

Three (3) reasons why drinking may end your hopes of fatherhood

Drinking alcohol is a pretty common practice for men across the globe. Whether it's date night at the local bar, unwinding with the guys over a cold beer or just having a drink out of pure boredom, social drinking is often a casual lifestyle choice that can have serious consequences. Studies show that binge drinking and heavy drinking do indeed harm sperm.

This guide from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides some context into the terms 'binge drinking' and 'heavy drinking':

	Binge Drinking	Heavy drinking	Underage drinking
Males	Five or more drinks on one occasion (within 2 to 3 hours)	Fifteen or more drinks per week	Any alcohol used under age 21

How does alcohol affect sperm and male fertility?

Numerous research shows that there is a direct link between alcohol consumption and the quality of sperm. For example, Van Heertum and Brooke (2017) outlined in their peer-reviewed research article entitled 'Alcohol and fertility: How Much Is Too Much?' that long-term, heavy alcohol use reduces gonadotropin release, testicular atrophy, and decreased testosterone and sperm production. Furthermore, these findings have been echoed by several other researchers, including Gude (2012), La Vignera et al. (2013) and Van Heertum and Brooke (2017). We've gone ahead and linked their works in the reference list below.

But what exactly is gonadotropin release, testicular atrophy and decreased testosterone anyway and why are they so important? Let's break down these fancy terms and show their role in helping the sperm perform at its maximum potential.

1. Let's talk about gonadotropin release

Gonadotropin, in the simplest of terms, is the hormone that triggers the creation of sperm in men. This hormone also plays a crucial role in maintaining the high levels of testosterone levels needed for male fertility. Therefore, heavy drinking of alcohol significantly reduces the body's ability to release this hormone, impacting the male's fertility.

2. Testicular Atrophy and what that means for men

Secondly, let's look into testicular atrophy as an effect of heavy drinking. Testicular Atrophy refers to the shrinking of the testicles, the two male reproductive glands located in the scrotum. The concern

with this shrinking of the testicles is that this can result in lower sperm count and/or lower testosterone levels. Considering that both low sperm count and low testosterone levels significantly reduce a man's ability to impregnate a woman, testicular atrophy can be a hopeful father's worst nightmare.

3. Decreased Testosterone

Let's dig into decreased testosterone as a result of heavy drinking. As you may have already guessed, Testosterone levels play a key role in the reproduction process. Low levels of testosterone can result in erectile dysfunction, reduced bone mass and a reduced sex drive. All these effects make it increasingly difficult to impregnate a woman.

So what now? Do I quit drinking completely?

It is clear that excessive alcohol consumption has a negative effect on male reproduction however are these results final? This has been a common question for men who have already spent years heavily consuming alcohol. According to research, a dramatic improvement of semen characteristics was noted within 3 months of withdrawal (La Vignera et al., 2013). That is to say that the breakdown of sperm parameters caused by alcohol use may be partially reversible if alcohol consumption is discontinued. All in all, men who drink heavily should consider decreasing their alcohol intake. Additionally, men who drink moderately should also be counseled regarding alcohol consumption based on their overall health status, and not only their reproductive health.

If you or someone you care about are planning to start a family and you would like more personal guidance for you and your partner, feel free to contact us at (876) 927-2481.

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References

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