



Donor Sperm/Being a Donor/Using Donor Sperm

fertility
NEW ZEALAND

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The donation of sperm is a generous gift to couples who, because they have issues with their own sperm, may only achieve a pregnancy by using a donation.

Who are the donors?

Sperm donors come from many groups within the community. Sometimes they have known someone who has required either donor eggs or donor sperm. Sperm donors mostly have their own families and recognize the gift children are to a couple.

Donors may come to the clinic in one of two ways. 'Clinic recruited donors' may have seen articles or advertising for donors and offered to donate to people on the clinic list.

Sometimes couples bring their own donor to the clinic. This is often a brother or relative of the recipient man, who is prepared to donate sperm so there is a genetic connection between the child and both parents. Occasionally a couple will bring a friend who is prepared to donate for them.

New Zealand Legal Situation

In New Zealand donors are expected to be available for the donor children or their families to seek information in the future. The laws, currently being drafted, are likely to include a central register of offspring and their donors. At 18 years of age (or younger in special circumstances) the donor children will be able to locate their donor. Clinics suggest some counselling support for the offspring and their donors to help make the meeting successful.

Who requires Donor Sperm

There are a variety of reasons for the use of donor sperm. While use has diminished with the advances in medical techniques allowing sperm to be retrieved from the testes, some men do not have sperm at all. These men will require donor sperm if the couple are to achieve a pregnancy.

Other situations may involve infection or injury to the testicles, a vasectomy or a genetic disorder that may be passed on to a child. Men who have had treatment such as radiotherapy or chemotherapy, may also need donor sperm.

For single women or lesbian couples, using donor sperm is a safe way to become pregnant and to minimize medical risk and legal issues.

Being a donor

Men, who wish to become a donor, make contact with the clinic to talk about the process of being a donor. Before they begin their donations they will need to complete blood tests, semen analysis, a medical appointment and counselling about the implications of being a donor. During this time the clinic is looking to see if the man is suitable to donate sperm and to ensure that he and his partner understand the implications of being a donor both for the immediate and long term future. At the same time the man and his partner are considering whether, with all the information, they still want to proceed.

If all goes ahead the man will begin his donations, the number of donations will depend on the quality of the semen sample. These donations are frozen and stored. Once these have been deposited there is a period of quarantine, usually 6 months before the sperm is released for use.

The donor is informed once a year about the success of his donations, he is given the gender of the child and the year of birth. He is not entitled to seek contact with the recipients or their children although in exceptional circumstances he can discuss contact with the clinic.

Donors and their partners are able to restrict the availability of their donation to specific groups. Clinic staff will talk through these issues during an appointment.

Donors can nominate the number of families they are prepared to donate to, the maximum is 4 families and 10 children.

Using donor sperm

It is very distressing for a couple to discover they will require sperm from another man if they are to achieve a pregnancy. Couples need to work with their counsellor to deal with the grief involved before they begin donor sperm treatment.

Single women who decide to proceed with this treatment, have generally made a considered decision and feel fortunate to have this opportunity. Lesbian couples should also give significant thought to the decision and the choice of treatment through the clinic.

These people come to the clinic and work with the doctor, counsellor and nurse to understand

the process and consider all the implications of receiving donor sperm. To do this treatment they need to have an understanding of the menstrual cycle, the hormones involved and the process of insemination. They learn about the proposed laws, the selecting of donors, the implications of a child having the genetic relationship to only one parent and discuss many other issues such as bonding with the child.

Having completed this they are then placed on a waiting list. On reaching the top they are able to choose their donor by viewing the profiles of those available to them. When they feel comfortable with their selection the recipients are able to begin to use their donations on the next menstrual cycle. If they achieve a pregnancy enough sperm is reserved to hopefully have a second fully genetic child.

It is acknowledged within the clinic that the children of donor families will need to know their genetic origin or information at some stage. It is important that the recipients have thought through all aspects so they can feel confident about their decision and enjoy their children.

Families with donor offspring can approach the clinic for donor linking if they require health or other information. Counselling support can help ensure that both donor families and donors are comfortable with any contact.

When people make the decision to have a child they develop dreams and expectations about this child. Being faced with the reality that they will not be able to have a child that is fully genetically theirs means they have to reshape their dreams and expectations. Sperm donation has been practiced for years and there are many families, created as a result of this generous gift, who are enjoying their lives together. Donating sperm is an act of kindness and generosity which brings great happiness to the recipient family.

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