

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

factoid About 3 million people worldwide are alive today as a result of in vitro fertilization.

Q. If a guy places a laptop or a hot item on their lap, does that affect sperm production?

A. The ideal temperature for sperm is about 5 degrees below normal body temperature (or about 93.6 degrees F), which is the reason why the scrotum – the sack that contains sperm-producing testes – hangs down away from the groin. In warm weather, the muscles in the scrotum tend to relax and drop low to keep cool. When ambient temperatures are colder, the testes are drawn close to the body to help maintain warmth.

Because spermatogenesis, or the process of making sperm, is heat sensitive, recent studies have shown that extended laptop use can warm things up enough to reduce sperm counts. Similarly, exposure to the high temperatures found in hot tubs and saunas can also make a difference in how much sperm is produced in the short term.

But if you think laptop use and plenty of time in the Jacuzzi are the answer to male birth control, keep in mind that among the millions of sperm that are released in an average ejaculate, it only takes one to fertilize an egg.

Whether or not you are trying to prevent the little swimmers from reaching their ultimate destination in one of the fallopian tubes, it makes sense to keep them healthy. The quantity, quality and motility of sperm, it turns out, can be something of a barometer for overall health. Alcohol, tobacco and drug use can all have an adverse affect, while things like maintaining a healthy weight, exercising and reducing stress are things that can help. While you are at, it's probably a good idea to keep those laptops off your lap and on a desk when in use.

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