

## Semen fertility screening test

Please note that the pathology laboratory at Barnet Hospital will only accept specimens by appointment.

### Tips for collecting your semen sample:

- There are **no** facilities for the collection of infertility samples within the hospital. Consequently samples must be collected at home and delivered to the specified location at Barnet Hospital (you will be informed as to where to bring the sample at the time of booking).
- Your doctor will advise you how to collect the sample.
- Samples must be brought in as soon as they are produced, and the container kept in a pocket close to the body (to keep the sample warm).
- It is essential that the specimen be delivered to the hospital within **one hour** of production. You must not have had sex or masturbated for 48 hours before collecting the sample but should have had an abstinence period of no longer than seven days.
- First wash your hands and genitals with water only and dry thoroughly.
- Please do not use any gels, lubricants or oils, as this will affect the results.
- Collect the sample by masturbation, collecting the entire specimen directly into the container.
- Evidence shows that semen parameters are optimised if you take at least 10-15 minutes to produce the sample.
- It is essential that the whole ejaculate (discharge of semen) is collected, as the first part is often the richest in sperm numbers. Please notify us if you think that some of it has been lost.
- Rubber sheaths (condoms) must **not** be used for collection as they contain substances which will kill the sperm.
- Withdrawal is not advised for collecting the sample.

### How to store your sample

- Please use the sterile container provided for you (100ml Sarstedt collection pot certified as being non-cytotoxic to sperm). No other sample container is acceptable.
- Do not open the container until you are ready to produce the sample.
- Seal the container immediately after sample collection using the lid and make sure that the lid is on tightly.
- Ensure your name, date of birth plus date and time of production is written on the container label.
- Place in the sealable bag provided.
- Please ensure that your name, date of birth, and address on the request form are correct. Please add the date and time of sample production and number of days of abstinence. The name and address of your doctor should also be stated.

### How to deliver your sample

- Please deliver the specimen and request form at the appointed time and to the specific location you have been told to report to.
- You must hand your sample directly to a member of the reception staff. Please **do not leave it** without seeing someone first. You will be required to fill out and sign a short form regarding timings of the sample.
- Unlabelled samples will **not** be processed.

If you have any queries, please phone the laboratory on 020 8216 4620. This is not an appointment line.

If you are unsure of or do not understand the instructions above please contact your doctor for advice in advance of sample collection.

### Semen assessment FAQs

#### Will I get an earlier appointment if I book online?

By booking online you will be able to choose a date and time to suit you and will also be able to view cancellations. In addition you will receive a text reminder.

#### Why do I have to abstain from ejaculating for 2-7 days?

When producing a sample for semen analysis, you will usually be asked to abstain from ejaculating for 2 to 7 days before producing the sample for the test. Any longer than this will cause the sperm waiting in the epididymis to die off, thus giving a falsely high proportion of immotile sperm in your sample. On the other hand, if you ejaculate very near to the time of the test, there may be falsely low numbers of sperm in the sample.

#### Why do I have to provide a sample by masturbation?

Samples must be provided by masturbation because it is vital that there is no contamination of the sample with any other bodily fluids (eg vaginal, oral). Other fluids can be quite toxic to sperm. During natural intercourse, the sperm are only exposed to the vaginal secretions for a relatively short period of time as they quickly leave the vagina to pass into the womb. You must not use condoms because these contain substances that will tend to kill the sperm.

#### Why is it necessary to bring the sample into the laboratory within one hour of ejaculation?

The semen must be examined as soon as possible after ejaculation, because if the sperm remain in the seminal fluid for too long, they will begin to die. After ejaculation into the vagina during normal intercourse, the sperm move very quickly out of the seminal fluid and into the female reproductive tract which is a more conducive

environment for longer term sperm survival. Sperm will live for several days in the female tract, but only several hours in semen.

### What tests are performed?

- Appearance: what the sample looks like.
- Volume: how much there is of the sample. After two days abstinence there should be more than 2ml of semen.
- Liquefaction: when semen is produced (ejaculated) it coagulates on contact with the air, then, over a short period of time, it liquefies. Liquefaction should be complete at the time of testing (one hour after ejaculation).
- Viscosity: this is a measure of how fluid the sample is (for example, water has a low viscosity, treacle has a high viscosity). Semen should have a fairly watery consistency at the time of testing (one hour after ejaculation).
- pH: the pH of a substance is a measure of how acid or alkaline it is (pH 7.0 is neutral). The pH of semen increases with time but should not be less than 7.2 at one hour.
- Motility: this measures which percentage of sperm are moving and how well they are moving.
- Sperm count: the sperm count is a measure of the total number of sperm (spermatozoa) present. It is usually recorded in millions of sperm per ml of semen. A normal count is regarded as being greater than 20 million per ml.

### When will I receive the result?

The result will be sent back to your requesting doctor within two working days. You will need to contact your doctor for this result and not the laboratory.