



Saint Mary's Managed Clinical Service
Division of Gynaecology

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT YOUR STORED EMBRYOS

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS FOR MY STORED EMBRYOS?

You have recently been contacted by the Department of Reproductive Medicine in relation to your stored embryo(s).

In 2022, the law governing the storage of gametes and embryos in the UK changed. These changes enable patients to consent to store their embryos for use in their own treatment for a maximum of 55 years from the date they were first stored, however, this extended storage is only permitted if consent is renewed every 10 years.

Your embryos have now been stored for nearly 10 years. We understand that your personal circumstances or plans for future treatment may have changed, and you may decide not to continue storing them for your own use. You now have several options to consider, and we're here to support you in making the decision that is right for you. The options are:

1. Renewal of consent to storage for your own purpose
2. Donation (training, research or treatment of others)
3. Withdrawal of consent to storage

We understand that this is a very personal decision, you will have around 18 months to decide, and we are on hand to offer you support in reaching your decision.

Should you wish, you can book an appointment with our Counselling Service to discuss your decision. If you would like an appointment, please contact us using the details below.

Please note that counselling is optional, unless you are considering donating your embryos for the treatment of others. If you choose not to attend counselling, we strongly encourage you to read all the relevant information carefully to ensure you fully understand the implications of your decision and the forms you complete.

RENEWAL OF CONSENT TO STORAGE FOR YOUR OWN PURPOSE

All patients may store their gametes or embryos for their own treatment for the maximum of 55 years, but they can only do this if they 'renew' their consent to storage, and this must take place within 10 years of first storage and again after each successive 10-year period.

Storage fees

For NHS funded treatment, a period of storage is included in your treatment, however, please note that storage fees apply after 2 years. These fees help cover the costs to keep your embryos safe

and secure in temperature-controlled tanks that are constantly monitored to meet the strict standards set by the HFEA for stored material. These measures are in place to give you peace of mind and ensure your embryos are safely throughout the consent period.

If you have any questions about funding, charges, or your options moving forward, please contact the department using the details provided. We're here to support you in making an informed decision.

If embryos are donated for any purpose, there will be no storage costs to you.

YOUR OPTIONS IF YOU NO LONGER WISH TO USE YOUR EMBRYOS FOR TREATMENT

1. DONATION: TRAINING

You may wish to donate your embryos for use in training. If you choose to donate your embryos for training purposes, please be aware that both individuals whose eggs and sperm were used to create the embryos must give their consent.

Embryologists undergo extensive training to master a range of highly technical and delicate procedures that are essential to successful fertility treatment. Before they can carry out clinical work, newly qualified embryologists must complete supervised training to ensure they can perform these tasks safely and accurately.

Donated embryos may be used to train Embryologists in:

- Warming and freezing techniques
- Micromanipulation techniques
- Handling techniques, such as moving the embryo between dishes, or loading the embryo into a catheter, or
- Use of the laser which is used to create a tiny hole in the outer shell of the embryo.

Donated embryos may also be used to test or validate new processes, media or equipment such as incubators to test the embryos development.

Consent to training can be withdrawn up until the point the embryos are used in training.

If you choose not to donate your embryos for training, they will be respectfully removed from storage without being used.

2. DONATION: RESEARCH

The Department of Reproductive Medicine have links with a team of researchers at the University of Manchester who are working to improve in vitro fertilisation (IVF) results, develop new techniques and to increase our scientific knowledge of fertilisation, embryo development and abnormalities that can arise.

If you would like to learn more about donating embryos to research projects please contact the Department and we will pass your details to one of our Research Nurses who can give you more detail about the current research projects, explain the donation process, discuss eligibility, and answer any questions you may have. Any discussion with the Research Nurse does not commit you to anything.

If you wish to donate your embryos and you are eligible to do so, the Research Nurse will ask you to complete a Research Consent Form. By completing the form, you are granting consent for the researchers to store your embryos until they can be used for research. You can choose to allow your embryos to be stored for research for up to 10 years from the date you give your consent. You won't

need to renew this consent in the future and there will be no cost to you. However, it is important that you understand that once the embryos have been transferred to the research group, they cannot ever be used in treatment. It is also not possible for any feedback to be provided on the results of individual embryos used in research.

You can withdraw your consent to research at any point up until embryos have been used for research. Please consider that the embryos could be used for research in the future, within the legal limits of storage, even if you were to die or become mentally incapacitated. If you do not wish to donate to research your embryos are respectfully removed from storage without, use for research.

All aspects of the research are performed in full alignment with the HFEA, and no personal identifying information is shared with our research partners.

3. DONATION: TREATMENT OF OTHERS

If you no longer wish to keep your embryos in storage for your own purposes, you may wish to consider donating them to another person or couple.

There are certain criteria set out by the HFEA, which must be met to be eligible for donation. These are:

- Age limit at the time of embryo creation (the person providing the egg will have been between 18-35 and the person providing the sperm will have been between 18-45),
- Screening,
- Consent, and
- Counselling

Donor conceived children can access non-identifying information about the donor from the age of 16 and can access identifying information from the age of 18. Only non-identifying information is shared with the recipient. If you would like more information regarding the donation of your embryos, please contact the Department and we will pass your details to our Donor Nurse.

You can withdraw your consent at any time until the embryos are used in treatment.

4. WITHDRAWAL OF CONSENT TO STORAGE (FOR ALL PURPOSES)

If you do not wish to continue to store the embryos for your own purpose, or to donate them and you no longer wish for them to remain in storage, you can withdraw your consent to the storage of embryos.

You can withdraw your consent to storage on the Consent Form which has been provided to you on the Fertility Consent platform 'Renewal of consent to storage of your embryos for treatment'.

If the embryos were originally created and stored for your named partner's or someone else's treatment, they will be notified that consent has been withdrawn.

Once a withdrawal is received from either of the gamete providers, consent will be taken as having been withdrawn and the embryos can no longer be used in treatment. However, it remains lawful for the embryos to remain in storage until either:

- a. The end of the consent period,
- b. The end of a period of 12 months beginning on the date that the first withdrawal is received,
or
- c. Receipt of a second withdrawal stating that they consent to the disposal of the embryos.

If both parties consent to the withdrawal and disposal the embryos will be allowed to perish.

CONTACT DETAILS



hfeaconsent.enquiries@mft.nhs.uk



[Reproductive Medicine - Saint Mary's Hospital](#)