

If you are considering donating embryos, this fact sheet will give you an overview of what is involved, outline some of the issues you should consider, and help you decide if embryo donation is for you.

THE FACTS ABOUT:

Embryo donation

Donating embryos is a big decision as well as a very generous one. At Life Fertility Clinic we will do all we can to answer your questions and help make this process straightforward for you, but please understand that the preparations can be a little time-consuming as we need to protect you and the people who will receive your embryos.

Why donate embryos?

Many people who offer to donate their embryos do so because they have been through their own fertility journey, have completed their family and now want to help another person experience the joy of having a family as well.

Others may have completed their IVF treatment and for other reasons are no longer going to use the embryos that they have remaining in storage.

For couples or individuals who can't produce their own embryos because perhaps their own eggs, sperm or embryos aren't suitable and who may feel they have explored many or all other avenues; donated embryos can be a remarkable 'last chance' opportunity to make pregnancy and a family possible.

Who can be an embryo donor?

It is incredibly generous of anyone to consider donating their embryos however in order to protect everyone involved (you the donor(s); the potential future parents and any resulting children), we're sure you understand that it's important for us to be quite careful in accepting donors. To be accepted as an embryo donor you must:

- Preferably have completed your own family.
- Be offering embryos for donation where the age of the person who provided the eggs was less than 37 years of age at the time the embryos were created and cryopreserved.

The egg provider can be older if you are donating embryos to a friend or family member but your recipient(s) should understand the implications of using an older egg donor.

- Be able to give a full medical history for the persons who provided the eggs and sperm from which the embryos were created. This means that if your own eggs or sperm were used and you were adopted you must know your own biological origins. Equally, if you used donated eggs or sperm in the creation of the embryos, the donor must be identifiable and a full medical history must be available.
- Be able to produce formal photo identification such as a Medicare card, driver's license or passport.
- Attend a consultation with a Life Fertility Clinic doctor where your personal, medical and reproductive history will be reviewed.

Once all screenings, declarations, counselling and consents have been completed, the doctor will give final medical clearance for your donation.

- Attend an education session with an IVF nurse coordinator. If your eggs or sperm were used in the creation of the embryos you will be required to complete questionnaires on lifestyle, family and medical history in order to rule out the possibility of an inherited condition or transmissible infection being passed on.

This session will include you being asked to consider how you feel about the recipients of your embryos donating them to someone else or discarding them in the future should they no longer need them for their own treatment.

- Attend at least two counselling sessions with our counsellor to make sure you have fully explored what the embryo donation may mean for you and your family.

If you know the person(s) that you are donating to, you will also need to have a joint counselling session with them.

- Attend to a range of screenings for infectious diseases (including HIV, Hepatitis B and C, HTLV 1 and 2, and Syphilis) and a range of tests (including cystic fibrosis, karyotype, blood group and any genetic conditions prevalent in your racial group) if your eggs or sperm were used in the creation of the embryos.
- Consent to embryo donation and to Life Fertility Clinic storing identifying details and non-identifying details about you on our embryo donor register.



- Agree to your identifying information being released to any children conceived using your embryos when they reach 18 years old, if they request to know.

Will I know who gets my embryos?

You can choose to donate for a family member or friend but you can also be an anonymous embryo donor, where you and the person(s) who uses the embryos will not be identified to each other. Life Fertility Clinic will co-ordinate both known and anonymous donation for you.

How are embryo donors and recipients matched?

If you are donating embryos anonymously, the people who are considering receiving the embryos will be given your profiles (or the profiles of the person who provide the eggs or sperm from which the embryo were created). This includes non-identifying details such as physical characteristics (hair and eye colour, height, weight, build, complexion, race), blood group, career and education.

As there are not many embryo donors, we often have a waiting list of patients hoping for an embryo donor, so you are likely to be matched quite quickly after volunteering to donate.

Is there payment for embryo donation?

No. It is illegal in Australia to receive payment for donation but the person who receives the embryos will refund any reasonable out-of-pocket expenses related to the donation.

What does the mandatory counselling involve?

Embryo donors must attend a minimum of two confidential counselling sessions with a Life Fertility Clinic counsellor. This gives you the opportunity to talk through what it means for you and your families and to make sure you fully understand your rights and the situations that could arise in the future as a result of your donation.

It also gives us a chance to get to know you and assess whether you would be a suitable donor. As much as we really appreciate your willingness to be embryo donors, we don't want to take on anyone who may find it difficult to deal with the physical and emotional aspects of donation.

Most people find it very helpful to explore their feelings about donating and to consider how it may affect their life now and in the future.

If the recipients of your embryos are known to you, you will also be required to have a joint counselling session with them.

Legal issues

Once a donation agreement is in place, the recipients become responsible for the embryos in storage. This point is reached when: all preliminary requirements including counselling have

been completed by everybody involved; you, the donor(s) have completed your consent to donation; and the recipient(s) have completed their consent to receive donated embryos.

Although it might seem a long way in the future, you will be asked in your consent to embryo donation to consider whether you are happy for the recipients to donate the embryos to someone else in the future should some remain in storage when they have completed their treatment. This is because donation of these embryos could result in further families being created. You will also be asked whether you are happy for them to discard the embryos. There is no obligation to consent to either of these.

The recipient will be provided with all of this information prior to donation and can choose not to accept the donation as needs be.

Embryo donors can still change or withdraw consent to the donation at any time up to the time of embryo transfer for the recipient. However, once this point in treatment has been reached, all rights and responsibilities with regard to any pregnancies, or any legal responsibilities for any child born, lie with the recipient(s).

The recipient(s) of donated embryos, regardless of whether the donors are known to them or not, are the legal parent(s) of any child born as a result of the treatment and they are named on the child's birth certificate.

All embryo donors (or the person who provide the eggs or sperm) must consent to their identifying information being held with Life Fertility Clinic. When a child conceived using your embryos reaches 18 years old, they are entitled to ask Life Fertility Clinic for your identifying details and may try to trace you for medical or other reasons. The information we will release will be that which we were given at the time of donation and may include name, date of birth, address and medical history.

If we are contacted we will endeavour to let you know that we have received this request and will be releasing information about you.

If you have donated anonymously, you may also ask us for non-identifying details about who has received your embryos and the number and gender of any children born.

What are the chances that donated embryos will result in a baby?

The chance of pregnancy depends on a number of factors, including the stage at which the embryos were frozen, the methods used for cryopreservation and, most importantly, the age of the woman (whose eggs were used to create the embryos) at the time the embryos were frozen.

If an embryo vitrified at the blastocyst stage is thawed and transferred, it has approximately the same success rate as a fresh embryo.

There is no evidence that frozen and thawed embryos result in a greater number of miscarriages or abnormalities.



Can I donate to more than one recipient?

Yes, if you have multiple embryos in storage Life Fertility Clinic may consider (with your consent) offering your embryos for donation to more than one recipient, but there is a limit on the number of families that can be created (including your own).

It is a licensing requirement for Life Fertility Clinic that the number of families created from any donor is appropriately limited. For both known and anonymous donors, it is Life Fertility Clinic policy that all donors are limited wherever possible to creating no more than five families (in Queensland) including their own.

Life Fertility Clinic keeps a record of all donors. On this donor register we will record your details, any children that you have had of your own, previous donations and babies born as a result of your donation with us.

Treatment pathway

- Obtain a referral from your GP.
- Make an appointment for your consultation with a Life Fertility Clinic specialist.
- Attend an education session with a Nurse Coordinator.
- Attend two counselling sessions with a Life Fertility Clinic counsellor to discuss the implications of donating embryos.
- Attend blood screening tests and complete medical and lifestyle questionnaire (if the embryos were created from your eggs or sperm).
- Complete consent forms.

Thank you for considering becoming an embryo donor. It could mean the world to someone.

Support groups

Australian Donor Conception Network

Email: donorconceptionnetwork@gmail.com

Website: www.australiandonorconceptionnetwork.org

The Australian Donor Conception Network is a self-funding organisation run by volunteers and has been in existence since 1993. The membership is made up of people considering or using donor sperm, egg or embryos, those who already have children conceived on donor programs, adult donor offspring and donors.

The Australian Donor Conception Network provides support, help and research assistance.

Access

Email: info@access.org.au

Website: www.access.org.au

Access is a consumer based, independent, non profit organisation committed to being a national voice in promoting the wellbeing and welfare of infertile people of all ages.

Contact Life Fertility Clinic

The friendly and professional team at Life Fertility Clinic are keen to answer any questions about our embryo donor program.