



MALE FERTILITY TESTS (SPERM COUNTS)

Information about your condition from
The British Association of Urological Surgeons (BAUS)

You have been given this leaflet either because you have been diagnosed with a male-factor infertility or because you have undergone a vasectomy reversal procedure. The aim of the leaflet is to provide you with detailed information about assessing your semen quality in this situation.

We have consulted specialist surgeons during its preparation, so it represents best practice in UK urology. You should use it in addition to any advice already given to you.

To view the online version of this leaflet, type the text below into your web browser:

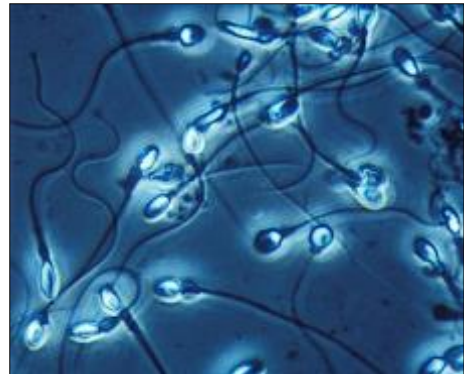
[http://www.baus.org.uk/_userfiles/pages/files/Patients/Leaflets/Fertility tests.pdf](http://www.baus.org.uk/_userfiles/pages/files/Patients/Leaflets/Fertility%20tests.pdf)

How should the specimen be produced?

You should produce the semen specimen after at least 3 days (and no more than 7 days) abstinence from all sexual activity (masturbation or intercourse).

Your sample should be produced by masturbation (by hand) into the plastic container provided. Do not use a condom to collect the sample, and do not use lubricants as they may affect the sample quality.

You must collect the whole sample. If you think your sample is incomplete, you should inform the laboratory when you deliver it.



What should I do once I have produced the specimen?

Fill in the date and time of production, and the number of days since your last ejaculation on the request form. This is essential for accurate assessment.

Check that the container is clearly marked with your name and date of birth.

Please note: If the details on either the form or container are not complete, the laboratory will not accept the sample. You may then need to provide a further sample for the laboratory later.

Where do I take the specimens?

Your local hospital will tell you where the Cytology Laboratory is for you to take your sample. Most laboratories only accept specimens during normal working hours, and some operate an appointment system for dropping off samples. You will be told if there is a number you need to call in advance to book a time slot. Specimens received outside normal working hours, or at the weekend, cannot be processed and will usually be discarded.

It is best if you bring the specimen yourself. Hand your sample in at the reception desk, along with the completed form, and check both are correctly labelled before leaving.

How soon do the specimens need to be delivered?

The specimen **must** be brought to the hospital within 1 hour of production. During the journey, it should be kept warm (i.e. at body temperature) in an inside pocket. Excessive heating or chilling will affect the quality of the sample and may give inaccurate results.

If you are unable to get the sample to the laboratory within 1 hour, enquire about producing the sample on site at the laboratory.

Only use the container provided.

How will I know the results?

The results will normally go back to the clinic that ordered the test. You will need to arrange an appointment to discuss your results with the doctor you saw originally. Some laboratories send you a letter informing you of your results directly.

What if the results show poor sperm counts?

You will usually need to produce two semen tests, three months apart, to confirm that any abnormal results are genuine.

Your Consultant Urologist or GP will advise you further if any abnormality is found. This will usually result in a referral to see a specialist Andrologist (male infertility specialist) who will arrange further tests to discover the cause of the underlying problem.

Often the underlying problem can be remedied or treated, even in cases where no sperms are visible in the semen sample. If treatment is not possible, the next step may involve some form of assisted reproductive technique (e.g. *in vitro* fertilisation, IVF).

What sources were used to prepare this leaflet?

This leaflet uses information from consensus panels and other evidence-based sources including:

- the [Department of Health \(England\)](#);
- the [Cochrane Collaboration](#); and
- the [National Institute for Health and Care Excellence \(NICE\)](#).

It also follows style guidelines from:

- the [Royal National Institute for Blind People \(RNIB\)](#);
- the [Patient Information Forum](#); and
- the [Plain English Campaign](#).

Disclaimer

We have made every effort to give accurate information in this leaflet, but there may still be errors or omissions. BAUS cannot accept responsibility for any loss from action taken (or not taken) as a result of this information.

PLEASE NOTE

The staff at BAUS are not medically trained, and are unable to answer questions about the information provided in this leaflet. If you do have any questions, you should contact your urologist, specialist nurse or GP.