



Conceiving with donor sperm

Donor sperm has been used for over a hundred years to help women become pregnant. In the last 50 years, two million people were born in Western Europe and North America using donor sperm, and in Britain there are parents and grandparents who themselves are the result of treatment with donor sperm. It is now recognised as a standard fertility treatment and in the UK is regulated by law. Donor sperm may be used in IUI, IVF or ICSI treatments.

Who may benefit from fertility treatment with donor sperm?

A woman or couple may need to use donor sperm for one of several reasons:

- a man's testes may never have produced sperm because of a genetic condition
- surgery or drugs to treat cancer may have left a man infertile
- a man may produce sperm, but too few to create a pregnancy
- a woman is single or in a single-sex relationship

Who can have treatment with donor sperm?

MFS operates a non-discriminatory policy about access to services, investigations and treatments. The clinic provides fertility treatment for couples, single and lesbian women.

The welfare of any potential child created as a result of treatment at MFS is always taken into careful consideration before any agreement to treat a patient, whether they are single, or in a heterosexual or single-sex relationship.

Who can become a sperm donor?

Donors are men aged 18 to 45 who are fit and healthy, have no family history of serious illness and whose sperm samples can survive the freeze-thaw process. They come from all backgrounds and professions. Sperm is collected and frozen from regular donors at MFS, but some is obtained from other centres permitted by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), which may include sperm banks from abroad.

How are donors tested?

Before being accepted as a donor, a man's blood is tested to:

- determine his blood group
- screen for any infections such as gonorrhoea, syphilis, chlamydia, HIV and Hepatitis B and C. Donors must test negative for all these
- screen for genetic abnormalities, such as Cystic Fibrosis
- screen for cytomegalovirus (CMV) - a rubella-like virus. In accordance with current guidelines, sperm samples from a donor who is CMV positive can only be used by a woman who has also been exposed to CMV. This may reduce the availability of sperm to some women

A new, screened donor's sperm sample is frozen and stored for six months before it can be used. After the quarantine period the blood tests are repeated and if all are still satisfactory, the sample is released for use in treatment.

What can a patient know about the donor?

A patient will be told non-identifying information such as hair and eye colour, height, weight and blood group. Some sperm donors also write additional information about themselves in a 'pen portrait', including details such as his hobbies, likes and dislikes. This may be given to the patient and she may wish, in time, to pass it on to her child.

In 2005 the law regarding donor anonymity changed so that any child born from sperm donated after that date will be able, on reaching the age of 18 - or sooner if they plan to marry - to access identifying information about the donor. The donor-conceived adult may then choose to share this previously confidential information with their mother/parents. However, it is not available to the woman until then.

How are sperm donors and recipients matched?

MFS will match, as closely as possible and as required, the following characteristics of the donor:

- ethnicity
- CMV status
- eye and hair colour
- height and build

Consenting to treatment with donor sperm

Before any fertility treatment using donor sperm, the woman must sign a form consenting (ie agreeing) to her treatment.

In addition if she is part of a couple, that is, one of:

- a heterosexual married couple or of a civil partnership, under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008, the woman receiving treatment and her husband or civil partner will automatically be the legal parents of any child born from her treatment:
 - the woman should complete form *HFEAWP* (provided by MFS) to consent to her partner being the legal parent
 - her husband or civil partner should complete form *HFEAPP* to confirm that they do not object to being recognised as the legal parent
- a heterosexual co-habiting couple or of a same-sex co-habiting couple:
 - under the HFE Act 2008 the woman can consent to her partner being named the legal parent of any child born as a result of her treatment by completing form *HFEAWP* (provided by MFS)
 - for this to happen, her partner must also consent to be the legal parent of any child born from her treatment by completing form *HFEAPP*
 - if the partner does not consent in writing, the child will have no second legal parent

Both the woman and her partner can make changes to or withdraw their consent at any point until the time of the sperm, egg or embryo transfer. Changes to consent must be made using new forms. MFS recommends that patients seek qualified legal advice for specialist information on family law or inheritance law if necessary.

Reserving donor sperm

MFS has only a small bank of donor sperm. Samples of donor sperm are bought in or allocated on an individual patient basis, after MFS has confirmed the patient's CMV status and the required characteristics of the donor. Sometimes sourcing the donor sperm may take some months. As soon as the recipient has paid for the sperm, it will be allocated exclusively for her treatment. If she becomes pregnant before this allocation has all been used, she will know that some remains available for use in future treatment.

If a patient purchases sperm but does not use it within a year, or if she loses contact with the clinic, MFS has the option to buy back the sperm, so long as there are no exceptional circumstances why her treatment hasn't progressed and the pregnancy slot is still available.

Can sperm from the same donor be used for more than one child?

If a woman becomes pregnant from fertility treatment using donor sperm and she would like more children in the future, she should advise MFS as soon as possible after her confirmed positive pregnancy test, so that more sperm from the same donor can be reserved for her use, whenever possible. If more sperm from the

same donor cannot be obtained, the patient may need to use a different donor and so her next child will be a genetic half-brother or half-sister of the first.

For how long can sperm, or embryos created from donor sperm, be frozen?

Legislation determines the time that MFS, with the donor's consent, is allowed to store sperm or embryos created from his sperm. Currently they may be legally stored for 10 years. Under exceptional circumstances, storage may be extended up to 55 years from the date of freezing (to be reviewed every 10 years), if the donor, the donor's partner or someone to whom the sperm is allocated is prematurely infertile or likely to become prematurely infertile.

Special considerations of using donor sperm

Potential patients should be advised:

- sperm needs to be kept frozen in liquid nitrogen in a storage cryobank. Although all is done to prevent any failure of the storage system, including a 24 hour alarm system, MFS cannot give an absolute guarantee against such failure
- the sperm sample may not thaw successfully or prepare as well as required on the day of the treatment. If available, an additional vial of sperm may be required
- when planning her family, the recipient must consider that donor sperm and embryos created from donor sperm may be stored for a limited time
- donors have the right at any time to withdraw consent to use their sperm or embryos, up to the point of transfer
- initially only ten 'live birth events' are permitted for each sperm donor before use of his sperm is restricted to 'sibling pregnancies'. In which case it may not be possible to use the donor sperm a patient has already paid for and an alternative donor must be found

Results

Results of all MFS treatment cycles can be viewed via midlandfertility.com/success-rates.

Costs

Please refer to the current List of Charges in either the Patient Finance Information leaflet or via midlandfertility.com/fees.

Further information

Please visit midlandfertility.com and search for 'Treatments' or read the following MFS infosheets:

- Counselling
 - IUI
 - IVF
 - ICSI
- (downloadable from midlandfertility.com by searching for 'MFS Treatment Literature', or in hardcopy from MFS).
- Donor Conception Network via dcnetwork.org
 - National Gamete Donation Trust via ngdt.co.uk