

Information for Patients

Sedation for patients undergoing egg recovery

During the process of egg recovery the surgeon will place a scanning probe into the vagina in a very similar way to your previous scans. A fine needle is then inserted alongside the probe. When the needle is used to suck out the ripened eggs, a momentary discomfort often occurs - once for each ovary.

To help with this it is routine practice to use intravenous sedation and a short acting and very powerful pain relieving medication together, rather than general anaesthetic. You will therefore be sedated and not fully unconscious. This is very safe.

Can I choose to have a general anaesthetic?

You may have had a general anaesthetic in the past and feel you will not cope with sedation. There are some surgical reasons for using general anaesthetic, however these are rare and your surgeon will advise you if this is necessary.

The vast majority of patients in the UK and throughout the world have sedation to enable egg recovery and are very satisfied with it. Sedation is also recommended and preferred as the method for this procedure by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence UK (NICE) and is our technique of choice at Saint Mary's Hospital.

In a recent survey, over 95% of patients were very happy with their experience and would have sedation again if it was needed. They also benefited from low rates of nausea and vomiting, a quicker recovery and a shorter stay in hospital - often leaving by lunchtime. The majority of our sedated patients do not remember any detail of the procedure itself or discomfort.

What happens during the procedure?

During the procedure you will be monitored fully, which is routine. The surgeon will reassure you if necessary during the egg recovery procedure, but it is best to relax with the sedation and allow the surgeon to proceed.

It is important that you understand that with sedation there is a possibility that you may remember some events during surgery and that you may feel the probe and possibly a little discomfort. Only with a general anaesthetic would you be completely unaware.

Typically the whole process takes about 30 minutes and after a short period of recovery and a bite to eat and a drink, the ward nurses will ensure that you are safe to leave us. Whether you have sedation or a general anaesthetic, please remember that you should not operate any machine, drive or sign important documents until the day after as your judgement may be impaired.

Please ask the fertility nurses if you have any questions about what will happen to you.