

Sperm Storage

Information for Patients and Partners



Why do I need to freeze sperm?

You may wish to have sperm stored for several reasons this may be because:

- You are about to undergo treatment that may result in you being infertile afterwards
- Your sperm count is very low
- You are undergoing surgical retrieval of sperm
- You may not be able to produce a sample on the day of treatment
- You are undergoing a vasectomy

We would like to offer you the opportunity to freeze sperm that you are producing now so that it may be possible for you to have a child in the future.

What is the procedure?

You will be asked to produce a semen sample. This service involves at least one visit to the Leicester Fertility Centre to be arranged as soon as possible after the decision to freeze sperm has been made. At the first visit you must try to produce a semen sample by masturbation. There are private rooms designated only for this purpose. If this is not possible, you may be able to produce samples at home, but they must be brought straight to the clinic for freezing.

We will inform you and your referring doctor about the quality of sperm you have; this may be by in person, by telephone or in writing. If further samples are needed, you will be contacted. Provided there are at least a few sperm present, each sample will be frozen and subsequently stored in liquid nitrogen. However, if during the first visit there should be no sperm in the semen (azoospermia) we may be able to consider carrying out a surgical procedure, if clinically appropriate, but this would depend upon a medical assessment and is only possible Mon/Weds/Fri during our routine theatre list.

Patients can choose to give consent for up to 55 years storage. Consent is given in 10-year increments. If your samples are being stored for NHS funded fertility treatment, NHS funding is available for a limited duration of storage usually between 1-3 years. It is possible to extend this period at your own expense if required. NHS funding is available for up to 10 years for fertility preservation patients only. Storage beyond 10 years is not NHS funded. The quality of frozen semen will not deteriorate during the first ten years of storage. After that period, we cannot predict what effect very long storage may have on the sperm although, theoretically, frozen samples can be kept indefinitely.

If you wish you can have an appointment with staff to discuss the quality of the samples.

What preparation is needed?

Good practice requires that you undergo HIV and Hepatitis B and C testing. This is because your sperm will be processed by the laboratory and stored in a tank where other samples are kept. You will be advised of the limitations of testing and the implications of positive results beforehand.

Will I need to sign consent?

The storage of sperm is regulated by the Human Fertility and Embryology Authority. This law requires that you consent to the storage of your sperm and its future use including for treatment, research and/or training. If you currently have a partner, you will be able to consent to your partner's use of the sperm at a later date to create a family. If your personal circumstances change and you wish to change your consent form or withdraw consent, please contact us on 0116 258 5922.

You will also need to decide what should happen to the samples in the event of your death or mental incapacitation; they will either be allowed to perish or if you have a partner this person can be named on the consent forms and therefore be able to use the samples in fertility treatment up until the maximum storage period originally completed in the consent forms. If you have consented to the use of your sperm by a partner, then the law allows you to consent to being recorded as the parent in the birth register of any child born as a result of fertility treatment undertaken after death. If you wish to do so you will also be asked to sign a form agreeing to this.

You can vary or withdraw your consent to use and storage of sperm at any time by making an appointment at the clinic.

In the event of a patient's death, treatment for the surviving partner would depend upon their individual circumstances and involve welfare of the child assessment with the counsellor.

Stored samples will not be thawed without your consent except if the legal storage period has expired or in the case of unpaid invoices where applicable.

Will my sample be safe?

Samples are kept on site and any need to transfer them elsewhere would be communicated to you in advance e.g., clinic closure. Whilst we take care to store sperm under ideal and safe conditions, circumstances such as strikes or civil disturbances could affect the supply of electricity and/or liquid nitrogen. Uncontrolled thawing of samples may spoil the sperm. If your samples were destroyed during such an accident, we would inform you.

What follow up care is available?

We understand that this is a very difficult time for you emotionally. Should you wish to access any supportive counselling regarding the impact of your treatment on your fertility you may contact our counsellor on 0116 2585922.

What happens after my treatment is over?

If you are undergoing chemo/radiotherapy six to twelve months after you have finished your treatment you may wish to contact your GP or the Leicester Fertility Centre to arrange a semen analysis to see whether your fertility has been affected.

When you and your partner wish to use the samples, you should write (see address) or telephone the Leicester Fertility Centre on 0116 2585922. You may need to see your GP to be investigated and referred.

An appointment will be made for you to see the appropriate member of the team, who will then discuss with you the investigations and treatment options available.

What are the risks of sperm freezing?

- Some sperm are inevitably killed during freezing; freezing may also cause some damage to the surviving sperm. Practically, this means that after freezing there is always a reduction in the quality of the sample. As a result, the pregnancy rate is lower when frozen sperm is used compared to fresh sperm. Neither fertilisation nor pregnancy is guaranteed.
- There is no evidence to suggest that babies born as a result of using frozen/thawed sperm have an increased rate of abnormalities at birth or subsequent problems.

- Some sperm samples freeze better than others. Unfortunately, we cannot predict which samples will survive well and which will not.
- We freeze and keep every sample containing sufficient sperm for treatment irrespective of the sperm quality before or after freezing. There are new fertility technologies, which make it feasible to fertilise eggs even if there are very few sperm. These technologies include *in-vitro* fertilisation (IVF) and intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI). The quality of the frozen/thawed sample will determine the form of treatment, which would be recommended in the future. You should also be aware that NHS funding for these treatments is very limited.

We will write to you prior to the storage consent expiry. Patients are responsible for ensuring any invoices for storage are paid as non-payment may lead to disposal of the samples.

IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU LET US KNOW IF YOU CHANGE ADDRESS OR IF THERE ARE ANY CHANGES IN YOUR CIRCUMSTANCES.

Our commitment to patients

We are constantly striving to improve our services to patients, and we will welcome your comments or suggestions for improvement.

Leicester Fertility Centre Contact Details

Tel: 0116 2585922

E-mail: LFCinfo@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Website: www.leicesterfertilitycentre.org.uk

Useful addresses

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority: www.hfea.gov.uk

NICE guidelines: www.nice.org.uk

NHS - Response line: [111.nhs.uk](tel:111) / 111

NHS - Smoking helpline: 0300 123 1044

Fertility Network UK: www.fertilitynetworkuk.org / 0121 323 5025

Do you feel that you are at risk of verbal or physical abuse? If so, you may find the following numbers useful:

Domestic Violence Helpline:

United against violence & abuse (UAVA)

Helpline: 0808 802 0028

Email: info@uava.org.uk

Text support: 07715 994 962



This information was correct at the time of printing. While the Trust makes every reasonable effort to keep its information leaflets up to date, very recent changes may not be reflected in the guidance and you should discuss this with the clinical staff at the time of your appointment.



Today's research is tomorrow's care

We all benefit from research. Leicester's Hospitals is a research active Trust so you may find that research is happening when you visit the hospital or your clinic.

If you are interested in finding out how you can become involved in a clinical trial or to find out more about taking part in research, please speak to your clinician or GP.

If you need information in a different language or format, please call the number(s) below or email equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔

على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર ફોન કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।

Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

0116 258 4382 or 0116 250 2959