



Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service
Division of Gynaecology

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

YOUR INITIAL FERTILITY APPOINTMENT

This leaflet provides essential guidance helping you take the necessary steps to help prepare you for your fertility journey and to ensure that you have all the necessary information prior to commencing fertility treatment.

You should have received a Registration Questionnaire for you and your partner to complete. It is important this is completed and returned as soon as possible to obtain your partner details (if you are in a relationship), arrange partner investigations, check your eligibility for fertility treatment and to prevent delays in your care pathway. The investigation results and eligibility for assisted conception treatment will be discussed when you attend for a consultation appointment with a doctor. Consultation appointments are only scheduled after your Registration Questionnaire and investigations are completed.

If you have not received a questionnaire or are having difficulty completing or returning this, please contact our admin team on 0161 276 6000, Option 6.

NHS FUNDING

It's important to understand that IVF funding in the UK can vary significantly depending on your location. To qualify for NHS-funded fertility treatment, you must meet the specific eligibility criteria set out by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) your GP is registered with. This includes:

- Having a healthy body mass index (BMI) ranging between 19.0 - 29.9
- Both patient and partner not smoking or vaping
- Falling into a certain age range (under 43 for Fresh IVF)
- Not having any children (including adopted) from your current or previous relationships. It is important to note that the ICB's have differing criteria regarding whether patients or their partners can have children from previous relationships when applying for NHS-funded fertility treatment.
- Both NHS and privately funded cycles will be taken into account when determining how many cycles will be funded. For example, if you have had 1 privately funded cycle, this may reduce the number of NHS-funded cycles available to you. Your individual circumstances will be discussed with you during your consultation

You can check your eligibility using this link:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhsfunded-ivf-in-england/nhs-funded-in-vitro-fertilisation-ivf-in-england> or for Greater Manchester via:

<https://gmintegratedcare.org.uk/in-vitro-fertilisation-ivf-cycles-in-greater-manchester/>

OVERSEAS VISITORS

Please note patients who were not born in the UK or have not lived in the UK for the past 12 months will be referred to the Overseas Visitors Team.

If you are referred to the Overseas Visitors Team, you will receive a letter requesting for you to attend with applicable paperwork to assess if you would be eligible for assisted conception treatment as an Overseas Visitor. **It is important that you attend this appointment to prevent delays in your pathway.**

INITIAL TESTS & INVESTIGATIONS

Please note your initial appointment will be for investigations only.

For female patients, your investigations will be completed by members of our nursing team and Saint Mary's Hospital Sonography team.

For male patients, a separate appointment will be made for you with our andrology team.

Once all your results are available you will receive an appointment with a doctor to discuss your results, eligibility and treatment planning if eligible. The current waiting time for this appointment may be up to 6 months following your investigations appointment.

FEMALE FERTILITY TESTS & INVESTIGATIONS

<u>Clinical Observations</u>	Your blood pressure, heart rate, respiratory rate, temperature and oxygen levels will be assessed and documented. If any of the results are out of normal range, we will ask you to consult your GP for advice.
<u>Body Mass Index (BMI)</u>	Your height and weight will be measured and documented to calculate your current BMI.
<u>Anti-Mullerian Hormone (AMH)</u>	AMH is produced by the cells in your ovaries that surround your eggs. It allows us to understand the number of eggs you have remaining and helps to guide your treatment options. Your AMH will be tested via a blood sample.
<u>Full Blood Count (FBC)</u>	A FBC helps us assess your health and detect any issues, such as anaemia or infection that may require treatment. Your FBC will be tested via a blood sample.
<u>Rubella</u>	<p>We will check whether you are immune to rubella (German measles), as it can cause harm to unborn babies if contracted during pregnancy. This will be tested via a blood sample. If your Rubella result is positive this would indicate that you have immunity to Rubella, this is what we want to see, and no further action is needed.</p> <p>If the result is negative, it indicates the absence of antibodies, and you should contact your GP to confirm whether you have received the MMR vaccines or arrange to get them. If you were vaccinated as a child but still have a negative result, you may need an MMR booster from your GP. It is important to wait at least one month after receiving the vaccination before becoming pregnant.</p>
<u>Sexual Health Screening</u>	You will be screened for chlamydia and gonorrhoea as these infections can affect your reproductive health and would need to be treated before beginning your fertility pathway. These tests are via a self-taken vaginal swab. After your investigations and consultation, you decide to proceed with IUI/IVF/ICSI you will also have blood tests to check for HIV, Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B and Syphilis.

<u>Transvaginal Ultrasound Scan</u>	We perform a trans-vaginal (internal) ultrasound scan to examine your ovaries and uterus. This is to identify any issues that could affect your fertility and guide your treatment plan. Please note that some scans are performed in the main scan department in the new Saint Mary's Hospital. The department undertakes scans for fertility, gynaecology and maternity patients. The department has a smaller waiting room available if you would be more comfortable using this facility, please ask at reception.
<u>Sickle Cell and Thalassaemia Screen</u> <i>(if applicable)</i>	Screening for sickle cell and thalassaemia will be completed via a blood test for individuals that are in the at-risk group, as these blood disorders are inherited and can be passed on to your baby. Please note that this blood test will be ordered if applicable following your consultation with the doctor, it will not be routinely taken as part of your initial investigations. For more information about this screening, please visit: https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/your-pregnancy-care/screening-for-sickle-cell-andthalassaemia/

MALE FERTILITY TESTS & INVESTIGATIONS

<u>Diagnostic Semen Analysis</u>	A semen analysis is required to assess the quality and quantity of sperm, which helps us understand any factors that may affect your ability to conceive. This will help direct further management if needed. There will be instructions sent to you on how to prepare for this when the appointment is made.
<u>Sexual Health Screening</u>	If after your initial investigation and consultation, you decide to proceed with IUI/IVF/ICSI you will also have blood tests to check for HIV, Hepatitis C, Hepatitis B and Syphilis.

ATTENDING YOUR FERTILITY CONSULTATION

We understand that starting fertility treatment can be a significant and emotional step. **Because fertility care involves both partners (if you are in a relationship), it is important that you both attend all consultation appointments together.** This helps ensure that we can provide the most accurate and supportive care tailored to your shared journey and to avoid a delay in your pathway.

At your first consultation, we will carefully review both of your investigation results, discuss your eligibility for treatment, and explore the options available to you. We cannot start your fertility treatment unless you both attend. **If, for any reason, you are both unable to attend a scheduled consultation, we kindly ask that you cancel and rebook your appointment. To do this, please call us on 0161 276 6000, Option 6.**

Following your initial consultation with our Reproductive Medicine doctors, you will receive a letter outlining your eligibility and the next steps to take.

If you are eligible for NHS-funded assisted conception treatment, please be aware that both you and your partner will be required to provide 1 form of photographic identification each (e.g. a passport. If you do not have a passport, you may upload a driving licence). It is important to note that if you upload a driving licence, you will need to complete your consent forms with your NHS number when it is time for you to complete your Human Fertility Embryology Authority (HFEA) consent forms. The HFEA is our licencing body and plays a vital role in regulating treatments in the UK, including the requirement for written consent for various aspects of treatment and storage of eggs and sperm. If you are married, you will also be required to provide a copy of your marriage certificate.

BODY MASS INDEX

Your weight plays an important role in fertility, a healthy range is defined by the Body Mass Index (BMI). To qualify for NHS-funded fertility treatment, your BMI needs to be between 19.0 and 29.9. This range is recommended to help ensure the best possible chances of success as being underweight or overweight can make it harder to conceive.

A BMI that is below 19 could affect your menstrual cycle and fertility. In this case, we would recommend that you try to gain weight. Being underweight also increases the risk of complications during pregnancy, labour, and delivery. An overweight BMI can negatively affect your fertility by disrupting hormone balance and interfering with ovulation, making it difficult to conceive. A BMI of 30 or above can also reduce Male fertility.

Reaching a healthy BMI is crucial for both improving your chances of conceiving and meeting the criteria for NHS fertility treatment. Group exercise and having dietary support is often more effective than trying to manage your weight on your own. Maintaining a healthy weight ensures you are ready for treatment and gives you the best chance for a successful pregnancy. Currently, the department is unable to provide support with weight loss and advises you to contact your GP if you wish to discuss your weight loss options. Please be aware that if you are using weight loss medication, you will need to wait at least 2 months from stopping this medication before beginning fertility treatment.

For further guidance and support on achieving a healthy BMI refer to the additional links below:

- <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/lose-weight/>
- <https://fertilitynetworkuk.org/access-support/health-wellbeing-programme/>

NUTRITION & SUPPLEMENTS

Eating a healthy, varied diet will ensure that your body receives most of the vitamins and minerals it needs. But when you are pregnant, or there is a chance you might get pregnant, it is important to take additional supplements. For more information and supplement guidance please visit the NHS website using this link: <https://www.nhs.uk/pregnancy/keeping-well/vitamins-supplements-and-nutrition/>

CERVICAL SCREENING

Before starting fertility treatment, it is vital that your cervical screening (previously called a smear test) is up to date. This is a test to check the health of the cervix and involves taking a sample of cells from the cervix which are then tested for the human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a virus that can cause abnormal cells changes, which could potentially develop into cervical cancer. If your cervical screening is overdue, you must book an appointment with your GP to have this completed as soon as possible to not delay your fertility treatment. This cannot be carried out whilst you are pregnant. More information about cervical screening is available via: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/cervical-screening/>

LIFESTYLE ADVICE

ALCOHOL

We advise avoiding alcohol when trying to conceive because it can negatively impact fertility by affecting hormone levels, egg and sperm quality, and the overall chances of a successful pregnancy. For tips on staying alcohol-free during preconception and pregnancy please access:

SMOKING

Quitting smoking before fertility treatment can improve your chances of achieving a healthy pregnancy. Many research studies have shown the harmful effects of smoking on sperm quality, egg quality and implantation rates for fertilised eggs. Smoking also increases the risk of miscarriage and complications such as preterm birth, low birth weight, and developmental problems for your baby.

If you or your partner smoke it is important to note that to be eligible for NHS funding, both partners must have quit smoking for a minimum of 3 months before starting fertility treatment. The department is unable to provide support with assisting you to stop smoking/vaping and advises you to contact one of the following to discuss your options:

- Your GP or Practice Nurse
- Visit: <https://www.nhs.uk/better-health/quit-smoking/>

TRAVEL GUIDANCE

Patients and their partners should avoid travelling to regions with active Zika or Ebola infection outbreaks due to the potential risks associated with these infections during pregnancy. If you have travelled to a high-risk area, the clinic will not carry out treatment until after a wait of at least 3 months from the date of your return before starting fertility treatment. To avoid delays when you are ready to begin, it is essential to regularly check the government website for the up-to-date list of at-risk countries.

For further information please visit the links below:

- <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>
- <https://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-country-specific-risk>

If you require any further information or clarification of terminology, please do not hesitate to talk to one of the nurses carrying out your investigations, or the doctor at your follow up consultation, who will be happy to discuss your concerns with you.

CONTACT DETAILS



(0161) 276 6000



<https://mft.nhs.uk/saint-marys/services/gynaecology/reproductive-medicine/>