

Counselling

This may be a very stressful and confusing time and consideration of your fertility may be the last thing on your mind. We have an independent counsellor who may be able to help you with the anxiety and mixed emotions you have at this time. If you wish to use this service then appointments can be booked by calling the Fertility Unit on 0115 970 9238.

What if something goes wrong?

We endeavour to keep your samples in the best condition possible. However we cannot provide guarantees for the condition of the sample in event of strike, civil disturbance, catastrophic equipment failure and any other abnormal circumstances which may affect our service.

Queries

Please feel free to contact NUH Life on 0115 970 9417 if you require any further information about this service.

Feedback

We appreciate and encourage feedback. If you need advice or are concerned about any aspect of care or treatment please speak to a member of staff or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS):

Freephone: 0800 183 0204

From a mobile or abroad: 0115 924 9924 ext 65412 or 62301

Deaf and hard of hearing: text 07812 270003

E-mail: pals@nuh.nhs.uk

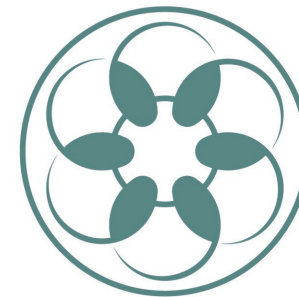
Letter: NUH NHS Trust, c/o PALS, Freepost NEA 14614, Nottingham NG7 1BR

www.nuh.nhs.uk

NUH01997N

Sperm storage

Information for patients



This document can be provided in different languages and formats. For more information please contact:

NUH LIFE

A Floor, West Block
Queen's Medical Centre
Derby Road
Nottingham, NG7 2UH

Tel: 0115 9709417
www.nuh.nhs.uk/andrology

This leaflet is for anyone considering storing sperm and aims to provide information about the process so they can make an informed choice about whether they wish to proceed. A section for adolescents can be found at the back of this leaflet.

What is sperm storage and why would I need it?

Sperm storage involves freezing sperm and storing them at 'ultra-cold' temperatures in liquid nitrogen freezers. It is suitable for anyone undergoing medical or surgical treatment which may affect their future fertility.

How do I organise sperm storage?

You will usually be referred to NUH Life by your Consultant. You may get an appointment time directly from the consultant or we may contact you by letter / telephone.

If you are referring yourself as a private patient e.g. prior to vasectomy, then you can contact NUH Life on 0115 970 9417.

In order to obtain an optimum sample you are required to abstain from any sexual activity (masturbation or intercourse) for 2 - 3 days but no longer than 7 days prior to your appointment.

What is the process of sperm storage?

Your first appointment will last for approximately one hour. At this time you will be asked to complete some legal consent forms and produce a semen sample. If you have a partner then you will be asked to give consideration to how you would like to use your samples and what you would like to happen to them if you were to die or become mentally incapacitated.

As part of the sperm storage process you will be required to have a blood test for HIV, Hepatitis B and C. This is a legal requirement and may be carried out by your referring doctor or at your first appointment.

Time permitting we would recommend a second semen sample be stored. This could either be produced at the hospital or brought from home (depending on distance).

What else will I need to do at the clinic?

A member of the sperm bank team will ask you about your medical history. You will also be offered the chance to see someone with or without your parents. Then you will be asked to complete some forms, which ask for your permission to store your sperm. It will also ask more sensitive things (which are required by law) like if anything happened to you, would you want to leave your sperm to be used by your girlfriend, if you have one?

How will I know if my sperm and fertility are damaged by my treatment?

We won't know this until you give us another sample after your treatment is completed. We usually recommend that you wait for at least a year after your treatment has finished. You just need to telephone the laboratory when you are ready to organise an appointment.

What else do I need to know?

Before storing your sample you must have a blood test for Hepatitis B & C and HIV. You are not being singled out for this test, it is merely a legal requirement and performed on all of our patients to allow us to store your samples safely in our freezers.

If you are sexually active, we would recommend that you use contraception while on the treatment and for at least 12 months after.

In the future if you have a new partner with whom you would like to use your frozen samples then please contact us to arrange an appointment to complete new consent forms.

If you would like a referral to a Fertility Clinic to use your frozen samples then please contact your own GP who will arrange this for you.

If you have any other queries in the meantime about your frozen samples or your fertility don't hesitate to call us on 0115 970 9417.

Sperm storage for adolescents

Occasionally young men need to store sperm (sperm banking) when they are about to have a treatment which could affect their fertility (ability to become a father).

What are sperm?

Sperm first appear at puberty (around age 13 - 15) and are tadpole shaped cells that are made in your testicles. These cells are mixed with fluids from various glands in your reproductive system to form 'semen' which comes out of the penis when you ejaculate. Sperm are required to create a baby which occurs when a sperm fertilises an egg from a female.

Why do I need to store sperm?

You need to store sperm because you may be having chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery which has a risk of leaving you without sperm in the future.

How do I store sperm?

You will have to produce a semen sample by masturbation. This can be done either here at the hospital in a private room or at home if you prefer. It is understandable that you may feel a bit awkward or embarrassed about this but we will try our best to make you feel as comfortable as possible.

When you have collected the sample we check out the number of sperm you have and how well they swim. We then mix it with a special kind of antifreeze which helps to protect your sperm before they are stored in our freezers.

Why does storing sperm help?

The sperm you store will be kept in our freezers until you need to use them. If your treatment does stop you from producing sperm then at some point in the future we can thaw some of your frozen sperm and use them in fertility treatments to make your partner (wife, fiancée, girlfriend) pregnant. Babies are born as a result of this kind of treatment every day and are every bit as healthy as those conceived naturally.

Can my partner (or carer / parent / guardian) come with me?

You may be accompanied to your appointment by anyone you wish and this person may stay with you to complete your consent forms. We respect your need for confidentiality so please make it clear to your companion in advance if you would rather be seen alone during the consent process.

If you are under 18 years old then a parent / guardian should accompany you when completing your paperwork. However you may be seen alone if you would prefer.

How do I collect my sample?

- Ensure that the container has your name and date of birth on it and ensure that the sterile seal is intact.
- Be hygienic - wash your hands and genitals.
- Produce your sample by masturbation into the sterile container. Please ensure that you attempt to collect all the semen produced.
- Once the sample has been collected please ensure that the lid is screwed tightly on and place the container into the sealable bag.
- If bringing your sample from home please aim to deliver it within one hour. Keep the sample close to the body i.e. in your pocket whilst travelling to the hospital.

How are my samples frozen?

Firstly we test your sample to assess the number of sperm present and assess their swimming ability using a computer assisted sperm analyser. Your sample is then mixed with a 'cryopreservative' which protects your sperm during the freezing process.

Your sample will be split up into 0.5ml high security straws which are individually labelled with your name, date of birth and hospital number. Your samples will be placed into a quarantine freezer until we receive your blood test results. We then split your samples wherever possible over two separate freezers with other screened samples.

How long can my samples remain in storage?

The maximum storage period set by law is 10 years. This can be extended if your fertility has become impaired because of any surgery or treatment that you have received.

It is usually necessary to provide a semen sample for analysis to verify this before your GP or Consultant can sign a form to allow you to extend your storage. You will be required to renew your consent forms in this way every 10 years until you no longer require your samples. It is essential that you keep us informed of any changes to your address and reply to any correspondence we may send you.

Who funds my sperm storage?

If you are being referred to us by your Consultant before you embark on treatment or surgery that has a risk of affecting your future fertility then it is likely that your storage will be funded by the NHS. As your samples may remain in storage for many years the availability of NHS funding may change in the future.

If you are self funding your storage, you will be asked to pay an initial charge and then an annual maintenance charge each year thereafter. If you wish to terminate your storage then you must let us know in writing.

How do I check my fertility after my treatment?

After receiving chemotherapy or radiotherapy your fertility may return within a few months or over several years. We advise you to arrange a semen analysis test approximately 12 months after completing your treatment. This is the only way we can provide you with accurate advice about contraception or your chances of achieving a pregnancy naturally. You can organise this test by calling the laboratory on 0115 970 9417.

If you are receiving chemotherapy / radiotherapy then this may lead to changes in sperm. If you conceived this could lead to the baby having abnormalities. For this reason please ensure you are using contraception and consult your doctor for advice on when it may be safe to try to conceive after your treatment.

How do I use my sperm in the future?

If you need to use your frozen samples then you and your partner will need to see your GP to be referred to a Fertility Clinic. The treatment you will require will be dependant upon many factors including the quality of the sperm that you have stored. NHS funded fertility treatment is only provided to couples who meet a strict criteria so please be aware that you may need to 'self fund' treatment to use your frozen samples in the future.

What if my sperm are poor?

Sperm can be poor for many reasons, particularly if you are poorly at the time they are stored. As part of the actual freezing process more than 50% of the sperm can become damaged. Fortunately advances in fertility treatment mean that a pregnancy may be achieved even if you do have very few sperm.

Can I transfer my samples to another clinic?

If in the future you wish to pursue fertility treatment it may be necessary to transfer some or all of your frozen samples to another Fertility Clinic. Please contact us directly and we will send you the necessary paperwork to complete and return to us. Please note that there may well be a cost implication to transporting your samples and the transfer would be at your own risk.

What if I no longer require my samples?

If you conceive naturally, decide you have completed your family or just no longer require your samples then please send a written request for your samples to be withdrawn from storage to the address on the front of this leaflet.

Your assurance of quality

The Fertility Unit at Queen's Medical Centre has provided a dedicated fertility service for over 30 years. Our laboratory runs a comprehensive quality control program and is enrolled in the UK National External Quality Assurance Scheme (UKNEQAS).