



PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

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Male Infertility

REQUEST AN APPOINTMENT

Our male infertility specialists provide expert, personalized care to help you move forward with clarity and confidence. To request an appointment, please call [617-732-4222](tel:617-732-4222).

Infertility is the inability to conceive after a year of regular, unprotected sex. It can affect both men and women.

According to the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services](#), infertility affects 12% to 15% of couples trying to have a baby. In about one-third of these cases, the issue is related to the male partner.

Learning that you or your partner may be facing male infertility can feel overwhelming—especially when you're hoping to grow your family. Brigham and Women's Hospital provides effective treatments that can help men and their partners conceive biological children.

What is male infertility?

Male infertility is a condition in which a man—or someone assigned male at birth—has difficulty getting their partner pregnant after one year of regular, unprotected sex. It can be caused by many factors, including genetic conditions, anatomical differences, hormonal imbalances, or infections and injuries that affect the reproductive organs.

MULTIDISCIPLINARY, WHOLE-PERSON INFERTILITY CARE

At the Brigham and Women's [Center for Infertility and Reproductive Surgery](#), our male infertility and urology specialists understand how personal and emotional the male

infertility journey can be. We use advanced diagnostic tools and offer a full range of treatment options to address male reproductive and sexual health concerns.

Your care team includes a urologist and a reproductive endocrinologist. If you are receiving [in vitro fertilization](#) or intracytoplasmic sperm injection, your team will also include an embryologist.

As part of a world-class academic medical center, you'll have access to a broad, highly specialized network of providers. Your urologist works closely with experts across the Brigham to make sure every aspect of your health is considered. If another medical issue may be contributing to infertility, we'll connect you with the right expert for timely evaluation and care.

If you've been trying to conceive without success or are concerned about your fertility, our male infertility specialists will work with you to understand your options and guide you toward a treatment plan that fits your goals. Call us to request an appointment at [617-732-4222](tel:617-732-4222).

COORDINATED CARE WITH FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SPECIALISTS

Fertility is a shared journey—and many couples benefit from care that supports both partners. At Brigham and Women's Hospital, our male infertility specialists work closely with experts in [women's health](#) to offer comprehensive, team-based care.

When appropriate, we collaborate to:

- Coordinate diagnostic testing and timelines for both partners

- Identify and treat factors affecting fertility in either partner

- Develop shared treatment plans for options like in vitro fertilization (IVF) or intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI)

- Support same-sex couples and individuals pursuing fertility preservation or third-party reproduction

By combining our expertise across male and female reproductive health, we're able to offer patients a more streamlined and supportive path to parenthood.

What are the risk factors for male infertility?

Factors that can contribute to an increased risk of male infertility include:

- History of **prostatitis** or genital infection (such as chlamydia, syphilis, or genital herpes)
- Testicular trauma or injury
- Early or delayed puberty
- Prior hernia repair
- Undescended testicles
- Some medications
- Use of tobacco, alcohol, or recreational drugs
- Exposure to high heat around the genitals (such as hot tubs or saunas)
- Exposure to environmental toxins
- Use of testosterone supplements or steroids

What causes male infertility?

Male infertility can result from a wide range of medical, genetic, and environmental factors. Some conditions affect sperm production, while others interfere with sperm delivery or function.

What are the signs of male infertility?

The most common sign of male infertility is the inability to conceive after one year of regular, unprotected sex. Other possible signs may include:

- Problems with sexual function, such as trouble ejaculating or maintaining an erection
- Low sperm count or abnormal sperm quality
- Low energy, which can be linked to low testosterone

In many cases, male infertility does not have obvious symptoms. Fertility testing may be the only way to identify the issue.

To learn more about men's sexual health and when to seek care, [read this article on sexual health for men](#).

WHEN SHOULD I SEE A DOCTOR ABOUT MALE INFERTILITY?

You should consider speaking with a fertility specialist if you and your partner have been trying to get pregnant for one year without success—or after six months if the female partner is over age 35. You should also seek care sooner if you have a known risk factor for infertility, such as a history of undescended testicles, testicular cancer, genital injury, or prior vasectomy.

Male infertility tests

To diagnose male infertility, your primary care doctor or urologist will review your medical history to determine if you have any risk factors that may contribute to fertility issues. They may also order one or more of the following tests to determine if you have male infertility:

Semen analysis: The primary test for male infertility, which measures the amount and quality of semen and sperm

Transrectal ultrasound: Uses sound waves to examine the shape and function of your prostate gland.

Hormonal tests: Measures levels of testosterone and other hormones needed for sperm production

Testicular biopsy: In rare cases, a small tissue sample may be taken to rule out conditions like cancer

How is male infertility treated?

At Brigham and Women's, our male infertility specialists offer expert, compassionate male infertility treatment. Whether the focus is on treating the underlying cause of male infertility or helping you and your partner conceive, we provide a full range of advanced treatment options.

We begin with a comprehensive evaluation, led by a board-certified specialist in male infertility. From there, we work closely with you to create a personalized treatment plan. If

surgery is recommended, most procedures are minimally invasive and performed on an outpatient basis, with mild recovery time.

Our team-based approach fosters collaboration between all members of your care team. For example, urologists will work together with embryologists to perform microsurgical sperm extraction in real time, optimizing sperm retrieval rates during the procedure.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

Quit smoking: Tobacco use has been linked to lower sperm count and motility.

Limit alcohol and avoid recreational drugs: Excessive alcohol, marijuana, anabolic steroids, and other substances can interfere with hormone levels and sperm production.

Maintain a healthy weight: Obesity can affect hormone balance and sperm function. Regular exercise and balanced nutrition may help improve fertility.

Reduce stress: Long-term stress can affect hormone levels involved in sperm production. Mindfulness, therapy, and physical activity may help reduce stress.

Avoid high heat around the testicles: Prolonged exposure to hot tubs, saunas, or tight underwear can impact sperm quality. Choose looser clothing and avoid excess heat when possible.

Protect yourself from toxins: Contact with chemicals, heavy metals, or radiation—especially in the workplace—can harm sperm. Use protective gear and follow safety guidelines to reduce your risk.

Avoid testosterone supplements: These can suppress sperm production. Talk to your doctor before using any hormone-based products.

MEDICAL TREATMENTS FOR MALE INFERTILITY

In some cases, male fertility can be improved with medication or hormone therapy:

Hormone therapy: Used to correct imbalances that may affect sperm production or function.

Medications: May treat specific conditions such as retrograde ejaculation, immunologic infertility, or hormone deficiencies related to the pituitary gland.

SURGICAL TREATMENTS FOR MALE INFERTILITY

Surgical procedures can address physical blockages, anatomical issues, or help retrieve sperm directly for use in fertility treatments.

- Varicocele****ectomy:** A minor outpatient surgery to repair enlarged veins in the scrotum (varicoceles), which can affect sperm quality
- Vasectomy reversal:** Reconnects the severed ends of the vas deferens, allowing sperm to mix with semen again.
- Intrauterine insemination (IUI):** Places sperm directly into the uterus using a thin catheter to improve the chances of fertilization.
- In vitro fertilization (IVF):**Fertilizes the egg with sperm in a lab before transferring the embryo to the uterus.
- Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI):** A single sperm is injected directly into an egg. The resulting embryo is then implanted in the uterus.
- Testicular sperm extraction (TESE):** Collects sperm directly from the testicles in men who have no sperm in their ejaculate.

FERTILITY PRESERVATION FOR MEN

If you are planning medical treatment that may affect your fertility—such as cancer therapy, gender-affirming care, or certain surgeries—our specialists can help you explore fertility preservation options. Sperm banking and TESE may allow you to conceive in the future using assisted reproductive technologies. We'll work with you to develop a plan that supports both your immediate medical needs and long-term reproductive goals.

Frequently asked questions about male infertility

Can males be born infertile?	+
How easy is it to conceive?	+
Can male infertility be cured?	+

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