



PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

SCREENING FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES PRIOR TO TREATMENT FOR ASSISTED CONCEPTION

WHY DO WE SCREEN FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES PRIOR TO ASSISTED CONCEPTION TREATMENT?

To help you prepare for future pregnancy and ensure safe storage of gametes and embryos, the Department of Reproductive Medicine tests for infections that could affect your treatment and pregnancy. This is recommended by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), the UK fertility regulatory body (<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/>).

The departmental policy states that all patients/donors must have virology screening before commencing assisted conception treatment within 3 months for the first treatments and every two years thereafter. It is important that you understand the implications of both positive and negative results before testing.

Please read the information below. If you wish to discuss any of the information further, then please do not hesitate to ask the nursing team. Supporting leaflets are available in the department regarding on-going treatment and care.

The screening includes:

- Hepatitis B.
- Hepatitis C.
- Syphilis.
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).
- Human T-cell Lymphotropic Virus 1 (HTLV-1) - in selected high-risk cases.

These infections may be more common in certain groups of people, such as those from specific geographical areas or with particular lifestyles. If you are worried about HIV, syphilis, or hepatitis and would like confidential advice or testing before coming to the Department of Reproductive Medicine, please visit or contact your local Northern Sexual Health clinic. For current contact details and opening hours, visit <https://thenorthernsexualhealth.co.uk/>.

WHAT IS HEPATITIS B?

Hepatitis B is a liver infection spread through blood, semen and vaginal fluids. The chance of getting it in the UK is low. The risk of getting hepatitis B is higher in some parts of the world, including Africa, Asia, the Middle East and parts of South America and Eastern Europe.

One can get hepatitis B from:

- having vaginal, anal or oral sex without using a condom or dam with a person who is infected
- having a blood transfusion in a country that does not check blood for hepatitis B. Blood transfusions in the UK are checked for hepatitis B.
- injecting drugs using shared needles
- being injured by a used needle
- having a tattoo or piercing with unsterilised equipment

Most adults who get Hepatitis B will clear it without treatment, but some do not and may need treatment by a liver specialist.

All pregnant women are offered a test for Hepatitis B because their babies can be vaccinated at birth to prevent them getting the virus.

WHAT COULD HEPATITIS B MEAN FOR ME IN PREGNANCY?

A pregnant woman with Hepatitis B could pass the virus on to her baby during pregnancy or birth.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTED CONCEPTION TREATMENT FOR PATIENTS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR HEPATITIS B?

If you or your partner test positive for Hepatitis B, the Saint Mary's team will refer you for further assessment and treatment.

The Department of Reproductive Medicine at Saint Mary's Hospital can provide some parts of your treatment. You will go to Saint Mary's for blood tests, scans, and monitoring. However, your egg collection and embryo transfer will happen at another clinic. The nurses at Saint Mary's will arrange this for you.

WHAT IS HEPATITIS C?

Hepatitis C is a virus that can infect the liver. Antiviral drugs are available to treat the infection. The hepatitis C virus is usually spread through blood-to-blood contact. Some ways the infection can be spread include:

- sharing razors or toothbrushes with infected person
- sharing unsterilised needles, especially for injecting recreational drug
- through unprotected sex – although this is very rare
- having a blood transfusion in a country that does not check blood for hepatitis C. Blood transfusions in the UK have been checked for hepatitis C since 1991.

WHAT COULD HEPATITIS C MEAN FOR ME IN PREGNANCY?

A pregnant woman with Hepatitis C can occasionally pass the virus on to her baby. This type of transmission is known as vertical transmission or mother-to-child transmission. The risk of this happening is relatively low, but it is a recognised possibility.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTED CONCEPTION TREATMENT FOR PATIENTS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR HEPATITIS C?

If you or your partner test positive for Hepatitis C, you will be referred to a liver specialist for further tests and treatment.

At Saint Mary's Hospital, the Department of Reproductive Medicine will provide part of your fertility treatment. You will go to Saint Mary's for blood tests, scans, and monitoring. However, your egg collection and embryo transfer will happen at another clinic. The nurses at Saint Mary's will arrange this for you.

WHAT IS HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (HIV)?

HIV is a virus that weakens your immune system, making it harder to fight infections and diseases. It is found in the body fluids of an infected person, including semen, vaginal and anal fluids, blood, and breast milk.

You are at risk of getting HIV if you come into contact with these fluids from a person with HIV. The most common way to get HIV in the UK is through anal or vaginal sex without a condom. Other ways include sharing needles or other injecting equipment, and from mother to baby during pregnancy, birth, or breastfeeding.

HIV can go unnoticed for many years because it may not cause symptoms right away. A test is needed to diagnose HIV.

The good news is that HIV treatments work very well. With treatment, people with HIV can live long and healthy lives and have more than a 99% chance of having an HIV-negative baby.

WHAT COULD HIV MEAN FOR ME IN PREGNANCY?

All pregnant women are asked to have an HIV test in pregnancy so that if they are HIV positive, they can benefit from the treatments and their baby can be protected from infection.

If a HIV positive woman takes anti-HIV drugs and formula feeds her baby, the chances of her baby getting HIV are usually less than 1%.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTED CONCEPTION TREATMENT FOR PATIENTS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR HIV?

If you or your partner test positive for HIV, you will be referred to the appropriate specialist for further management and treatment of the HIV.

The Department of Reproductive Medicine at Saint Mary's Hospital will be unable to provide your IVF treatment. Your fertility treatment will need to be provided by a centre that deals specifically

with HIV positive patients.

WHAT IS SYPHILIS?

Syphilis is an infection caused by a bacterium called *Treponema pallidum*. The most common way to get syphilis is by having unprotected sex (vaginal, anal, or oral) with someone who is infected. You can get the infection by coming into contact with an ulcer on their penis, vagina, anus, or inside their mouth.

Syphilis can also be passed on:

- To an unborn baby during pregnancy (congenital syphilis)
- By injecting drugs with a needle used by an infected person
- During a blood or organ transplant (this is rare because all blood and organ donations in the UK are checked for syphilis)

Although it can be serious, syphilis can be cured with antibiotic treatment.

WHAT COULD SYPHILIS MEAN FOR ME IN PREGNANCY?

Untreated syphilis can cause serious problems for both the mother and baby. It can lead to miscarriage, premature birth, stillbirth, or death of newborn babies. Babies may also have deformities, developmental delays, seizures, rashes, fever, a swollen liver and spleen, anaemia and jaundice.

With antibiotic treatment before or during pregnancy, these problems can be completely prevented.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR ASSISTED CONCEPTION TREATMENT FOR PATIENTS WHO TEST POSITIVE FOR SYPHILIS?

If you or your partner test positive for syphilis, you will be referred to a specialist for management and treatment of the infection.

Once the specialist confirms that the syphilis has been cured the Saint Mary's team will be able to start your assisted conception treatment.

WHAT IS HUMAN T-CELL LYMPHOTROPIC VIRUS 1 (HTLV-1)?

HTLV-1 is a virus that belongs to the same family as HIV, but it is less well-known. Testing for HTLV-1 antibodies is necessary for certain individuals:

- Donors living in or born in high prevalence areas
- Sexual partners born in high prevalence areas
- If the donor's parents were born in high-prevalence areas

Your doctor will assess if you need this test.

WILL HAVING THESE TESTS AFFECT MY MORTGAGE OR INSURANCE APPLICATIONS?

The information we have about your care, including test results, is completely confidential. It will not be shared with any third party without checking with you first, even if you are referred to another centre for further treatment.

Screening for HIV and hepatitis viruses is a standard part of your assessment. It does not mean you are at risk of infection and will not affect your mortgage or insurance status. However, if you have an increased risk of having an infection, an insurance company might reasonably expect you to inform them.

CONTACT DETAILS



0161 276 6209



ivf.sec@mft.nhs.uk



<https://www.mft.nhs.uk/>