

Male infertility made clear: Quick insights from the AUA guidelines

Why does male evaluation matter?¹

- ➔ Male factors contribute fully or partially to infertility in up to 50% of all couples.
- ➔ Although many couples can achieve pregnancy through IUI or ART (IVF ± ICSI), evaluating the male partner is essential.
- ➔ The AUA guideline provides a framework for evaluating and managing the male partner by means of:
 - ↳ History taking
 - ↳ Physical examination
 - ↳ Targeted laboratory and imaging tests
 - ↳ Appropriate use of medical, surgical and ART interventions

Key recommendations at a glance¹



Assessment essentials

- ➔ Evaluate both partners at the same time and take a reproductive history from the male partner during the initial evaluation.
- ➔ Perform one or more semen analyses.
- ➔ If semen parameters are abnormal, conduct a thorough history and physical examination as well as further tests.



Diagnostic highlights

- ➔ Obtain hormonal evaluation (FSH and testosterone) for males presenting with impaired libido, erectile dysfunction, oligozoospermia, azoospermia and atrophic testes.
- ➔ For azoospermia, use physical examination, semen volume/pH and FSH levels to differentiate between obstruction and impaired sperm production.

Recommendations¹

- 1 Karyotype testing for primary infertility with azoospermia or sperm concentration <5 million/mL, especially with elevated FSH, testicular atrophy or impaired sperm production.
- 2 Y-chromosome microdeletion testing for sperm concentration ≤1 million/mL with features of impaired sperm production.
- 3 CFTR mutation testing for males with vasal agenesis or idiopathic obstructive azoospermia.

“ **For recurrent pregnancy loss: Karyotype with DNA fragmentation testing is recommended.¹** ”

Values related to the DNA fragmentation index²

- ➔ Normal/Low risk: ≤15%
- ➔ Intermediate: 15%–30%
- ➔ High/Severe: >30%

Higher DFI value is associated with a negative fertility outcome.

Commonly used DNA fragmentation index tests³

- ➔ SCSA
- ➔ TUNEL
- ➔ Comet assay
- ➔ SCD

Treatment overview¹



Varicocele

- ➔ Consider varicocelectomy for palpable varicocele, infertility and abnormal semen, except in males with azoospermia.



Sperm retrieval

- ➔ For non-obstructive azoospermia, perform microdissection testicular sperm extraction.
- ➔ For obstructive azoospermia, sperm may be extracted from the testis or epididymis.
- ➔ Consider testicular sperm use in non-azoospermic males with elevated DNA fragmentation index.
- ➔ For aspermia, consider surgical sperm extraction or methods for induced ejaculation.
- ➔ Treat retrograde ejaculation with sympathomimetics, induced ejaculation or surgical retrieval.



Obstructive azoospermia and post-vasectomy

- ➔ Microsurgical reconstruction may restore sperm in vasal/epididymal obstruction.
- ➔ Ejaculatory duct obstruction can be treated with transurethral resection of the ejaculatory ducts.



Medical and nutraceuticals

- ➔ Counsel couples with low total motile sperm count that IUI success may be reduced and ART may be considered.
- ➔ Aromatase inhibitors, human chorionic gonadotropin, selective oestrogen receptor modulators or combinations may be used in males with low serum testosterone.
- ➔ Avoid prescribing exogenous testosterone for males interested in fertility.
- ➔ Consider FSH analogues for males with idiopathic infertility.

Abbreviations

ART: Assisted reproductive technologies; AUA: American Urological Association; CFTR: Cystic fibrosis transmembrane conductance regulator; DNA: Deoxyribonucleic acid; FSH: Follicle-stimulating hormone; ICSI: Intracytoplasmic sperm injection; IUI: Intrauterine insemination; IVF: *In vitro* fertilisation; SCSA: Sperm chromatin structure assay; SCD: Sperm chromatin dispersion; TUNEL: Terminal deoxynucleotidyl transferase dUTP nick end labelling

References

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