

Information for Patients

How to help yourselves getting through the days of waiting following embryo transfer

Introduction

The 14–16 day wait following embryo transfer can be a very stressful time. After what may seem like never ending visits to the hospital for blood tests and scans, followed by the anticipation and excitement associated with egg collection, fertilisation and embryo transfer, you are then suddenly left on your own. Having been so involved in the process so far, it may seem strange that all you can do now is put your faith in 'mother nature' and wait! Naturally, this wait can generate anxiety, particularly as you have no control over the outcome, and may wonder 'am I pregnant or not?'

Whilst some degree of anxiety over the next two weeks is probably unavoidable, we have enclosed some suggestions which will hopefully help to minimize stress and ease the pressure of waiting.

Taking care of yourselves

By the time you have completed embryo transfer you really have done as much as you can possibly do at this stage towards achieving a pregnancy. Perhaps now is the best time to re-focus your time and energy onto yourselves and each other, and make taking care of yourselves your main priority. Indulging yourselves a little, and try to give yourselves a well-earned break. This can be achieved in different ways, depending on the things that you enjoy doing as an individual or couple. Going on a short holiday, to the cinema or to your favourite restaurant are things that might help you to relax. Although it is unlikely that you will be able to avoid thinking about the outcome of treatment, some distraction could be positively refreshing.

Contact with others

Socialising with friends and family during this time may be a good way of getting the support that you need and/or taking your mind off the wondering/waiting scenario. It may, however, be worth giving some thought to the kind of social situations that you feel would be helpful and those that it may be better to avoid for a while, particularly if treatment is unsuccessful.

Work

Some people may choose to go back to work once treatment has been completed, whilst others may decide to take time off to rest and unwind. This is a matter of personal choice based on what is best for you. It may be helpful for the woman to take the last two days off in case a period starts at work, which can be very difficult to cope with. Be aware that, occasionally, a period can start sooner or later than 14 days after the end of treatment.

Exercise and alternative therapies

Exercise may provide you with a sense of physical and emotional wellbeing and may also be a useful way of reducing the symptoms of stress. Although it is advisable to avoid strenuous exercise at this time, gentle swimming and walking could be helpful and restorative. Relaxation tapes, meditation or listening to your favourite music may also help to overcome the physical symptoms of stress. If you use aromatherapy oils please ensure that you avoid those that are contra-indicated when trying to get pregnant. Please seek the advice of a nurse or doctor if you plan to use acupuncture, reflexology, herbal remedies or any other form of alternative therapy.

If treatment is unsuccessful

This can be a very difficult time, not least because of the physical and emotional investment in the treatment process in the hope of becoming pregnant and then it seems there is nothing at the end of it. It may be worthwhile taking time to appreciate that you have suffered a loss and, as a consequence, you may be feeling considerably more vulnerable than usual.

Taking care of yourselves is particularly important, as is allowing yourselves time to grieve. Also, be aware that one partner may need more time than the other to come to terms with this particular loss before planning the next course of action.

What to do next

You will receive a letter from the Unit advising you about the outcome of treatment and the next course of action. For some, this may be the possibility of further treatment and for others, it may be that further treatment is not possible and you could be advised to consider other options. If you are unsure about what to do next and would like to discuss this further you may contact the reception staff and arrange a follow up appointment with a doctor. You may also wish to access the Counselling Service.

Counselling Service

The unit provides a free and confidential counselling service for patients and appointments are available to all patients before, during and after treatment. You do not have to explain your reasons why you may wish to see the counsellors, just call into Reception or Telephone (0161) 276 6494.

The Counselling Service is available Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.