



# PATIENT INFORMATION ON DONOR SPERM

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the UK, donors are men who provide sperm altruistically. They are usually unknown to the recipients; however, some people prefer to ask a friend or relative to be their sperm donor.

Donors need to:

- be between 18 and 41 years old
- consent to any resultant child knowing their identity once he or she is aged 18

They are tested to ensure they are medically suitable to be a donor. These tests include screening for sexually transmitted diseases, for Hepatitis and HIV as well as providing a personal and family medical history to assess whether there could be an inherited condition in the family. Sperm has to be frozen and quarantined for at least six months before the donor is screened again and, only if results are clear, is the sperm released for use. When importing sperm from abroad, the same conditions are required.

Payment of donors is prohibited but, those who donate in the UK can receive compensation of up to £35 per clinic visit, to reasonably cover any financial losses incurred in connection with the donation (such as for travel). If the sperm is imported from overseas the donor will have been able to claim expenses plus loss of earnings incurred, up to a daily maximum of £61.28 but with an overall limit of £250 for each course or cycle of donation.

## 2 THE HUMAN FERTILISATION AND EMBRYOLOGY AUTHORITY (HFEA)

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) is the organisation that regulates the work carried out in all IVF clinics. The HFEA keeps a Register of confidential information about people who have had licensed treatment, the donors and the children who are born. Donors are asked to provide their characteristics and other relevant information for this register. This includes their name, physical characteristics, ethnic origin, family medical history and as much information as possible about their family background, interests, hobbies and skills. They are also asked to describe why they decided to be a donor, to write a goodwill message to the child and provide any other descriptive information that might be of interest to the child.

Any child born as a result of sperm donation will be genetically related to the donor's own children and to any other children of recipients who have used the same donor. In the UK a donor's sperm can be used to create up to 10 families unless the donor has specified a lower limit.

## 3 CHOOSING A SUITABLE DONOR

There is a significant shortage of donors and the availability can change so we cannot give an accurate prediction of time scales at this point, but you will have an opportunity to discuss the situation with an embryologist once you are ready for treatment.

You are entitled to know any non-identifying information the donor has provided. Donors are usually selected on the basis of their match with the male partner, but if you are single or in a same sex relationship, the matching is done with you or your female partner. This includes skin colour, eye colour, hair colour, height and build and may include blood group. If it is not possible to find a donor with a close match this will be discussed with you. Other factors such as religion and social background can be taken into account if you feel this is particularly important, however, this can increase the difficulty in finding a match.



It is important to remember that any child born from donor sperm will be a combination of the male and female characteristics, and therefore the characteristics of the resultant child cannot be predicted.

#### 4 WHAT INFORMATION CAN PATIENTS AND PARENTS HAVE?

Patients can ask for the donor's non-identifying information to help them decide on a suitable donor. Parents are also able to ask the HFEA about:

- the number of other children conceived by the same donor
- whether they are boys or girls
- the year that they were born.

#### 5 WHAT INFORMATION CAN DONOR-CONCEIVED PEOPLE HAVE FROM THE HFEA REGISTER?

From age 16, anyone can request the following information from the HFEA Register:

- Whether they are donor conceived
- If so, the non-identifying information provided by the donor
- Whether they are genetically related to someone with whom they may have an intimate relationship.

At 18 they can:

- Ask for the donor's name and last known address
- Place their name on the HFEA Donor Sibling Register which will enable them to meet genetic siblings by mutual consent.

If a donor-conceived person does ask for the donor's name and contact details, they will first be offered counselling and the HFEA will try to contact the sperm donor to advise him that the information has been requested.

#### 6 WHAT INFORMATION CAN DONORS HAVE?

The donor may ask about

- the number of children conceived by their donation
- whether they are boys or girls
- the year that they were born.

#### 7 WHO ARE THE LEGAL PARENTS?

A woman who gives birth to a baby is the legal mother.

**Married couples / Couple in a civil partnership:** The Law presumes that the married partner / civil partner is the legal second parent provided they have consented to treatment.

**Unmarried couples / not in a civil partnership:** The partner must consent on the HFEA PP form to being the legal second parent in order to be recognised as such and named on the birth certificate. The mother must also consent to this on a second form, (HFEA WP form).

**If no consent is given:** From 6 April 2009, if no consent is provided by either unmarried couples not in a civil partnership, then any child conceived as a result of gamete or embryo transfers after that date would not have a second legal parent.



**Only patients who are unmarried/ not in a civil partnership can withdraw consent to be a named second legal parent.** In this case the Person Responsible for the Unit must be notified in writing of this intention. Once this intention has been received the Unit will contact the other parent and notify them of the withdrawal of consent. The appropriate HFEA withdrawal of consent forms will be completed. No further treatment will be offered until notification has been received.

## 8 NEXT STEPS

### 8.1 Counselling

It is essential that you are fully informed and understand all aspects of using donor sperm before you consent to treatment. A central issue is between secrecy and being open about treatment. Sessions will focus on how to best prepare you to meet your child's need to know about their origins. For these reasons, we always arrange counselling so that you can talk through the ethical, emotional, legal and practical aspects of using donor sperm. We suggest that you arrange to see the counsellor as far in advance of your treatment as possible.

The Counselling Service can be contacted via reception.

### 8.2 Blood Tests and Characteristics Form

After you have seen the counsellor you will be allocated a nurse to support you next steps. They will arrange for you to have blood samples taken: Blood group and Rhesus factor and CMV screening. A characteristics form and necessary consents will be completed at this time.

### 8.3 Selecting a donor and ordering sperm

You will then meet our donor sperm coordinator nurse who will discuss the sperm ordering process with you. Most of the donor sperm used at Wales Fertility Institute is imported from abroad; the nurse will explain how this is coordinated.

Until it is confirmed that the donor sperm you have selected is available, you cannot start your treatment cycle.

### 8.4 Treatment Planning

Once the donor sperm coordinators have informed you that the donor sperm you have selected is in the clinic, you can arrange to start your treatment.

## 9 OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

- You or your partner can change or withdraw consent at any time by contacting WFI, as long as the egg/ sperm/ embryos have not already been used in treatment, research or training. You will be required to put this in writing and complete new forms.
- The donor can change or withdraw his consent at any time until the sperm or embryos have been used in treatment.
- Should a child be born with a disability and it was shown that the disability was a result of a sperm donor failing to inform the clinic of congenital or genetic defects about which he knew, or ought reasonably to have known, that child may be able to seek compensation for damages under the Congenital Disabilities (Civil Liabilities) Act 1973. In these circumstances, information potentially identifying a donor might be disclosed to you.