

Information for people requesting a sperm or egg donor

Introduction

For some fertility patients, use of donor sperm or egg is an appropriate option for fertility treatment. There is a shortage of sperm and egg donors in New Zealand. Those who need sperm or eggs generally exceed the number of donors available. Consequently, there is usually a long wait for a donor (i.e. a year or more) and a limited choice of donor.

Identifying a sperm or egg donor

There are two main avenues for identifying a suitable sperm or egg donor: personal donors or clinic donors. Personal donors are identified by the fertility patient or couple themselves and clinic donors are identified by the clinic. These options are described below and each will be supported by your fertility clinic.

All fertility patients are expected to attempt to recruit a personal donor. The fertility clinic will assist you to ensure that any donor is suitable (e.g. age, important health factors) and that all guidance is adhered to. The fertility clinic will also provide the counselling required for donors and recipients.

Personal donor

A successful option for many families is finding a personal donor and the donor is often a family member or friend. Currently about half of donor treatments in New Zealand are from personal donors. Clinics encourage personal donors and can support patients with this process. Under certain circumstances using a family member as a donor may require an application to the Ethics Committee for Assisted Reproductive Technology (ECART) application and there are costs associated with this that the recipient will need to pay.

Finding a donor can feel like a daunting task and it can be difficult to know where to begin. Sharing your need for a donor with others can be a significant step to take. You may wish to contact a clinic counsellor to access support during your search.

While patients are encouraged to ask family or friends first, personal donors may also be identified through advertising or through personal networks. If this is not possible, fertility clinics have a process for advertising for donors including the following:

- The person wanting a donor places an advertisement in an appropriate newspaper or magazine, with advice on content from a fertility clinic (there can be costs associated with this for the patient)

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- Replies to the advertisement are directed to the fertility clinic
- The fertility clinic reviews potential donors for suitability
- The clinic facilitates the exchange of information between the potential donor and recipient without disclosing identifying information
- The donor and recipient decide if they wish to proceed
- The donor and recipient undertake counselling
- If multiple donors respond, after you have proceeded with your chosen donor, there is potential for donors to be considered for other recipients.

Fertility clinics may also provide donors and recipients with information on legal and ethical requirements and greater detail on expectations for both parties. These include:

- No payment can be made to the donor, but some expenses may be covered
- All potential donors (whether recruited by advertising, or a friend or family member of the recipient) must undertake a suitability check and counselling (and may be declined, usually for health reasons)
- The donor is free to withdraw consent for the use of their gametes (sperm or egg) before fertilisation
- There is a waiting period of six to nine months before treatment.

Clinic Recruited Donors

In the event that a fertility patient is unable to identify a personal donor, either from their own networks or through advertising, the fertility clinic may be able to identify an appropriate donor. This process includes:

- Clinics attempt to recruit donors as part of their ongoing practice
- A clinic cannot always provide a suitable donor, so it is possible that they may not have any options to offer or that donor options may be limited
- Donors can decide whether or not to donate to a particular person (under the Human Rights Act)
- It is likely that the availability of clinic donors will continue to be limited, because of the on-going demand and difficulty with recruitment of donors
- Counselling is required for donors and recipients
- The fertility clinic reviews potential donors for suitability (e.g. age, important health factors).

Publicly Funded Donor Treatments

Publicly funded donor treatment is offered when patients are eligible for funded fertility treatment and donor treatment is the most appropriate option to achieve a pregnancy with the least intervention.

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