

MALE INFERTILITY

How common is male infertility and how is this defined?

Infertility caused by male factors affects 15% of couples in Australia.

It is generally accepted that in the percentage of couples affected by infertility

- Male infertility is causative in 1 in 5 cases
- Female infertility in 1 in 3 cases
- Both male and female causes in 1 in 3 cases

What are the different causes of male infertility?

Male infertility can be due to hormonal problems interfering with sperm production, or blockages in the male urogenital tract that prevents sperms from reaching the ejaculate.

Sometimes certain inherited genetic conditions like Klinefelter's syndrome and cystic fibrosis may also be causative. Obesity, certain prescription medications, history of testicular injury or inflammation and a childhood history of undescended testes can also reduce sperm production

How can this be diagnosed?

It is important to see a fertility specialist early if male infertility is suspected by an abnormal semen test.

The specialist may arrange extra blood tests to check hormone profiles, genetic testing assessments and an ultrasound of the testes to exclude any other associated factors.

How can male infertility be treated?

Sometimes just a change of life style factors can improve fertility, such as reducing smoking, drinking, avoiding certain types of medications or recreational drugs.

In certain cases, the specialist may help to improve sperm production by using certain hormone preparations to stimulates sperm production.

Where there are blockages of the main duct leading from the testes, the specialist can perform Surgical sperm retrieval directly from the duct or

sometimes from the testes. This is a procedure that will need to be done under anaesthetic and is usually successful in achieving a pregnancy.

The last option is also to consider treatment using a sperm donor, but it is important to see a specialist early, who will be able to make a good clinical assessment and advice on the best suitable treatment for this.

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