



# What Is the Morally Acceptable Way of Ordering a Sperm Count as Part of the Evaluation of Infertility?

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The diagnosis of male infertility, following a thorough history and physical exam, generally requires analysis of seminal fluid, particularly the sperm count. Typically, semen is obtained through masturbation in a medical facility washroom, often with the use of pornographic materials. However, this practice is dehumanizing and humiliating. It is also morally problematic, as the good end of seeking fatherhood does not justify a corrupt means. The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls masturbation “. . . an intrinsically and gravely disordered action.” “The deliberate use of the sexual faculty, for whatever reason, outside of marriage is essentially contrary to its purpose.”<sup>1</sup>

It is generally considered permissible for married couples to obtain seminal fluid samples from a nonlubricated, perforated condom after normal intercourse.<sup>2</sup> These nonreactive, nonlubricated polyurethane sheaths are available for this purpose from

Apex Medical Technologies.<sup>3</sup> They may be perforated several times with a small needle so as to retain a sample of semen without acting as a barrier method.

## Notes

1. CCC 2352.
2. Reproductive Technology (Evaluation and Treatment of Infertility)—Guidelines for Catholic Couples, copyright 2009, Natural Family Planning Program, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, available at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/reproductive-technology/upload/Reproductive-Technology-Evaluation-Treatment-of-Infertility-Guidelines.pdf>; Infertility Treatments—National Catholic Bioethics Center. Prepared by the Ethicists of the NCBC, February 2013; Revised 2015. Available at [http://www.ncbcenter.org/files/2314/4916/3482/NCBCsumFAQ\\_InfertilityTreatments.pdf](http://www.ncbcenter.org/files/2314/4916/3482/NCBCsumFAQ_InfertilityTreatments.pdf).
3. Male-FactorPaks produced by Apex Medical Technologies, [www.apexfertility.com](http://www.apexfertility.com).