

Low sperm count more prevalent with other health problems finds study



By Dr Ananya Mandal, MD March 19, 2018

A new study shows that more and more men have a low sperm count. The team of researchers from University of Padova in Italy, presented their work this week at the ENDO 2018, the Endocrine Society's 100th annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois.

The team included 5,177 male partners of infertile couples in Italy for this study. Alberto Ferlin, M.D., Ph.D., from University of Brescia and earlier from University of Padova led this study. The team tested the men thoroughly and also performed their sperm analysis. A low sperm count is considered to be counts below 39 million sperm per ejaculate. Half of the participants had low sperm counts.

The team then noted that men with a low sperm count were 1.2 times more likely to already have some other features. This includes a wider waistline, a higher body mass index (BMI), higher systolic blood pressure, higher levels of bad cholesterol LDL and lower levels of good cholesterol or HDL. They also had metabolic syndrome and insulin resistance. Metabolic syndrome refers to a composite condition with high blood pressure, high blood sugar, excess body fat around the centre and raised cholesterol and triglycerides. Metabolic syndrome raises a person's risk of developing diabetes, stroke and heart attack.

These men with a low sperm count were also 12 times more likely to have reduced testosterone levels. This is called hypogonadism. These men also were at risk of osteoporosis. Their bone density scan showed lower bone mass.

The researchers said that the problems of low sperm counts were the result of the metabolic problems such as obesity, high blood pressure, high blood sugar and high cholesterol. These problems were the reason for low testosterone levels and this was causing the low sperm counts according to the experts. They also add that there are other factors that lead to a lower sperm count. This includes genetics, excessive alcohol abuse, and excessively tight underwear, effects of heat, environment and chemicals.

Dr Alberto Ferlin said that, “: Infertile men are likely to have important co-existing health problems or risk factors that can impair quality of life and shorten their lives.. Fertility evaluation gives men the unique opportunity for health assessment and disease prevention.” He said that men treated for infertility should get a full health check up and diagnosed correctly. This would increase their chance of getting their partners pregnant and also reduce their risk of long term disease and early deaths.

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