



The Fundamental Importance of Male Preconception Health Care

The Fundamental Importance of Male Preconception Health Care

Preconception care offers an opportunity for disease prevention and health promotion which has a profound impact on long term health. The benefits of completing a naturopathic preconception program include:

- Improved pregnancy outcomes due to enhanced biologic and genetic contribution to the pregnancy
- Reduced damage to sperm DNA
- A window of opportunity to improve sperm quality

Even healthy individuals can still benefit from preconception care as it improves sperm quality, morphology, genetic health and other fertility parameters.

Many factors can affect male reproductive health so by assessing and then addressing risk factors an improvement in sperm parameters can be achieved.

Factors that Compromise Male Fertility

Perhaps you have been trying to conceive and nothing is happening. Before you waste any more time read about some common causes of lowered fertility.

Nutritional deficiencies – both zinc and folate protect sperm against oxidative stress and DNA damage

Diabetes affects male fertility and literature demonstrates that diabetes not only affects sperm quality but also erectile dysfunction can affect up to 35% of male diabetics¹.

Alcohol – research shows that the partners of men who drink more than 4 standard drinks per week had a 21% reduction in live birth rate compared to men who drank less than 4 drinks per week².

Many **medications** can affect sperm count and quality and include erythromycin (antibiotic), phenytoin (epilepsy), calcium channel blockers (high blood pressure) and sulfasalazine (arthritis, ulcerative colitis).



The Fundamental Importance of Male Preconception Health Care

Paternal age is a big factor in male fertility which most men are not aware of. There is a link between older fathers and higher schizophrenia risk factors in their children. One study concluded that for fathers aged 30-35 years old, 1 out of 99 children were estimated to have schizophrenia compared to 1 out of 47 for fathers aged 50 or older².

Excess weight – men who are overweight or obese have lower testosterone levels and poorer sperm quality. The odds of infertility increases by 10% for every 9kg overweight³.

Tobacco causes oxidative damage to sperm DNA and smoking is associated with a lower sperm count, abnormal sperm morphology, motility and fertilisation capacity.

Marijuana reduces testosterone production, sperm count as well as sperm quality.

Common hobbies may be placing you at risk of lower fertility. For example organic solvents found in paint strippers or heavy metals in old paint or stained glass windows will have a detrimental effect.

Chronic inflammation caused by gum disease, stress and diet can all cause oxidative damage to sperm.

Environmental exposure to certain chemicals has been shown to cause sperm DNA damage. These include phthalates (a plasticiser used in many household products), pesticides, dioxins, radiation and heavy metals. A comprehensive naturopathic preconception program will improve not only your fertility but also the health of your future children. Taking steps to optimise your health now will reduce your risk factors for chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, obesity and diabetes.

References

1. McCulloch DK, Campbell IW, Wu FC, Prescott RJ, Clarke BF. *The prevalence of diabetic impotence*. Diabetologia 1980; 18:279-83.
2. Rossi BV et al. *Effect of alcohol consumptions on IVF*. Obstet Gynecol.2011 Jan;117(1):136-42
3. Malaspina D, Harlap S, Fennig S, et al. *Advancing paternal age and the risk of schizophrenia*. Arch Gen Psychiatry 2001; 58:361-7.
4. Sallmen M, Sandler DP, Hoppin JA, Blair A, Baird DD. *Reduced fertility among overweight and obese men*. Epidemiology 2006; 17:520-3.