

Male infertility: semen analysis, causes and treatment options

Male fertility can be impaired even when erections, desire, testosterone and general health seem normal, so both partners should be assessed at the same time. A semen analysis is a snapshot that may need repeating, and the results, history and the couple's timeline together guide whether to treat a cause, use assisted reproduction or combine approaches.



Figure 27.1. The Male Fertility Workup Pathway. Male fertility workup combines reproductive history, semen testing, examination, selective hormones and genetics, and the couple's shared timeline.

Key points

- Fertility is not only a female issue; a man who feels healthy may still have a significant sperm abnormality.
- A semen analysis is not a pass-fail test, and one abnormal result often needs to be checked again.
- Testosterone is not a fertility treatment; it can dramatically suppress sperm production.
- Hormone tests, genetic tests and ultrasound are used selectively, to answer specific questions.
- Treating a reversible cause, surgery, sperm retrieval and assisted reproduction are not a simple ladder; they may proceed together.
- A severe abnormality can be a signal about a man's broader health.

Questions to ask your urologist

- What do my semen analysis results mean, and should the test be repeated?
- Are there time-sensitive issues for either partner that should change how fast we move?
- Could any medication, supplement or hormone I take be reducing sperm production?
- Do I need an examination, hormone tests, genetic testing or ultrasound, and what would each answer?
- Is there a correctable cause, and should treating it run alongside assisted reproduction?

- How will you coordinate with my partner's fertility specialist?

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