



# Preventing Male Infertility

By Jason Cheng, DO

**F**or those who believe that men's reproductive abilities are not vulnerable to the stresses of aging the way a woman's is, you may be in for a surprise. Studies that have been discussed in this years meeting for the American Society for Reproductive Medicine have shed new light on how aging may adversely affect a man's reproductive ability.



Traditional lines of thinking dictate that a man's fertility is unimpaired due to an unlimited ability to produce sperm. However, new scientific research is proving that quantity is not necessarily quality. Although the lifespan of ability to produce a sperm continues unabated, men are just as vulnerable to the wear and tear of the aging process as a woman is. Exactly what is the process by which a man's reproductive capability declines?

Imagine the time old analogy of the little fishes trying to race to the finish line. The goal is ideally for a healthy strong sperm to make it to the gate, thereby ensuring proper fertilization. When a male is young, most of the fishes are fairly healthy and strong, and the "less healthy" fishes are usually disqualified from the race early on. Biologically, this process of "disqualifying" bad fish is called apoptosis, or the body's mechanism for removing chromosomally damaged sperm. As a male gets older, and environmental damage begins to take its toll, apoptosis begins to decline, thus allowing the chromosomally damaged sperm to "compete" against the healthy sperm.

The study performed by Dr. Narendra Singh at the University of Washington in Seattle concluded that men age 35 and older had not only lower degree of apoptosis, but also sperm with worse motility than younger men. Going back to our analogy, this means that there are more unhealthy fishes heading for the gate, and the healthy fish don't have quite the speed and stamina to make it like before.

## What can be done to optimize fertility for men?

1. First and foremost, keep up with regular health checks. Hypertension, prostate problems, and other chronic conditions are bound to affect not only your sexual health, but also your reproductive health too.
2. Avoid constricting underwear. Proper circulation and "attention" should be paid to making sure you do not physically stress your genital organs.
3. Avoid prolonged exposure to hot environments, such as Jacuzzis and spas. Though

the occasional dip is fine, elevated temperatures can have less than ideal effects to reproductive organs.

4. Avoid environmental toxins that are found in auto warehouses or anesthetic gases. Halogenated chemicals such as chlorides and fluoride compounds have an oxidizing effect which can damage chromosomes. This is why taking antioxidants such as vitamin E and selenium are especially important.
5. Avoid smoking and alcohol. Just as damaging in the long run as hazardous gases, This link to cancers and systemic hypertension can also lead to unhealthy environmental and genetic damage.
6. Last but not least, regular exercise such as 1 hour of aerobic exercise three times a week is highly recommended. Whether it's running or a brisk game of tennis, exercise provides the energy and aerobic development good not only for reproductive health but for sexual energy and stamina too.

Fertility at its core is a couples' issue. It should never be approached as solely the responsibility of a woman or man's. The studies shown here will indeed bring us exciting new information regarding the many dimensions of infertility, from both the male and females perspective. We are now finding through solid science that men are affected just as much women are in regards to fertility issues. The era of gender specific medicine has shown us that men need to be as concerned with fertility and osteoporosis as women are now concerned with lung cancer and heart disease.

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