therapy. While these treatments can be effective they are often costly and may also have some serious side effects.

For centuries, natural and holistic treatments have used been to treat infertility as well as overall male reproductive health. Treatments such as herbal and homeopathic remedies are gentle enough to use, without the harsh side effects of allopathic medicine.

**Fertility-enhancing herbs** such as Epimedium grandiflorum (Horny Goat Weed) promote male potency and libido, while also acting as a natural aphrodisiac and increasing sperm production. Centella Asiatica (Gotu Cola) has a wide range of beneficial effects such as ensuring an adequate supply of blood and nutrition to the male organs and also helping to strengthen erections and sexual desire. In addition, Tribulus terrestris (Gokshura) is also an excellent tonic for the male reproductive system.

## Conventional Treatments

If sexual problems such as premature ejaculation, impotence or erectile dysfunction are causing infertility, drug therapy or certain behavioral approaches can help.

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Medications may also improve sperm production, fight sperm antibodies, cure infections of the urinary tract, testes or prostate that compromise sperm as well as hormonal dysfunction. Surgical procedures are performed to treat reproductive tract obstruction and varicoceles.

The use of assisted reproductive therapy includes electroejaculation, sperm retrieval and washing, in vitro fertilization (IVF), intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) and gamete intrafallopian transfer (GIFT). Different methods may help to improve erectile dysfunction, obtain sperm, induce sperm production and inseminate an egg.

Nutrition is also very important. Eating healthily is essential so that the reproductive system can function properly. Certain nutritional deficiencies such as a lack of vitamins and minerals can inhibit sperm production, impair hormone function and cause the production of abnormal sperm. Exercise is equally important – helping to promote circulation and blood flow to the reproductive organs.

## Coping with Male Infertility

Coping with infertility is not easy. Many emotions of anger, frustration and confusion will be experienced. Many men feel alone and feel that they have failed. There are ways to help you cope effectively with infertility. Use these helpful tips:

Manage your feelings and emotions by speaking openly to your partner  
Join a support group or attend counseling sessions to deal with your emotions  
Reduce stress and learn to relax by listening to soothing music, working out at the gym or walking. A detox is also a good idea to remove impurities in your system.

Consider other options such as adoption, donor sperm or surrogacy  
Do not be so hard on yourself, give yourself a break and accept that you are giving the fertility process your best shot.

## The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is ‘better’ than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce



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it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called 'alternative' or 'complimentary' medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term 'holistic' medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are 'unproven' and 'untested', the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called 'standardized' extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While 'standardized' extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines

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2) Native Remedies and our suppliers are registered with the FDA as accredited suppliers and manufacturers of health supplements. Our products are sold all over the world and are manufactured to strict international standards in a GMP accredited manufacturing plant.

3) All our remedies are manufactured in an FDA registered pharmaceutical facility under close supervision.

This includes formulation, acquiring and testing of raw ingredients as well as final manufacturing. This gives us the confidence to say that when you are buying a Native Remedies product, you are buying the safest and the best! We know what goes into our remedies - which is why we know what you will get out of them!

4) Manufacturing is done strictly according to the principles of GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) and all raw ingredients undergo stringent testing before being approved by our registered manufacturing pharmacists.

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produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don't make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

## **Related Natural Remedies:**

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