



Using a

# *Sperm donor*

a guide to the treatment process



IVFAustralia's donor program assists anyone needing a sperm donor to help them have a baby.

Our program adheres to the practices developed by the Reproductive Technology Accreditation Committee (RTAC) of the Fertility Society of Australia (FSA), the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Ethical Guidelines, the 2007 NSW Assisted Reproductive Technology Act and the 2009 Regulations of this Act and the 2004 ACT Parentage Act.

At the heart of our donor program, is a focus on the future welfare of any child born from donor sperm. Any medical and counselling information provided before treatment will always take into account the best interests of the future child.

The purpose of this booklet is to explain the treatment process involved in using a known or de-identified sperm donor.

## What is sperm donation?

Sperm donation refers to the use of sperm, which has been donated by a third person or 'donor' to assist an individual, couple, or family, known as recipient(s), in their attempt to have a child.

## Types of donors

Donors are classified as either known or de-identified depending on the type of relationship between the donor and recipient(s).

**De-identified sperm donation** is where the identity of the donor is not known to the recipient(s) at the time of treatment, although identifying information will be made available for access by the donor conceived children once they reach 18 years of age. De-identified donors are recruited locally by IVFAustralia or through partnerships with international sperm banks. The donated sperm is available for treatment to any IVFAustralia patient and can be used to create up to five families.

**Known sperm donation** is where the identity of the donor is usually known to the recipient(s) and commonly where the donor and recipient have an existing relationship. A known donor may be a friend, family member or have been privately recruited. The donated sperm is only used for the treatment of one specific family.

## Preparation of sperm donors

At IVFAustralia we follow a careful process of preparation for sperm donation to try and prevent any potential genetic conditions or infectious diseases being passed onto the recipient or any children conceived.

It is an Australian requirement that all donated sperm samples be kept quarantined (frozen) for three months and will not be released for treatment until follow-up testing is complete.

Donors and their family are also required to undergo counselling to consider all aspects and implications of becoming a sperm donor. We are extremely careful about who we accept as sperm donors in our program and not every potential donor will meet our strict medical and psychological criteria.

If during the assessment process information arises that would have serious implications for the health of either the recipient or any children, the donor must give written consent for this information to be provided to the recipient(s), otherwise it may not be possible for the donation to proceed.

Sperm donation is a generous gift however sometimes it may become apparent during the assessment process that a person is not suitable to be a sperm donor. If this arises, the issues will be discussed with the donor and they will not be able to proceed with the donation.

Although donors are allowed to place conditions on the use of their gametes as to the preference (sexual orientation, race, relationship status, religion) of the recipients of their donation, this does not reflect IVFAustralia or Virtus Health's preference or values.

All donors are provided with counselling during their donation journey.

## The legal framework

In Australia, all sperm donors are required to make their identity available to the children conceived from their donation when the child turns 18 years of age.

All de-identified donors recruited by IVFAustralia, either in NSW or the ACT, must give written informed consent for their identifying information to be added to the NSW Health ART Central Register, if a child is born from their donation.

In the case of a known donor, where donation and treatment occurs in the ACT, there is no requirement for their name to be added to the NSW Register as this is a NSW requirement only. However, the donor is still required to consent to their identifying information being released to any donor offspring after the age of 18 years.

For more information about what details are added to the NSW Health ART Central Register please go to the NSW Health website [health.nsw.gov.au/art](http://health.nsw.gov.au/art)

Sperm donors are only allowed to create a maximum of five families worldwide including the family/s of the donor. All overseas donors are required to meet the same legislative requirements.

Sperm donors have no legal or financial obligation to any child born from their donation. A child born from donated sperm is deemed to be the child of the recipient(s) and the recipient(s) put their name on the birth certificate. As a parent, the recipient(s) have the same rights and obligations as other parents.

Sperm donation is a specialised, and sometimes complex, area of the law. If you have any concerns in this regard, you should seek your own legal advice.

## Treatment with donor sperm

### Is sperm donation suitable for you?

Due to low chances of success, women over the age of 45 who want to use a local clinic recruited sperm donor, can only do so if they are using donor eggs. For women over the age of 45 who would like to undergo treatment using their own eggs, IVFAustralia has an international clinic recruited program which will allow you to access treatment using your own eggs. For health reasons treatment with donor sperm is not provided to women once they have reached their 52<sup>nd</sup> birthday.

### Treatment options

Donor sperm can be used for either intrauterine insemination (IUI) or in-vitro fertilisation (IVF).

Intrauterine insemination involves inserting prepared semen through the neck of the womb (the cervix) and into the uterus, close to the time of ovulation. Sometimes, fertility drugs may be used to stimulate the ovaries and encourage the release of eggs.

IVF is a procedure where higher doses of fertility drugs are used to encourage a larger number of eggs (usually 5 – 15) to grow. These eggs are then collected from the ovaries and joined with the donated sperm in the laboratory where they are allowed to develop in a protected environment for a few days before being transferred back into the woman's uterus.

IVF is a more complex form of treatment but carries a higher chance of pregnancy success than intrauterine insemination. Your fertility specialist will discuss these options with you and help you decide which treatment is right for you.

### Egg sharing

If you are in a same sex relationship or other form of family, you may wish to egg share. This is where the eggs of one partner are collected in an IVF cycle to create embryos that are then transferred into the other partner with the effect that one partner is the gestational carrier and the other partner is the genetic parent. For some families this is a beautiful process that allows both partners to have a unique linkage to the child.

## Choosing a de-identified donor

Demand for donor sperm usually exceeds supply and for this reason we have established a waitlist to ensure fair and non-discriminatory access of recipients to treatment with de-identified sperm donors.

To join the waitlist you will be required to sign the waitlist agreement and pay a non-refundable administration fee.

Once you reach the top of the waitlist and have completed your medical preparation and counselling, you will be given access to a database of all the donors currently available to choose from. Here you will be able to view in-depth questionnaires completed by the donor about themselves and their families including physical attributes and a detailed family medical history.

If there are no suitable donors for you at that time, you can remain at the top of the waitlist until you find a donor that is suitable. You can continue to have access to that donor provided you are actively undergoing treatment. If you need more than 6-8 weeks between treatment cycles you will be asked to choose a new donor when you are ready to commence treatment again.

At IVFAustralia donor sperm and resulting embryos are only for use within IVFAustralia's network of care. This is so that we continue to ensure that we honour the consents and agreements set up with our generous donors.

## Having another child with a de-identified donor

Once you have had one child using a de-identified sperm donor, we will endeavour to assist you in having further children with the same donor.

Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee future access to the same donor. Sometimes a donor can change their mind about being a sperm donor and withdraw consent for future access to their samples. It is also possible that future legislative changes may make it impossible to continue use with a specific donor.

Where the donor is based in Australia, we can normally retain sufficient samples to ensure future access to the same donor.

Where the donor is based overseas, we will have to import sufficient samples to ensure future access to the same donor. We therefore require the recipient(s) who wish to ensure future access to overseas based donors to pay a charge for future access. If, for any reason, we are unable to provide future access, this charge will be refunded.

## Choosing a known sperm donor

When recruiting a known sperm donor, consider what criteria you might be looking for in a donor. For example: what level of involvement do you wish to have with the donor after a potential child is born? What are the person's motivations for donating?

We cannot accept sperm donors who are under the age of 21, are a close relative of the recipient being treated or are from a younger generation of the recipient(s). We also do not encourage known donors who are over 50 years of age, have a past or current history of significant mental health problems or have a medical condition themselves or in their family that may be passed onto future children.

However, you may have a strong or very sound reason for choosing a particular known donor and we will discuss the implications of that donor on an individual basis.

## Co-parenting

If you have chosen to co-parent, the person providing sperm will need to undergo preparation as a known donor. In this situation we recommend seeking legal advice before starting the process.

## Exchange of information for de-identified donors

What non-identifying information are the recipient(s) and children entitled to know?

**We are required to provide the following non-identifying information:**

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- ◆ Relevant medical and family history summary
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- ◆ A questionnaire completed by the donor (eg. eye colour, personality traits, education, ethnicity etc)
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- ◆ Genetic questionnaire
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- ◆ Number of other families and children conceived by that donor
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Any other information about the donor given to the recipient(s) and children is dependent on the consent of the donor. Once a donor conceived child turns 18 years of age, they can then access the donor's identifying information via the NSW Health ART Central Register or through IVFAustralia.

### **What information are de-identified sperm donors entitled to know?**

Sperm donors are only entitled to non-identifying information about the recipient families and any children born. On request to the clinic, a sperm donor is entitled to be told about the number, gender, and the year of birth of children born to each family using their donation but will not be given any further information without the consent of the recipient(s) of the donation.

If both donor and recipients(s) consent, it is possible for the voluntary exchange of information, according to the wishes of each party. This is usually driven by the child once they become aware they are donor conceived.

## Medicare

Many fertility treatments attract a rebate from Medicare. However, Medicare only rebate for fertility treatment when there is a medical cause for infertility.

We recommend you consult a fertility specialist for a full investigation to understand if you are eligible for any Medicare rebates.

## Costs of using a sperm donor

The costs involved in using a sperm donor depend on whether you choose to use a known or de-identified donor and the type of treatment involved.



If using a known donor the recipient(s) are required to pay for all the costs of the donor's assessment and treatment. There is a preparation cost which includes the donors counselling, sperm testing, genetic testing, freezing and first six months of storage. Other costs may include the donors out of pocket expenses for consultations, any additional tests required not included in the preparation fee, and ongoing storage.

If using a de-identified donor the recipients(s) will pay an access fee per treatment cycle.

Details of the costs are available on our website [ivf.com.au/costs](http://ivf.com.au/costs)

## Implications counselling

When deciding to use a sperm donor, there are some psychological, legal and ethical factors to consider. Your counsellor will help take you through these implications to assist you in making an informed decision before proceeding with treatment.

Your counsellor is required by the current legislation and RTAC guidelines to demonstrate that potential donors and recipient(s) have discussed and understood a range of topics relevant to the welfare of any potential child created from donation.

**Some topics that may be discussed in counselling include:**

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- ◆ How and when to tell children about their genetic origin. Current research and experiences of offspring conceived through donation suggest that children should be told of their biological origins and that secrecy can have adverse effects on family relationships
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- ◆ Your expectations for the future exchange of information
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- ◆ How ready you are to proceed with sperm donation treatment
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- ◆ Managing the response of family and friends
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## Sib-links

IVFAustralia has developed a unique information exchange system called Donor Sib-Links for our patients. This system provides families who have used our donor program to have contact with their half-siblings conceived through the same donor if they choose to voluntarily share information.

In addition, all of our families are provided, on request, with the month of birth and gender of all of their half siblings.

## Using a known sperm donor

### Phone clinic

**Appointment with fertility specialist** You and your donor will both need an appointment with a fertility specialist who will take a comprehensive medical history, arrange routine blood tests and discuss the process and treatment options for you.

**Donor coordinator** We will contact you to discuss the work up process and the costs for you and your donor. You will then be invoiced for the donor work up fee.

**Donor screening and genetic review** Your donor will undergo blood and urine tests for infectious and genetic conditions and a semen analysis. A genetic counsellor will also review their family & genetic history.

**Implications counselling** Usually two individual sessions and one joint counselling session with your donor are held with our fertility counsellors.

**Sperm freeze and quarantine** Donor sperm is frozen and quarantined for 3 months. After the quarantine period the donor is retested for infectious diseases. This must be completed before sperm can be released for treatment.

**Donor coordinator** Once the quarantine period is complete and the donors screening tests have been reviewed. We will contact you to arrange a follow up appointment with your fertility specialist.

**Follow up appointment with fertility specialist** Your fertility specialist will plan your treatment, discuss any issues and clarify medical procedures. You will also review and sign any appropriate consent forms.

**Arrange orientation and start treatment** You will need to call your clinic to arrange orientation. A nursing orientation will provide very detailed information on the steps, medications and timeline of dates for procedures involved in the treatment process.

## Using a de-identified sperm donor

### Phone clinic

**Appointment with fertility specialist** Your specialist will take a comprehensive medical history, arrange routine blood tests and discuss the process and treatment options. You will also complete an application to join the donor sperm waitlist.

**Donor coordinator** We will email you to confirm your name has been added to the donor sperm waitlist, advise approximate waiting times and make an initial counselling appointment.

**Implications counselling** Usually two individual appointments for the recipient(s) are held with our fertility counsellors.

**Wait list** Once your name moves to the top of the waitlist, we will contact you to complete your counselling and book a follow up consultation with your fertility specialist.

**Follow up appointment with fertility specialist** Your fertility specialist will plan your treatment, discuss any issues and clarify medical procedures. You will also review and sign any appropriate consent forms.

**Choose donor** Contact the donor coordinator, after you have seen your fertility specialist, for access to our secure donor sperm website to choose your donor. Once you have chosen your donor, we will contact you to confirm your selection.

**Arrange orientation and start treatment** You will need to call your clinic to arrange orientation. A nursing orientation will provide very detailed information on the steps, medications and timeline of dates for procedures involved in the treatment process.



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