

# Free helpline to answer all doubts about male infertility

## CORRESPONDENT

Dr Hrishikesh Pai, head of IVF department and consultant gynaecologist at Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital has for the first time conducted a unique helpline to provide free guidance and counselling to all problems pertaining to male infertility. Dr Pai said, "Insemination is an age-old method of achieving pregnancy in couples in which the male has a low sperm count. In the olden days, fresh semen was collected from donors whose identity was kept secret. This semen was then inserted into the woman at the time of ovulation." He added, "With the advent of AIDS, we have now become more careful. Nowadays, the semen of the donor is tested for AIDS and after that his semen is collected and sealed in plastic tubes. These tubes are stored in liquid nitrogen gas at a temperature of minus 190 degrees centigrade. One can preserve semen in this fashion for as many as 10 to 20 years. After six months, the donor is tested again for AIDS. If AIDS test is negative, then only the frozen sample is used for insemination." Infertility or childlessness is a major problem faced by married couples. As many as 10 per cent of couples do not conceive after one year of marriage. Generally, 50 per cent of infertile couples can be treated by the next door

gynaecologist by routine methods. However, 20 per cent of couples still fail to become pregnant within a year or two. These people need to go to specialised infertility clinics and get treated with new techniques of IVF, ICSI or sperm or egg donation.

Husbands are responsible for infertility in nearly 50 per

cent of cases. This is very important as the society tends to blame the wife and holds her responsible for infertility. The easiest way to find out whether the husband is responsible for infertility is by doing a semen analysis. Normal count in the males is around 40 to 60 million sperms per ml of semens. If the count is less than 20 million per

ml of semen or if the sperm movement is very poor then there is a definite male factor. Once the diagnosis of male infertility is established, the male is examined by the infertility specialist, preferably a surgeon or a urologist and treatment is given.

In males, infertility is generally due to a decrease in the sperm count in the semen. A fall in the sperm count is likely after suffering from diseases such as mumps or tuberculosis, or following surgeries such as vasectomy, hernia repair, and hydrocele operation. Certain drugs, alcohol intake, smoking may also decrease the sperm count. Men working in a hot environment such as foundries, and bus drivers can also witness a fall in their sperm count due to increased exposure to heat.

In recent times, certain studies in France have shown that there is an overall decrease in semen count in normal as well as infertile men. They feel that chemical pollution is responsible for this decrease. However, there is no study conducted in India to support this observation.

The helpline number is 9820224000. It is open from Monday to Saturday, from 8 am to 10 pm



(MCT)