

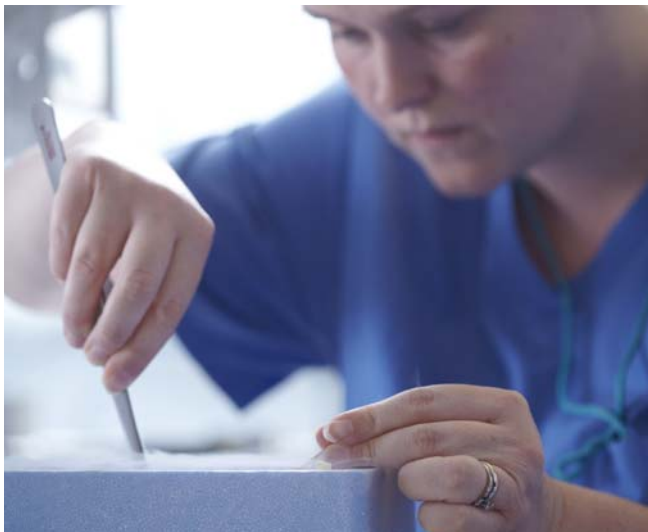
Embryo freezing

It is very common for more embryos to be created than we are able to transfer for you in your treatment cycle. If these embryos develop into good quality blastocysts on Day 5 or Day 6, they can be frozen and stored for use in a future treatment cycle. We routinely freeze embryos at the blastocyst stage; however, in exceptional circumstances, we are able to freeze embryos at all developmental stages.

Embryos can remain safely in storage over a long period. This procedure has been performed successfully for many years with scientific studies demonstrating that there are no long-term detrimental effects following embryo freezing and storage.

Freezing your embryos enables you to use them in a future treatment cycle without the additional expense and inconvenience of having your ovaries stimulated or having to undergo a subsequent egg collection procedure.

The freezing and thawing process is quite stressful for the embryos and sometimes not all embryos will survive. Therefore, your chance of a successful pregnancy in a Frozen Embryo Replacement cycle is slightly lower than in a fresh cycle. Our embryology team can guide you on our survival rates, and how many embryos to thaw and transfer to give you the best possible chance of a successful pregnancy.



Herts & Essex
Fertility Centre



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Freezing
Eggs | Sperm | Embryos

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Freezing

Freezing allows us to store your eggs, sperm or embryos until you are ready to use them. They can be stored safely in liquid nitrogen for many years.

Egg freezing

Egg freezing should be considered for fertility preservation if you are at risk of premature menopause or if you are to have surgery to remove your ovaries. Egg freezing can preserve your fertility if you are to undergo radiotherapy or chemotherapy treatment for cancer.

We can freeze eggs for non-medical reasons as a means of preserving your fertility i.e. if you are currently not in a position to have a child. This is known as Elective Egg Freezing (or Social Egg Freezing) and may be for you if you have not yet met the right partner, or you have concerns that your fertility may be impaired as you grow older.

What is involved?

You will need an initial consultation with a Fertility Consultant to discuss details of the treatment and ensure Egg Freezing is the right option for you.

Before retrieving your eggs, you will need daily injections of reproductive hormone to stimulate your ovaries to produce several eggs. When your eggs reach the optimal size, they are collected from your ovaries by a Fertility Consultant in theatre using a fine needle under ultrasound guidance, while you are under intravenous sedation. The embryologist will freeze and store your eggs in a procedure known as Vitrification, until you are ready to use them.

How do I use my frozen eggs?

When you are ready to start a family, you will receive a course of medication to prepare your uterus to receive an embryo or embryos created from your frozen eggs. ICSI is the recommended laboratory technique to maximise the chance of fertilisation with frozen eggs. This involves the injection of a single sperm directly into the egg to achieve fertilisation. An embryologist will update you daily on fertilisation and embryo development, and guide you until your return to the clinic for your embryo transfer.

Consent forms

The Herts & Essex Fertility Centre is regulated by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) who specify that all patients must receive counselling and that patients must give written consent for the centre to store their eggs. The forms will record how long you wish us to store the eggs, and what to do if you were to die or become unable to make a decision yourself. If you are donating some of your eggs for another person's treatment, you will be required to sign a specific consent form.

You can vary or withdraw consent at any time, either before treatment or before the eggs are used.



Sperm freezing

You can consider sperm freezing if you wish to store your sperm to use for treatment in the future. This may be because you are to undergo a vasectomy, are having your testicles removed due to cancer, have sperm that is deteriorating in quality or you are about to undergo medical treatment, such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy that may affect your fertility.

We also freeze sperm to be used for donation as this allows the sample to be quarantined for six months.

What is involved?

You will have an initial consultation with a Fertility Consultant who will explain the processes involved in freezing and storing your sperm. A semen sample is required on the day of your appointment to assess your sperm quality.

At your next appointment you will be screened for infectious diseases, including HIV and Hepatitis B and C. Counselling sessions will be available for you to consider the implications of donating your sperm for use by another couple.

You must give written consent for us to store your sperm. The forms allow you to stipulate what should happen to your sperm if you were to die or become unable to make a decision yourself, for how long you want to store your sperm (usually ten years), whether your partner can use the sperm later to create a family and whether you wish to be recorded as the father of any child born after your death. If you are donating sperm for another patient's treatment you must sign the relevant consent form.

You can vary or withdraw your consent at any time, either before treatment or before the sperm is used.

You will need to produce a fresh sample of sperm which will be frozen and stored in liquid nitrogen.

How do I use my frozen sperm?

When you are ready to use your sperm, it will be thawed and quality tested before deciding on the best IVF method to use for fertilisation.