

Sperm Donation - Information for Donors

The donation of sperm to help someone to have a child is one of the most generous gifts anyone can give. Many donors feel a sense of pride, knowing the joy they have brought to people who could not otherwise become parents. However, the decision to donate can have far-reaching consequences for you, the people who receive your donation, any children that are born as a result, and for your own family if you have one.

This leaflet aims to:

- Help prepare you for donating
- Provide information about the law and how it affects you
- Answer your questions about donating
- Encourage you to think about the issues that you might face

Who can be a donor?

To be a donor you need to be between 18 and 45 (recommended upper age limit) and in good health. You should have good health in your immediate and extended family. You should be a non-smoker. More details about the criteria for being a sperm donor will be discussed with you in a consultation.

As a potential donor, you will attend an initial appointment with our donor coordinator. This appointment is to discuss your personal and family medical history and to give you more information about donating sperm. With your permission, we will contact your General Practitioner to ask whether he/she has any further relevant medical information.

Who needs donated sperm?

Donated sperm is needed by a broad group of patients. It can be a heterosexual couple where the man does not produce sperm. This might be due to poor testicular function, which could be the result of surgery, trauma, or cancer treatment. Other men carry a genetic abnormality, which they would transmit to the children.

Another cohort of patients needing donated sperm are same sex female couples and single women.

Donated sperm is used to fertilise oocytes (eggs), either by insemination or with IVF treatment.

What do I have to consider before donating my sperm?

The gift of donating sperm is one like no other, but it can have a far-reaching impact on the women who receive your donation (and their families), the donor children, and you and your family.

In a legal and social sense, the people who receive your donation will be the parents of any child that is born. However, the child will inherit your genes and therefore they, and any children of theirs, will be genetically related to you. You should consider how you feel about this now and try to imagine how you may feel in the future.

As the law now stands once they reach 18 years of age anyone born as a result of your donation will be able to find out who you are, and may want to get in touch. You need to think about this carefully and discuss it with your partner (if you have one) and your wider family.

What advice and support can I get?

Your decision to donate sperm is an important one, with life-long implications. There are many issues to consider and some of them are complicated.

All our sperm donors have a session with our counsellor. This is a confidential session to give you the opportunity to explore the short and long term implications of sperm donation and allow you to consider how sperm donation might affect you, your partner (if you have one), your children (if you have any) and any child who may be born as a result of your donation.

Counselling gives you a chance to ask questions in complete confidentiality. Our counsellor aims to enable you to come to a confident and comfortable decision about whether to donate sperm. There is no obligation to continue the process following your counselling session. As well as addressing any questions you may have, the counselling session also provides you with an opportunity to consider what information you would like to give about yourself, and to learn who might have access to this information and when. Counselling is available throughout your time at the clinic and you may return at any time in the future to see our counsellor if you have any issues concerning your donation.

What tests have to be done before a donor is accepted?

- Semen analysis – to ensure your sample meets the required criteria for sperm donation.

We need to carry out screening tests to ensure that you are free from infection and have a normal genetic makeup. You will need to have blood tests for the following:

- To see if you are a carrier of the Cystic Fibrosis gene
- To check that you have normal chromosomes
- To see if you have any infectious diseases: HIV, Hepatitis A,B and C, HTLV, CMV
- To check whether you have any sexually transmitted infections: Syphilis

You will need to give a urine sample to test for the following:

- To check whether you have any sexually transmitted infections: Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea

Sometimes we will do additional blood tests due to your ethnicity or if there is something in your history to indicate that you may be at a higher risk of certain other diseases.

What details will I have to give about myself and why?

The details you will be asked for include:

- Your name
- The name you were born with if this is different to your current name
- Your date and place of birth
- Your NHS or passport number
- Your address at the time of donation
- Whether you have children of your own and, if so, how many and whether they are girls or boys
- Your appearance – height and weight, and colour of eyes, hair and skin
- Yours and your biological parents and grandparents ethnic groups
- Your medical history, any physical or mental health problems or disabilities you have
- Whether there are any medical conditions that you know of in your own biological family that could potentially be passed on
- Your job
- Your religion
- Your skills and interests
- Your reasons for donating

Finally, yet importantly, you will be invited to write a description of yourself and a goodwill message to any child or children. People conceived as a result of sperm donation are often curious about their origins. They may want to know whether they look like you or have a similar personality. They may also wonder why you decided to

donate and whether you have children of your own. You will be encouraged to include information about your education, achievements, views, values and life experiences. This important information enables the child's parents to talk to them about their origins as they grow up and helps them build a mental picture of you.

Donation and the law

On 1st April 2005 a new law came into effect, giving donor conceived people the right to apply for the following identifying information about their donor once they are 18 years old:

- Full name (and any previous names)
- Date of birth
- Town or district of birth
- Last known postal address (or address at the time of registration)

This means that any person born as a result of your donation has the potential to contact you in the future, although it's not known how many donor-conceived people will want to do this.

Where is the information about me held?

We send the information you provide on your Donor Information Form to the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) for them to record on the Register of Donors. The only people entitled to access identifiable information about you are any people created from your donated sperm.

The HFEA will try to contact you in the event of a donor-conceived person making an application for identifying information about you. This is to let you know that an application has been made, but they will not be able to tell you the name of the person or give you any identifying information about them.

You can provide updated information to Complete Fertility Centre or directly to the HFEA at any time after your donation cycle. This could include new medical information or your change of address for example.

Do I have any say about how my samples are used?

Not really. Although you can by law place conditions on who can use your donated sperm, in practice, you may not be accepted if you impose conditions. Complete Fertility Centre has a duty to provide equality of opportunity to our donation programme and we need to ensure that any conditions imposed do not unfairly discriminate against a person or group of people.

How many children could be born from my donation?

Each donor can by law donate sperm to create a maximum of 10 families. Each delivery could result in one baby, twins, or possibly even triplets. Also if you consent to this, embryos created from your donated sperm could be frozen and stored for future treatment.

What if I change my mind?

By law, when you donate you must consent in writing to your sperm being used in treatment. You can change or withdraw your consent up to the point at which any sperm are used for insemination or IVF/ICSI treatment, or any embryos created from your donated sperm are transferred to the recipient.

However, given that fertility treatment is costly, time-consuming, and emotionally and physically stressful, it is important to be sure beforehand that you really want to donate.

Could I be sued for any reason?

Any donor-conceived person born with an inherited condition could sue for damages if it can be proven that you had deliberately withheld information about your medical history at the time of your donation. It is imperative that you tell the consultant about any inheritable disabilities or illnesses that affect you or your family.

Do I have any responsibilities towards a child created from my sperm?

You have no legal obligations to any child created from your donation. The person who received your donation (and their partner if they have one) will be the child's legal and social parent(s). You will not be named on the birth certificate and have no rights over how the child is brought up, nor will you have to contribute financially.

However, as you are genetically related to the child you may feel you have certain emotional and psychological responsibilities.

Knowing about their genetic heritage helps people to make sense of who they are. This is why you are asked to give information about your family and medical history and to write something about yourself that a donor-conceived person can read when they reach 18, or the parents may ask for as the child grows up.

What will the child have been told about me?

We inform all recipients of donated sperm during their counselling session that it is in the best interests of donor-conceived children to learn about the fact of their donor conception from an early age.

Most parents intend to be open and will share any non-identifying information that they have about you with their child(ren). People conceived as a result of sperm

donation are often curious about their genetic origins. They may want to know whether they look like you or have a similar personality. They may also wonder why you decided to donate and whether you have children of your own. This important information that you provide enables the parents to talk about the child's origins and helps the child to build a mental picture of you.

Can I get any information about a child created from my sperm?

Legally, you can make an application to Complete Fertility Centre or to the HFEA to find out the number, gender and year of birth of any child created from your sperm. In practice, if you wish, we can also let you know if there are any confirmed pregnancies.

What if a child created from my sperm wants to get information about me?

Any child conceived using donated gametes will from the age of 16 years be able to obtain the following non-identifiable information about their donor from the HFEA:

- Physical description (height, weight, eye, hair and skin colours)
- Year and country of birth
- Ethnic group
- Whether the donor had any genetic children when they registered and the number and sex of those children
- Occupation, religion and interests (if supplied)
- The ethnic group of the donor's parents
- Whether the donor was adopted or donor conceived
- Marital status (at the time of donation)
- Details of any screening tests and medical history
- Skills
- Reason for donating
- A goodwill message
- A description of themselves as a person (pen portrait)

From the age of 18 years they also have the right to know the following identifying information:

- Full name (and any previous names)
- Date of birth
- Town or district of birth
- Last known postal address (or address at the time of registration)

A child born from your donated sperm can apply to the HFEA for identifying information about you. The HFEA will contact you to let you know that an application has been made (the HFEA will only be able to contact you if you have kept them up-to-date with your current address). The HFEA will not tell you the name of the person, or any of their identifying details.

What will the receiving parent/parents have been told about me?

The parent/parents have the right to see the non-identifying information from your registration form. They will not have been told any identifying information.

How is sperm banking done?

The following section gives an overview of the sperm banking process for a donor.

First appointment

Your first appointment will be with the donor coordinator. You will be informed about the process, and you will be asked to produce a sample for a semen analysis. The semen sample is produced by masturbation in a private room in a quiet setting. The sample is normally analysed while you are in the clinic, to ascertain that the quality and quantity is sufficient for being a donor.

Counselling

If you are suitable to be a donor, you will meet with the fertility counsellor to make sure all aspects of sperm donation have been thought through. You will have the opportunity to ask any questions.

Screening

You will have screening tests to ensure that you are free from infection and have a normal genetic makeup.

Consents

You will be asked to complete and sign consent forms prior to sperm banking. The donor coordinator will talk you through these forms.

Medical consultation

You will have a medical consultation with a consultant to go through your medical history and make sure that you are fit and well. A physical examination will also be conducted.

Sperm banking

You will come to the clinic normally once per week to produce a sperm sample by masturbation, which we freeze. Normally we ask you to produce 15 sperm samples to ensure we have a sufficient amount stored for our recipients.

Final screening

Following your last donation the samples will be quarantined for 3 months before we ask you to attend for final screening. If all results are negative, meaning that you have not contracted any infection while sperm banking, your sperm will be released and used for treatment.

Issues to consider with sperm donation

What if there is something wrong with me?

As a potential sperm donor your semen sample will be thoroughly analysed. There is a risk that we will discover that your sperm is not suitable.

Since we only accept sperm donors with a top quality sperm count, this does not necessarily mean that your own fertility is affected; only that it is not suitable for freezing/thawing and using in treatment.

However, if there is an abnormal result that could mean you will have trouble conceiving, the result and implications would be fully explained and we offer full support and counselling.

Ancestry Websites

It is important to be aware that due to the emergence of ancestry websites it is possible that donors, donor conceived people and their close genetic relatives could become identifiable to each other. This will be discussed further at your implications counselling session.

Will I be reimbursed?

The law prohibits payment (or other benefits) to people donating their sperm. The HFEA does however allow compensation for the donations and this will be discussed with you at your appointment.

Where can I find out more?

Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority (HFEA)

The authority that regulates and monitors all licensed fertility treatments.

Tel: 0207 291 8200

Website: <https://www.hfea.gov.uk/>

Donor Conception Network

A national support group for people who have conceived through donation and those considering being donors.

Tel: 020 7278 2608

Website: <http://www.dcnetwork.org/>

British Infertility Counselling Association (BICA)

The professional association for infertility counsellors and counselling in the UK. The website includes a list of counsellors providing services and a downloadable leaflet on choosing a counsellor.

Website: <http://www.bica.net/>

Fertility Network UK

The largest network in the UK offering information and advice by phone and face to face. It has groups throughout the country and also produces a range of publications on infertility.

Tel: 01424 732361

Website: <https://fertilitynetworkuk.org/>

Fertility Friends

An active self-help community for people experiencing the pain of infertility. This is a useful site featuring message boards and live chatrooms.

Website: www.fertilityfriends.co.uk