



Egg Freezing – Fertility Preservation

Information for Patients

1. Freezing eggs allows you to store eggs for future use allowing you the choice of when to start a family.
2. Egg numbers and quality declines with age. The best time to freeze eggs is before the age of 35 years.
3. Over 90% of eggs survive when thawed using the latest vitrification techniques at BCRM

Reasons for freezing eggs

- Social: A woman wishing to preserve her fertility for reasons relating to employment, not yet in a relationship to start a family, or not sure about if and when to start a family.
- Family history: where a woman's mother or close relative has suffered premature menopause
- Cancer: you are scheduled to have chemotherapy or radiotherapy for cancer which will reduce the number of eggs e.g. breast cancer, lymphoma, bowel cancer.
- Ovarian problems: you have recurrent ovarian cysts, endometriomas (severe endometriosis) or is due to undergo surgery that will result in the loss of the ovary or eggs.
- Other medical conditions: you are having medication for rheumatic conditions such as chemotherapy that can damage the ovaries

Conditions of Storage

- Egg, sperm and embryo storage is governed by legislation. The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) permit the storage of eggs for a maximum of ten years in the UK.

Ethical Considerations

- The storage and disposal of eggs raises important ethical issues. Before your eggs are stored you will need to have read, and understood, all the information provided in this document. You will have the opportunity to discuss issues with a specialist at the BCRM, and be given the opportunity to ask any questions.
- It is a legal requirement that anyone who stores eggs, sperm or embryos should decide what they would like to happen to them, if they should die or become mentally incapacitated. You may wish to enable a named partner to use your eggs after your death.

Counselling and patient support:

- You are also entitled to free counselling sessions if you wish to discuss the emotional

Consent

- You will be asked to sign consent forms for the storage and for the future use of your eggs. You can change your consent at any time by contacting us.

Patient Screening

- There is a small risk of passing on infections to a child resulting from the use of your eggs. This is why we have asked you to have blood testing for HIV, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C and Syphilis prior to egg storage. Despite this testing there may still be a theoretical risk of transmission of a viral infection between eggs in storage.

Important points

- Depending on your ovarian reserve, it may only be possible to collect a limited number of eggs and that occasionally it is not possible to collect any eggs.
- You should be aware that not all women have eggs that are suitable for freezing.
- The freezing and thawing process may have a detrimental effect on your eggs.
- If you have cancer, we will not know if this has an effect on your eggs.
- Eggs collected from just one cycle of stimulation treatment may not be sufficient to offer a realistic chance of achieving a pregnancy.
- Where you have an expected low reserve, we recommend you have more than one cycle of egg freezing to give you an improved chance of pregnancy.
- You can pay to have 3 cycles for the cost of 2.

Processing and storing your eggs

Step 1: Ovarian stimulation

- ⇒ The Fertility preservation process of egg freezing requires stimulation of your ovaries. The purpose is to obtain a sufficient number of eggs, to optimise your chances of becoming pregnant.
- ⇒ Your ovaries are monitored with ultrasound scans over a 1-2 week period when you'll be taking medication to stimulate your ovaries.

Step 2: Egg collection

- ⇒ When your ovaries have been found to produce the desired number of follicles you will have your eggs collected under anaesthetic sedation. You can usually return to normal activities within a few hours of the procedure.

Step 3: Egg vitrification and storage

- ⇒ Our specialist embryology scientists, will freeze your eggs in special storage tanks (egg bank) at BCRM. They will be frozen using the advanced vitrification techniques at a temperature of -196C. This prevents the eggs from ageing.
- ⇒ Your eggs will be processed into a number of sealed straws, to allow them to be used in the most efficient way to achieve a pregnancy.
- ⇒ Strict laboratory checking procedures are followed to be sure that every sample is clearly marked for future identification.
- ⇒ Samples stored in this way will not deteriorate with time however you should be aware that we cannot give an absolute guarantee of safe long-term storage.
- ⇒ All possible precautions and safeguards are in place but failure of the storage system can occur and we cannot give an absolute guarantee of safe long-term storage.
- ⇒ The storage service might be terminated subject to prevailing policies in the UK or due to Parliamentary legislation. If so, you will be informed of this and given the options.

Keeping in contact with us

- It is vital that you remain in contact with the BCRM. **You must inform us of any change of your address.** If you do not use the stored eggs within a set period of time we will write to offer you options including extension of the storage period if UK law permits this.
- **If we cannot contact you when your consent has expired we will be legally obliged to discard your eggs**

Future Use of Stored Eggs

- You can contact us in the future to have your fertility tested. You may not need your stored eggs, in which case they could be discarded.
- If however you do need to use your stored eggs please contact the BCRM to arrange an appointment so we can discuss options personalised to your individual circumstances.
- Your eggs will be at different stages of maturity when collected and this will mean that if you do need to use them to create embryos, you will require intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) which is a form of IVF treatment.
- We cannot guarantee that embryos will be created or that a pregnancy will be achieved through using your stored eggs.

If you have any queries please contact us: 0117 301 8605 or info@bcmr.org.uk