

Male factor sub-fertility

Having persistent low sperm counts (oligospermia) can be very common. Having no sperm in the ejaculate (azoospermia) affects approximately 1% of all men. There are many reasons why a man might have either very low counts or no sperm at all.

In a proportion of patients the underlying cause may be genetic. A member of the fertility team may recommend you have further blood tests including hormone and genetic screening. If a genetic blood test is abnormal then a referral to a genetics specialist will be organised. There could be a possibility of passing a genetic abnormality onto any male offspring.

New techniques like ICSI can help a couple achieve a pregnancy despite a very low count or azoospermia. Alternative treatment options would be to consider using donor sperm.

If the sperm is very low or absent the following blood tests may be recommended:

Cystic Fibrosis screening

In about 5-10% of azoospermic men there will be congenital absence of the vas deferens (CBAVD). The vas carry the sperm from the testes. This condition is associated with certain types of cystic fibrosis (CF).

There can also be abnormal variations of the CF gene in men with very low sperm counts. Approximately one in twenty Caucasians carry one abnormal CF gene. If you are a carrier this does not mean you have CF. We would then want to test your partner to see if she were also a carrier. Further information will be given by the fertility specialist if both partners are carriers.

Karyotyping (checking the chromosomes or genetics)

Chromosomes carry the genetic information. Sperm problems may arise because a man may be born with either an abnormal number of chromosomes or an abnormal arrangement of them.

If you have any further questions please discuss these with the Fertility Clinic on 0118 322 7286. Further information leaflets are available on IVF, ICSI and surgical sperm retrieval.

For more information about the Trust visit our website: www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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