

## BEING A SPERM DONOR

First of all thank you for considering being a sperm donor.

Despite advances in medical technology for many couples or individuals it is only possible to have a child through the gift of donated sperm. In being a donor you may be able to help up to ten families experience the joy of a child or children, and you would also be giving the gift of life to the children themselves.

The process of sperm donation in the UK, its storage and use in medical treatments is highly regulated by law. It is overseen by a government agency called the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA). This requires clinics to comply with national standards and guidelines through a process of licensing and inspection.

Men in the UK are not generally allowed to donate sperm when they are aged under 18 or 46 or over. The donation must also be for altruistic reasons and clinics are not allowed pay men to be a donor, although expenses such as travel or loss of earnings due to time off work may be paid up to a legal maximum by agreement. Clinics are, however, allowed to offer fertility treatment services at reduced cost or even free of charge to the donor or couple as a consequence of his donation.

Apart from the knowledge of having helped others, direct benefits to a man as a consequence of being a sperm donor in our clinic may include:

- A general health and fertility screen, with information that may be useful about his own fertility and/or whether he may carry certain unsuspected genetic conditions that could affect his children
- Certain fertility treatments e.g. banking of sperm for own possible future use or IVF treatment in our clinic by agreement at reduced or no cost

To be a sperm donor you should be in generally good health, a non-smoker, free from major infections (including hepatitis, HIV and sexually transmissible diseases) and there should be no significant risk of passing on a serious medical condition to a child. This would be assessed by a questionnaire about you and your family history, a clinic appointment and a blood and urine test. We would need to assess a sperm sample since not all men's sperm can withstand freezing and thawing. We would ask you to produce this sample at our premises. The screening tests may reveal unsuspected conditions that could have practical implications for you and your family and we are required to inform donors that deliberately and knowingly withholding information about a serious inheritable condition could allow a child to sue a donor because of this if the child was affected. This should not be a problem if the forms are completed and the questions answered in good faith, however.

If the initial tests are OK we would need you (and your wife or partner if you have one) to meet with our clinic's counsellor so that we can be sure that we

have given you a suitable opportunity to think and talk through all of the issues surrounding being a donor and that you are fully comfortable with them. These may include, for example, the implications for yourself, your family and your own existing or future children.

We would then need you to complete some statutory consent forms in which you would give us permission to store your sperm and to treat others with it. These forms would also ensure that any child that was born from your donation would have no legal right or claim on you. The legal parent or parents of a child born from your donation would be the woman who gave birth to the child and her husband or partner if she has one.

These forms would also include a section in which you would be asked to give as much non-identifying information about yourself that you feel a child might like to know, including possibly also a goodwill message to him or her. This information could also be made available to the woman or couple being treated.

Except where couples are seeking sperm donation from a friend or relative treatments in our clinic are carried out anonymously such that it should not be possible for the woman or couple being treated to discover the identity of the donor. We would ask you to keep the procedure as confidential as possible, therefore. In the UK, however, a child born from treatment on reaching the age of 18 should have access through the clinic or from the HFEA to the donor's full name(s), date of birth, the town or district of birth, and last recorded postal address. A child who was told the donor's identity would have no legal rights or claims on him, however, and vice versa.

You yourself would be entitled to some limited information about the outcome of your donation. On applying to the clinic or the HFEA you could be informed whether and how many children have been born from your donation, their sex and their year(s) of birth. You could also, if you wished, signify that you would like to be informed if in the future if a child had applied to be told your identity. If you were to keep us updated with your contact details we and/or the HFEA would make all reasonable efforts to let you know this if you wish.

You can also signify if you would like to be informed in the event that we received information that a child had been born from your donation with a medical condition that could have implications for your own family.

After completion of the forms, counselling and screening tests you would be asked to attend the clinic on a few occasions, preferably at least five, to produce the samples. You would need to bring photo-ID with you on each occasion. The samples would be processed, labelled and stored within the clinic. We would not be allowed to use the samples for six months and then only after you have had a repeat blood test for Hepatitis and HIV. You are allowed to change your mind any time about the maintenance of your sperm in storage or subsequent use for donation even after it has been banked, but please, please, please think carefully before banking sperm and then not

attending for the follow up test or withdrawing your permission for it to be used!

The samples could only be used in accordance with the terms of your consent and the rules and regulations that apply to UK clinics. This would apply even if samples were transferred to another clinic. Transferring, trading or swapping samples between clinics is common since there would be a potential advantage that children born from the donation may not all be born or live in the same geographic area. Some clinics that do not run their own sperm donor recruitment programmes may also buy samples from those that do.

If in the light of the above you would like to take the next step please contact us by telephone on 01392 405051, or in writing to: The Peninsular Centre for Reproductive Medicine, Heavitree Hospital, Exeter EX1 2ED.

In summary the steps are:

- Contact the clinic to express an interest
- Receive written information
- Return a questionnaire, receive an appointment and attend for an initial sperm test
- Undergo screening tests (blood test and urine sample), meet with a counsellor and complete consent forms
- Attend to produce samples for storage
- Return after six months for a final screening blood test
- Appreciate the knowledge of having given an opportunity of hope and joy to prospective parents and life to their children

\*\*\*\*\*