

Using donor sperm

Information for patients at
NUH Life Fertility Services

**Please retain this booklet as you may need to refer
to it at a later date**

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Introduction to using donor sperm

Welcome to NUH Life! Alongside this booklet, please visit www.nuhlife.co.uk for more information about our services.

This booklet is for individuals and couples who are considering fertility treatment using donated sperm. It explains how donors are recruited and screened, how to choose a donor, the legal and social implications of treatment, and where to find further support.

This booklet supports the conversations you will have in your implications counselling session. Please keep it for future reference.

For information about the donor insemination (DI) treatment process, please see our *Fertility tests and treatments* booklet.

Safety, quality and legal aspects of donation

How is donation regulated?

All UK fertility clinics are licensed and regulated by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA).

The HFEA ensures:

- Clinics follow UK law when recruiting donors
 - Donors, recipients and donor-conceived people are protected medically, legally and psychologically
 - Information can be shared safely and appropriately
- NUH Life follows all HFEA regulations. The HFEA website has a wealth of information about treatments, donation, clinics and success rates and we recommend you visit their website (see the *Support* section).

Unregulated donation outside licensed clinics carries significant medical, legal and emotional risks and is strongly discouraged.

Who donates sperm at NUH Life?

Our donors are healthy men aged 18 to 45 with no known hereditary conditions. Although many live locally while donating, their backgrounds and ethnicities vary.

All donors share one key motivation: **a wish to help others.**

Many donate because:

- They want to help others experience parenthood
- They do not plan to have their own children
- They know someone affected by infertility
- They are part of the LGBTQ+ community
- They simply want to give something meaningful

Donors often write about their personal motivations in their donor profile, which is shared at the time of matching.

We value our donors as compassionate people - not as commodities - and we provide them with the same high standard of ethical care that we offer recipients.

Are donors anonymous?

Yes and no.

- **At the time of treatment**, donors are anonymous to you.
- **When a donor-conceived person turns 18**, they can legally request the donor's identifying details from the HFEA.

Parents cannot access identifying information at any point.

Because of home DNA testing and social media, anonymity before age 18 can no longer be guaranteed. This is important to consider—see the section *“Could my child or the donor trace each other by other means?”*

What is known donation?

A known donor is someone you already know—such as a friend or family member—who donates specifically for you.

Key points:

- The donor's identity is known to you from the start.
- They must still meet all screening requirements and give consent.
- You pay for their screening, storage and treatment costs.
- Counselling is essential to explore the relationships involved.
- Yours and the donor's legal status is protected.

If this is something you are interested in, contact the donor coordinator.

Who are the parents of a sperm donor-conceived child?

Legal parenthood affects nationality, inheritance, financial responsibility and parental rights, for solo parents and couples. Whilst you might not have to think about these issues ordinarily, it's important to get it right now so that there aren't problems in the future, for example if the parents' relationship breaks down.

When you have treatment in a UK licensed clinic:

The birth parent

- Is always the legal parent, regardless of circumstances.

If the birth parent is married or in a civil partnership

- Their spouse/civil partner is automatically the second legal parent (even with an ex—unless lack of consent is proven on the HFEA LC form).

If the birth parent is not married or in a civil partnership

- Both partners must sign the HFEA WP and PP forms before treatment to give the non-birth parent legal status.

The donor

- Has **no legal rights or responsibilities** when treatment takes place in a licensed UK clinic.
- If sperm is used outside a clinic (e.g., home insemination), the donor is legally considered a parent.

Our nursing team will guide you through the forms relevant to your circumstances.

It is vital that you openly disclose your legal marital status to the clinic and can provide evidence when requested e.g. marriage/ civil partnership certificate.

Please note that some religious, overseas or humanist wedding ceremonies are not legally binding in the UK.

Are donors paid?

Donors are not paid but can claim up to £45 per clinic visit to cover expenses.

How are donors screened?

Donors undergo extensive screening to minimise the risk to recipients and donor-conceived children.

General medical screening

- Physical examination and detailed medical/family history
- GP verification of their medical background
- Only donors with full, accurate family histories are accepted

Infection screening

- Regular tests for HIV, Hepatitis B and C, Syphilis, Chlamydia, Gonorrhoea, CMV, Mycoplasma and more.
- Samples are frozen and quarantined before use.

Genetic screening

- Cystic Fibrosis gene (carriers excluded)
- Chromosome check (karyotype)
- Additional tests for donors from certain ethnic backgrounds (e.g. sickle cell, Thalassaemia, Tay-Sachs)

Fertility screening

Donors must have sperm parameters well above the normal range.

Acceptance criteria

Prospective donors who have abnormal results or concerns in their medical history are excluded from donating and are supported by our team to receive any additional information or health care they require.

Screening cannot completely eliminate all risk of infection and genetic disease but it does reduce the risk significantly. Donors understand the importance of full disclosure of their medical history and that deliberately withholding information could have serious legal implications for them in the future.

Future health issues

Accepted donors have a duty to keep the clinic up to date with any future health matters in themselves or their own family that may be relevant to recipients and donor conceived people. If there are any concerns in the future, the clinic will inform and support recipients and can withdraw a donor from further use.

How are donors counselled?

Every donor is carefully counselled to ensure they understand:

- The lifelong implications of being identifiable
- The emotional impact on themselves and their families
- Their responsibilities

They must attend at least one session of implications counselling before donating, and our counselling service is available to donors to support them and their families at any time during or after donation.

Can the donor withdraw their consent?

Yes. Donors can withdraw consent at any time. This could mean:

- A donor is withdrawn before your treatment
- A donor cannot be used again for a sibling pregnancy, even if you have frozen embryos or reserved samples

This is extremely rare, and donors are encouraged to seek counselling before withdrawing. If a donor withdraws their consent, we will contact you as soon as possible.

Can donors choose whom they donate to?

Donors have the option to place conditions on their donation. Conditions must be compatible with the Equality Act 2010, which prohibits service providers (clinics) from discriminating against characteristics such as age, race or sexual orientation.

How many children can be born from one donor?

A donor can create up to **10 families** in the UK, not including their own. A “family” may include multiple children (e.g., twins or siblings), so your child may have several genetic half-siblings. For lesbian couples, children can be born to either partner in one family.

Choosing a donor

How do I choose a sperm donor?

Choosing a donor can feel overwhelming! Our donor coordinators provide a personalised matching service and will guide you through the process.

You will be asked about preferred:

- Physical features
- Personality traits
- Any other characteristics that feel important to you

We will shortlist 2 to 3 donors who best match your preferences and share their profiles, including goodwill messages and pen portraits.

Remember:

- Genetics are only one part of who a person becomes
- Flexibility increases your options
- What matters most is the environment you raise your child in

For more information see our website www.nuhlife.co.uk/sperm-donor-selection

What is CMV matching?

CMV is a common virus which infects over 40% of the population. It causes mild cold or flu symptoms but it can be more harmful if contracted during pregnancy.

The risk of acquiring CMV from donor insemination is extremely low, and we screen recipients and donors for current and past infections. We call people who have antibodies to CMV “CMV-positive” and people with no antibodies “CMV-negative”.

We usually match CMV-negative recipients with CMV-negative

donors. However in exceptional circumstances, CMV-positive donors can be used for CMV-negative recipients.

What if I can't find a donor with the characteristics I'm looking for?

If you are looking for a specific characteristic, such as ethnicity, and you can't find an NUH Life donor to match, we may be able to explore:

- UK agencies or charitable organisations
- Importing donor sperm from the UK or abroad (must meet HFEA standards)

You should be aware that overseas donors may have many more families worldwide. Your child could therefore have dozens or even more than a hundred genetic half siblings. This is something to explore further in your implications counselling session.

Can I have a sibling using the same donor?

Once you become pregnant, you can reserve additional samples for future use.

- Contact us after your 20-week scan
- Availability is not guaranteed until a reservation agreement is in place
- An annual reservation fee applies

Can I use an NUH Life donor elsewhere?

Yes! You can use NUH Life donor sperm for treatment at other clinics in the UK. You may decide to use this option if you move on to IVF treatment. Shipping is performed using a specialist courier. Please speak to the donor coordinator for pricing and more information.

Social and emotional implications of using donor sperm

What is implications counselling?

Implications counselling provides a confidential space to give you and your partner (if you have one) the opportunity to explore the short and long term implications of using donor sperm. You can ask questions without fear of being judged and in complete confidence.

Implications counselling is not an assessment of your suitability to have treatment, and you do not have to prove any sort of resilience or acceptance of needing sperm donation.

Whatever your circumstance, using donor sperm comes with long term implications for you and your future child(ren). That's why implications counselling is a routine and essential part of the treatment pathway. It helps you explore:

- How you feel about treatment and your path to parenthood
- How genetics might affect family relationships
- How and when you might talk to others
- How to discuss donor conception with your child
- The impact of DNA testing
- Your thoughts on success, disappointment or future changes
- Legal parenthood arrangements

The first session should last up to an hour, and if you have a partner both of you need to attend. Appointments are available face to face, video call or by telephone. If further sessions are required, these may be as individuals or as a couple, your counsellor will guide you.

We also offer and encourage you to take up support counselling before, during or after their treatment, which can help with issues like stress, anxiety, grief, relationship difficulties and managing family and friends. Please see our *Counselling information* sheet or speak to a member of staff.

What records are kept of implications counselling?

Following implications counselling, your counsellor will arrange for a general template of themes explored in the session to be put on your clinic medical record, together with the date of the counselling, names of those who attended and the name of the counsellor. Crucially, no other information that may have been shared confidentially during the counselling will be disclosed unless you have explicitly agreed to this.

Do I have to tell my child and other people about using donated sperm?

The right of a child to know their origins is enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (specifically Article 8). Research also shows it is best practice for parents to share this information with donor conceived children from a young age.

We recommend:

- Talking to your child from babyhood
- Making donor conception part of their normal family story
- Using age-appropriate explanations
- Avoiding secrecy—late disclosure can damage trust

If you, as their parent, are open about how your child was conceived there is no reason they should feel any different to any other child. If donation has been part of the family story for as long as your child can remember, their genetic origins needn't be a big issue.

Being open does not mean that a child will reject their non-genetic parent. Some donor-conceived children are likely to want to know more about their donor, while others won't be particularly interested. You can read personal stories from donor conceived people on the DCN website <https://dcnetwork.org/useful-info/personal-stories>

For support with talking to children about donation, we highly recommend the Donor Conception Network www.dcnetwork.org. DCN has some excellent resources, including children's picture story books about all the different types of donor conception and a wide variety of family set ups. Our counselling service is also available for support with talking to children and family about donation.

Accessing information now and later

Who holds information about the donor?

Clinics must provide donor and treatment information to the HFEA, who store it securely.

Data includes:

- Identifying and non-identifying donor details
- Information about treatments
- Details of children born from treatment

If in the future you or your child want to access information about your donor you can approach NUH Life or the HFEA directly.

What information can I receive about the donor?

When matched, you will receive the non-identifying information the donor has provided, such as:

- Donor characteristics
- Pen portrait (if provided)
- Goodwill message

Different donors provide different amounts and types of information. Some donors only provide a small amount – for example, their height, hair colour and occupation. Others provide more detailed information about themselves as a person.

We recommend that you keep this information safe, and share it with your child. You can always request it from us at a later date too.

After your child is born, you can also find out:

- Number of donor-conceived siblings
- Their sex and year of birth

We recommend that you are as open as possible with your child. There is lots of support and resources available to help. Have a look at the support section for information about the kinds of organisations that can provide guidance and support on sharing information.

What information can my child receive about the donor?

Before 16 years of age children can only access the information that is available to their parents, through their parents, as above.

At 16 years of age your child can find out the following non-identifying information about the donor:

- Physical description e.g. height, weight and eye, hair and skin colour
- Year and country of birth
- Ethnic group

- Whether the donor had any genetic children when they registered, and the number and sex of those children
- Other details the donor may have chosen to supply e.g. occupation, religion and interests
- The ethnic groups of the donor's parents
- Whether the donor was adopted or donor-conceived
- Marital status at the time of donation
- Details of any screening tests and medical history
- Skills
- Reasons for donating
- A good will message, and
- A description of themselves as a person (pen portrait)

At 16 years of age your child can also access:

- Anonymous information about any donor-conceived genetic siblings e.g. number, sex, year of birth
- Information about the possibility of being related to the person they intend to enter into an intimate physical relationship with
- Information about the possibility of being related to the person they intend to marry (at any age)

At the age of 18 years your child will be legally entitled to receive the following *identifying information* about their donor:

- Full name (and any previous names)
- Date of birth
- Town/ district of birth
- Last known postal address (or address at time of registration)

At 18 years of age they can also access:

- Identifying information about donor conceived siblings (with mutual consent through the HFEA Donor Sibling Link)

What information can the donor receive about me and my child?

We can only tell donors:

- Number of children born
- Year of birth
- Sex of the child

Known donors may receive information agreed mutually between you.

Could my child or the donor trace each other by other means?

Yes. Because of home DNA testing and online genealogy databases:

- A donor-conceived child can be identified
- A donor can be identified
- Extended family members can make identification possible
- This can happen *at any age*

Even if you choose not to tell your child about their genetic origins, in their lifetime it is likely that their genetic origins will become known to them. This is why openness with children is strongly recommended and why counselling is so important.

Support and further information

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA)

UK regulator of fertility treatment

www.hfea.gov.uk

The British Infertility Counselling Association (BICA)

Search for a specialist fertility counsellor.

www.bica.net

Donor Conception Network

National charity supporting donor conception families.

www.dcnetwork.org

Donor Conceived UK

A peer-led charitable organisation to represent people affected by donor conception.

donorconceiveduk.org.uk

NeXYs fertility

Support for men navigating fertility challenges

www.nexysfertility.com

Stonewall

LGBTQ+ Family Formation Guide

www.stonewall.org.uk/family-formation

LGBT Mummies

Organisation to support LGBT+ women and people on the path to motherhood or parenthood

lgbtmummies.com

Fertility Network UK

UK's leading charity providing information, support and advice to all those struggling to conceive

www.fertilitynetworkuk.org

The Fertility Alliance

A national fertility charity offering support and information.

thefertilityalliance.org.uk

NUH Life clinic information

Opening times

Monday – Thursday 8am - 3:30pm, Friday 8am - 12pm

Contact details

Telephone 0115 970 9238

General enquiries: nuhnt.fertility.enquiries@nhs.net

Donor coordinator: nuhnt.andrology@nhs.net

In case of emergency

If you have an urgent enquiry during opening hours call us on 0115 9709238. In an **out of hours emergency** relating to your treatment call Nottingham University Hospital Ward A23 (gynaecology) on **0115 924 9924 ext. 69023**. In a medical emergency call 999.

Teaching policy

Nottingham University Hospitals is a major teaching centre and so medical students, student nurses or junior doctors may be present during your consultation. If you prefer to not have them present please indicate to one of the nursing team.

Chaperones

You are welcome to have a chaperone to accompany you during any appointment at NUH Life. Please ask a member of staff.

Interpretation, translation and accessibility

NUH has written and verbal translation and interpretation and sign language interpretation services available. If you require any support with accessing our services or written information please contact a member of staff.

Data privacy

NUH Life is part of Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust. NUH is the data controller of your information under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Please see the NUH privacy notice for more information about how your information is treated www.nuh.nhs.uk/data-requests-your-privacy and how to make a Subject Access Request.

NUH Life must also comply with HFEA requirements for the handling of patient data. Fertility records are held securely in the clinic and are not shared elsewhere in NUH. Information about your treatment is only shared with third parties such as your GP, other medical practitioners or researchers with your written consent. For more information please speak to a member of staff.

Feedback

If you have 2 minutes, let us know how was your experience today? And, what could we do to improve?



<https://forms.office.com/e/e999SQZgw0>

You can also leave us a review on the “Choose a fertility clinic” area of the HFEA website www.hfea.gov.uk.

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

E-mail: nuhnt.pals@nhs.net

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

www.nuh.nhs.uk

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email nuhnt.patient.information@nhs.net or phone 0115 924 9924 ext. 87184.

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