Table 1

Initial advice to male patients

- **Frequency and timing of sexual intercourse**

People who are concerned about their fertility should be informed that sexual intercourse every two to three days optimises the chance of pregnancy. Timing intercourse to coincide with ovulation causes stress and is not recommended.

- **Alcohol**

Men should be informed that alcohol consumption within the Department of Health's recommendations of three to four units per day for men is unlikely to affect their fertility. Men should be informed that excessive alcohol intake is detrimental to semen quality.

- **Smoking**

Men who smoke should be informed that there is an association between smoking and reduced semen quality (although the impact of this on male fertility is uncertain), and that stopping smoking will improve their general health.

- **Caffeinated beverages**

People who are concerned about their fertility should be informed that there is no consistent evidence of an association between consumption of caffeinated beverages (tea, coffee and colas) and fertility problems.

- **Body weight**

Men who have a body mass index of more than 29 should be informed that they are likely to have reduced fertility.

- **Tight underwear for men**

Men should be informed that there is an association between elevated scrotal temperature and reduced semen quality, but that it is uncertain whether wearing loose-fitting underwear improves fertilty.

- **Complementary therapy**

People who are concerned about their fertility should be informed that the effectiveness of complementary therapies for fertility problems has not been properly evaluated and that further research is needed before such interventions can be recommended.

Table adapted from National Collaborating Centre for Women's and Children's Health. Fertility: Assessment and treatment for people with fertility problems. RCOG Press: 2004, with the permission of the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.