



UROLOGICAL SOCIETY
OF AUSTRALIA
AND NEW ZEALAND

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USANZ urges men to understand their fertility is a marker of their health

The Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand (USANZ) is urging men to shake off the stigma around their own health, and to understand the link between fertility and long-term health.

Around one in twenty Australian men are infertile, and globally rates of male fertility have been declining at a [remarkable rate](#).

As many as one in seven men have varicocele, the most common reversible cause of infertility, although not all of them will need treatment.

Varicocele occurs when the veins in the scrotum that drain blood from the testicles become dilated and large. It can cause pain or discomfort, is increasingly common with age, and can impact fertility.

“As experts, we understand the social stigma around male infertility. But sometimes there are straightforward ways of treating it, and improving the chances of having children,” said USANZ Andrology Specialty Advisory Group lead, reproductive urologist Dr Shannon HK Kim.

“One patient of mine was referred to me with a treatable case of varicocele. We were able to help him, and he went from being told he’d never have children naturally, to becoming a father of three, without any additional help such as IVF. “

"Many patients I see are often unaware of potential association between varicocele and fertility challenges."

Male infertility is not just about reproduction though, it is a window into men's health as seen in a landmark study by doctors at the Stanford University School of Medicine.

The study explored links between male infertility and oncologic, cardiovascular, metabolic, and autoimmune diseases, and showed it may be a predictor of hospitalisation and mortality.

“There’s an emerging body of evidence suggesting that male infertility may be a harbinger of future health problems,” said Dr Kim.

“Just like erectile dysfunction can precede heart attacks, male infertility may be a predictor of future health problems in men.”

“It is a challenging journey for men to go through, and the underlying issues behind infertility can’t always be fixed, but examining them might find other health issues that can be addressed, and lead to a longer, healthier life.”

Lifestyle changes matter, and as well as improving fertility, they can help address other health issues.

In its 2023 report [‘The Health of Australia’s Males’](#), The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare noted there is a gap in data on the impacts of infertility, which is something Dr Kim would like to see addressed.

“We need to stop treating male infertility as a niche concern. It’s a public health issue, a diagnostic opportunity, and a chance to engage men in their own wellbeing.”

“Men need to know that the idea that you can somehow be less of a man because of infertility issues is out-dated and unnecessary, and we encourage men to seek help early if fertility is a concern.”

“Holistic approach of male fertility care can also improve men’s general health and quality of life.”

About Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand

The Urological Society of Australia and New Zealand is the peak professional body for urological surgeons in Australia and New Zealand. Urologists are surgeons who treat men, women and children with problems involving the kidney, bladder, prostate and male reproductive organs. These conditions include cancer, stones, infection, incontinence, urination difficulties, sexual dysfunction and pelvic floor problems. <https://www.usanz.org.au/>

