

Thank you for enquiring about donating sperm to help another couple or woman establish a pregnancy. This information sheet has been written in order to explain why sperm donation is needed and to answer some of your questions.

Treatment and research using donated sperm is licensed and regulated by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) under the terms of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990.

Why Is Sperm Donation Needed?

Sperm donation offers hope for a large number of couples or single women who otherwise would be unable to have children. Some men are unable to produce sperm for a variety of reasons. This may include irreversible testicular damage following surgery or chemotherapy, inadequate testicular development or testicular failure. For these couples, donor insemination (DI) offers their only chance of having a baby.

Additionally, men that are carriers of genetic diseases such as Cystic Fibrosis may request the use of donor sperm rather than risk giving birth to a child who may suffer greatly and die at an early age. In some other cases men may produce sperm of such poor quality that despite pursuing IVF treatment, have a very low chance of a pregnancy occurring without the use of donated sperm.

Who Are Potential Donors?

1. Volunteer donors.
2. Relatives or friends of men who need donated sperm.

Do I Need To Have Completed My Family Before Donating?

No, but you need to consider the implications of donating sperm and any children that may result from these donations.

Are There Any Age Limits?

Sperm donors should be between 18 and 45 years at the time of sperm donation.

Will Donors Remain Anonymous?

There is a requirement for donors' names to be given to the HFEA to hold on its information register. This register therefore contains both identifying and non-identifying (e.g. eye colour, hair colour, occupation) information about the donors. In June 2004, Parliament passed the "Disclosure of Donor Information Regulations". This new regulation meant that from April 2005, all donors who donate sperm to clinics could be identified in the future. However, this will only happen if the children born from donated sperm request this information when they reach a minimum age of 18. In the event of this happening, the HFEA will seek to inform the donor that an application for identifying information has been made. At present detailed arrangements regarding this are still being put in place, however, the HFEA will not disclose any information about the resultant child to the donor. For these reasons, it is very important that we are notified of any changes of address.

If your sperm are used to assist a woman in becoming pregnant, the choice of recipient will be entirely at the discretion of the medical staff and neither the donor's or recipient's identity will be revealed. However, you may specify information you would like the recipient woman or couple to have.

The only exception to the above is when the donor has come forward specifically to donate to a friend or relative. We will then offer counselling relating to the special problems created when the donor and recipient are known to one another.

Will Donors Have A Continuing Responsibility to Any Child Following The Donation?

No, donors have no relationship in law with any child resulting from treatment using sperm that they have donated.

A child born disabled as a result of a donor's failure to disclose inherited diseases in his family about which he knew, or ought reasonably to have known, may be able to sue the donor for damages. However, provided donors are open and honest about their medical and family history this is highly unlikely.

What Tests Will Be Done Before I am Accepted?

All donors are screened for Hepatitis B and C, HIV, Syphilis and CMV. A urethral swab is taken to test for Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea and other potential sexually transmitted diseases. These tests will need to be repeated 6 months after you have completed your donations in order to release these samples from quarantine for use. A physical examination is also undertaken and blood is taken to test blood group, chromosomes and whether you are a carrier of the cystic fibrosis gene. These tests will all be explained to you in greater detail at the time of the first consultation.

What Does Sperm Donation Involve?

At initial consultation we will discuss with you the social, medical and legal aspects of sperm donation. A history will be taken including a screening for inherited medical conditions in your family.

At the Oxford Fertility Unit, all potential donors are seen by an independent counsellor. You should ensure that you are given enough information so that you understand sufficiently to make an informed decision. If you are in doubt about any of the procedures or ethical aspects involved, please ask. A counsellor is available throughout the donation process if required.

We suggest a cooling off period of one week minimum following these consultations. If you still wish to proceed, you should contact us to arrange to produce a semen sample for analysis and to have your screening tests performed.

Is It Possible That I Might Meet The People Receiving My Sperm Accidentally?

All appointments at the Oxford Fertility Unit are given a specific date and time. It is highly unlikely that you will meet any of the people who may receive your sperm since this will not be used until after the quarantine period.

Will I Get Remuneration?

Donors may be reimbursed all reasonable out of pocket expenses incurred within the UK in connection with the donation (HFEA Directions D2006/1). This includes cost of travel and loss of earnings. Donors may be compensated for loss of earnings up to a daily maximum of £55.19 but with an overall limit of £250.00 for each course of sperm donation. Travel expenses should be receipted as far as possible and evidence should be provided for any loss of earnings. Donors will be paid their expenses from throughout the course of donation at the end of the programme, following the mandatory 180 day quarantining period and satisfactory final screening tests.

What Will Happen If A Donor Changes His Mind?

Under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act donors must give valid consent to the use and storage of their sperm, and of any embryos produced using the sperm. This consent is given by completing and signing a form supplied by the HFEA. For this consent to be valid, the donor must have received adequate information about sperm donation and must have been offered counselling before he signs the form. This consent may be withdrawn or varied at any time except in respect of an embryo that has already been placed into the recipient.

Will I Know If The People Receiving My Sperm Become Pregnant?

From April 2005 you will be able to find out if the recipients of your sperm have been successful in having a child. This information will not be passed on automatically but is available upon request. The implications of this information will be discussed during your Counselling appointment.

How Many Times May A Donor Donate?

The law states that there is a limit of the creation of up to ten different families and this must not be exceeded by any one donor; however sibling births are permissible which may result in more than 10 children being born.

What Should I Do Now?

If you would like to make an appointment to discuss becoming a sperm donor, please telephone the Oxford Fertility Unit on:

Oxford (01865) 782800
and ask to speak to Mary Cooke
Laboratory Administration Officer