

Diagnostic Semen Analysis

(Male Fertility Testing) (page 1 of 3)



Semen Analysis – what is it?

Approximately 1 in 6 couples have difficulty in conceiving, with about one third of these possibly due to a sperm-related problem. Sperm-related problems can range from the complete absence of sperm, to having low numbers of sperm or simply poor sperm quality (damaged sperm). The only reliable method we have for detecting these is by semen analysis (semen testing). Semen analysis is basically the microscopic examination of the semen to see how many sperm there are and whether they function correctly. The results of all the semen analysis tests will indicate whether or not a male fertility factor is involved and so aid decisions about appropriate treatment.

How do you get a semen analysis appointment?

Appointments are only made after your GP or fertility specialist decides that a semen analysis is needed.

You will be given a form to hand in and also a specimen container. If you lose your container please collect another one from your GP or fertility specialist. Then telephone the laboratory to make an appointment (please see below). As we have to plan our work carefully, appointments are only available on Tuesday mornings. We ask that you attend as close to your appointment time as possible. If you are more than 30 minutes late we may be unable to perform the test and you may have to re-book. You should therefore give yourself ample time to arrive, especially if travelling by car as parking is sometimes difficult. If, for any reason, you cannot keep the appointment, please telephone us on the number below.

What do I have to do now?

- book a semen analysis appointment – your test will not be performed without one. Appointments are only available on Tuesdays - from 8.15am to 8.45am.
- telephone the Microbiology Laboratory for an appointment 01722 429105 (the laboratory is open Monday to Friday between 9am to 5pm). The Laboratory is closed on Bank Holidays.
- please note that you must abstain from sexual activity for 48 hours before providing the sample. However, your abstinence period should be for no more than seven days.

Where is the Laboratory?

Microbiology Department
01722 429105 9am – 5pm Mon to Fri

If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

The sample is tested by the Microbiology Department at Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust (Salisbury District Hospital). The sample and the form should be taken to the Pathology Reception on the day of your appointment. This is on level 3 of the main hospital, just behind the main entrance. Pathology Reception opens at 8.00am on Tuesdays.

When you arrive – what to expect

When you arrive at the hospital you should take your sample to the Pathology Reception. A staff member will meet you and take you to a consulting room where your details will be checked. You will be asked to complete a tick-box form consisting of questions on abstinence times, transportation, time of production and whether you followed all instructions when producing the sample i.e. no condoms.

If you have any difficulties with the collection and delivery of your sample please contact the laboratory on telephone number 01722 429105.

How to collect and deliver the sample

- your sample should be collected in the morning.
- abstain from sexual activity for 48 hours (but no longer than 7 days) before collecting the sample.
- you must be hygienic, wash your hands and genital area with soap and water; please ensure complete removal of all soap residues and dry yourself thoroughly.
- use only the container provided (if you do not have one please collect one from your GP or fertility specialist).
- do not open the container until you are ready to produce the sample.
- collect the sample by masturbation, collecting the entire specimen directly into the container. The first part of the sample contains most of the sperm so if some is lost it will affect the overall test. If a whole sample is not collected please state clearly on your request form “incomplete”.
- do not use a sheath or condom for collection as they are harmful to sperm.
- after sample collection seal the container with the lid immediately; make sure the lid is on tightly.
- once your sample has been produced into the container and the lid tightly closed, make sure that you write the following information on the container label:
 - * your surname (last or family name)
 - * your forename (Christian or first name)
 - * your date of birth
 - * the date and time you collected the sample
 - * your Hospital or NHS Number (if known).
- keep the sample close to the body whilst travelling to the laboratory (for example, in a pocket near to your body), as sperm are sensitive to extremes of temperature.

- to ensure the test results will be accurate, please aim to deliver the sample within 1 hour of its production.

How are the sperm tested?

We examine a number of important sperm factors which all contribute towards a man's ability to fertilize.

Sperm concentration (or 'sperm count')

This is reported as the number of sperm (in millions) per millilitre (ml) of semen. This is done under the microscope using a specialised counting chamber.

Sperm motility

Sperm are graded on their ability to swim, the fast, forward swimming sperm being the most fertile.

Sperm morphology

The shape and size of the sperm are assessed and the number (expressed as a percentage) which are normal are reported.

Results

Results are normally posted back to the referring doctor within a week. Please ensure that you have arranged a follow-up appointment with your doctor or fertility specialist. We are not allowed to give or discuss results directly with patients.

Quality Assurance

The laboratory aims to provide a good quality service and so is enrolled on the UK National External Quality Assurance Scheme (UKNEQAS).

Queries

If you have any queries regarding this test, please contact us on 01722 429105 between 9 am – 5pm Monday to Friday.