

ARE YOU AT RISK FOR CANCER-RELATED INFERTILITY?



Before you start cancer treatment, it's important to understand if your cancer and/or cancer treatment might affect your ability to have a biological child in the future. You should discuss this with your oncology team (doctors and nurses) as soon as possible and involve your partner or parents if applicable.

Questions to Ask Your Health Care Team

1. Will my cancer and cancer treatment potentially affect my fertility?
2. Should I consider preserving my fertility before cancer treatment?
3. Can you refer me to a fertility specialist before my treatment starts?
4. Do I have time for fertility preservation?

Will My Insurance Cover the Cost?

You'll want to check with your insurance provider to determine if fertility preservation is covered under your plan. Some employers cover the cost and several states mandate fertility preservation coverage for cancer patients.

Financial Resources

Paying for fertility preservation is a challenge for most people. Here are some helpful resources:

1. **Worth the Wait** provides need-based fertility preservation grants and family building grants for those ages 13-39 without insurance coverage.
2. **Livestrong** offers discounts on fertility preservation services and medications at specific clinics.
3. **Walgreens** has two programs for free or discounted fertility medications for cancer patients.

Some chemotherapies and radiation may destroy eggs or sperm, damage the uterus, ovaries, testes, and/or the pituitary gland that controls reproductive hormones.



Scan me for resources

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Options for Females

If your fertility is at risk and you have ovaries, you may want to consider options such as egg, embryo, or ovarian tissue freezing.

Egg Cryopreservation

Hormone injections stimulate your ovaries to make many eggs at once (females typically produce one egg per month). When eggs mature, they are extracted through a minor surgery, under anesthesia, and frozen. This option is available for those with ovaries who have gone through puberty.

Embryo Cryopreservation

This process, sometimes called in vitro fertilization (IVF), is like egg cryopreservation, but after your eggs are extracted, they are fertilized by sperm. After a few days of maturing in a lab, your embryos are frozen for future use.

Ovarian Tissue Cryopreservation

In this procedure, one or part of your ovary is surgically removed and frozen. When you're ready to conceive, the ovary is surgically placed back in your body. It may start producing eggs again which can be used to conceive naturally or with the use of assisted reproductive technology, like IVF. This option may be available if you have ovaries and have not undergone puberty or if you cannot safely undergo egg cryopreservation.

Other Options

Other potential fertility-sparing methods include hormone shots (which shut the ovaries off) and shielding or moving reproductive organs to reduce potential risk. Talk to your doctor to see if these options will work for you, based on your medical condition and planned treatments.

What's an Embryo?

An embryo is an egg that is fertilized by sperm and developed for a few days in a lab.

Options for Males

If your fertility is at risk and you have testicles, you may want to consider sperm or testicular tissue cryopreservation or other options.

Sperm Cryopreservation

If you can provide a semen sample through masturbation, it will be processed by a lab and frozen. After thawing, it can be used to conceive through in vitro fertilization (IVF).

Testicular Tissue Cryopreservation

If you haven't gone through puberty, this experimental option involves surgically removing and freezing part of your testicle. In survivorship, options may exist to have your tissue reimplanted in your body.

Other Options

Potential fertility-sparing methods include shielding your testicles during radiation, a process called testicular shielding, and testicular sperm extraction with cryopreservation. Talk to your doctor to see if these options will work for you.

How Long Does Fertility Preservation Take?

Egg and embryo cryopreservation can be expedited for cancer patients and may only require delaying cancer treatment by about two weeks. Sperm cryopreservation is generally completed in one day.

Hope for All

If your physician says there isn't enough time to preserve fertility, rest assured there are other options for parenthood. Many cancer survivors build a family through adoption, egg, embryo, or sperm donation; or gestational surrogacy.

