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QUESTION

Discuss the factors facilitating the movement of sperm in the female reproductive tract

ANSWER

Human sperm are deposited into the anterior vagina, where to avoid vaginal acid and immune responses, they quickly contact cervical mucus and enter the cervix. Cervical mucus filters out sperm with poor morphology and motility and as such only a minority of ejaculated sperm actually enter the cervix. In the uterus, muscular contraction may enhance passage of sperm through the uterine cavity. A few thousand sperm swim through the uterotubal junction to reach the fallopian tubes (uterine tubes, oviducts) where sperm are stored in a reservoir, or at least maintained in a fertile state, by interacting with endosalpingeal (oviductal) epithelium as the time of ovulation approaches, the sperm becomes capacitated and hyperactivated. Which enables them to proceed towards the tubal ampulla. Sperm may be guided to the oocyte by a combination of thermotaxis and chemotaxis. Motility hyperactivation assists sperm in penetrating mucus in the tubes and the cumulus oophrous and zona pellcuida of the oocyte, so that they may finally fuse with the oocyte plasma membrane.