

# STORAGE OF SPERM FOR MEN HAVING CHEMOTHERAPY OR RADIOTHERAPY

## Contents

- How to arrange sperm storage and what is involved
- How long sperm can be stored for
- What to consider when giving consent for sperm storage
- The costs involved

## Introduction

Some of the treatments involving chemotherapy or radiotherapy can affect a man's future ability to father children. Men who are about to undergo these treatments may wish to consider storing samples of their sperm, which could be used at a later date if needed.

The storage of sperm is an activity licensed by the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority (HFEA) under the terms of the HF&E Act of Parliament (2008). In order to store sperm we are required to obtain your informed written consent. It is therefore essential that you read carefully the following information.

## How do I arrange sperm storage?

Your doctor, or a nurse from the clinic, should refer you to the Bath Fertility Centre (BFC) before you start your treatment. They should also arrange screening for HIV and hepatitis (see below).

The clinic is located approximately 6 miles south-west of Bath city centre, on Bath Business Park in Peasedown St John. For a detailed map and travel information, visit [www.bathfertility.com](http://www.bathfertility.com)

## Screening for HIV and Hepatitis

All patients wishing to store sperm must be screened for HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. For patients who require immediate storage (such as oncology patients) we have a system of quarantining samples until screening results are known. If screening tests prove negative the samples can then be placed in long-term storage. If, however, screening tests prove positive we would not be able to store the samples here. We should be able to arrange for the samples to be stored at another hospital.

## What is involved?

Normally when you are referred for sperm storage you will be attending BFC within a few days so that the sample(s) can be stored before you start your treatment. You will meet a member of the laboratory staff at Bath Fertility Centre who will confirm your details (name & address etc) and ensure that the appropriate consent forms are completed.

There is a small private room available where you are asked to provide your sample. This should be produced by masturbation directly into the container provided. If you find it a

problem to produce your sample at BFC it may be possible for you to do so at home, providing it can be brought to the laboratory within one hour.

After you have produced your sample the laboratory staff will assess the quality and discuss this with you. If there are sperm present and it is suitable for freezing the sample will be frozen in several tiny containers called ampoules. It may be possible to freeze more than one sample depending on when your treatment starts.

Very occasionally we find that there are no sperm present in a sample and we would therefore not be able to store any sperm.

### **How is the sperm stored?**

The ampoules of sperm are stored in special refrigerators containing liquid nitrogen at -196C, with temperature alarms linked to an auto dialler that will alert staff in the unlikely event of failure. Samples are also split between two refrigerators to provide a backup if one were to fail.

### **How long is the sperm stored for?**

You can consent to storage for up to 55 years, however storage can only be extended beyond 10 years if the following conditions are met: (a) your fertility is known to be affected and is certified as such by a medical practitioner (b) you request your samples are kept in storage and (c) you pay the annual storage fees. If we cannot contact you after 10 years from initial freezing your samples will have to be discarded.

You must notify BFC annually (by letter or email) that you require storage to continue. A letter will be sent to you each year reminding you to do so. It is therefore vital that you keep us informed of any change of address.

### **What happens to the stored samples if a patient dies?**

This depends on how you complete the relevant consent form(s). You can decide that the samples should be 'allowed to perish' (in which case the stored samples would be destroyed). If you have a partner you might decide instead that you wish your partner to be able to use any stored samples if you die (this is called posthumous use). If you choose this option you must complete an additional consent form, giving your partner's name. Before you make up your mind you should consider the following emotional implications of your sperm remaining in storage:

- Any child conceived after your death would never have known you – how do you feel about this, and how would a child feel?
- Your partner would have to go through fertility treatment on their own and may become a single parent
- The opportunity to use previously stored sperm may not help your partner in the grieving process if something does happen to you.

If you have given your consent to the posthumous use of stored sperm and you wish to enable your name to be on any resulting child's birth certificate you must complete the

'Consent to Birth Registration' section on HFEA form MT. This simply allows you to be recorded as a child's father; it does not confer any inheritance or other legal rights on a child. You should seek your own legal advice if you wish to arrange provision from your estate for a child conceived posthumously.

### **Counselling**

Free counselling is available to anyone considering sperm storage. This gives you the opportunity to discuss with an independent person your concerns regarding the storage of your sperm and its future use, including the implications for your future fertility. Support can be offered to both you and when appropriate your partner.

This counselling is available in a quiet, comfortable room within BFC. If you wish to take advantage of this service please make an appointment by telephoning BFC on (01761) 434464.

### **What does it cost?**

Depending on your circumstances the NHS may fund sperm storage for 5-10 years (this varies according to your location). This means that some men may have to fund their own storage if they already have children. When NHS funding ceases there will be an annual storage fee payable if you wish samples to remain in storage.

### **Confidentiality**

Any information that BFC holds is confidential. We will only disclose information to other specified persons (for example your family doctor) if authorised to do so by you.

### **Additional information**

If you wish to find out whether your treatment has affected your fertility, BFC can do a sperm test for you. The soonest that this can be done is 6 months after your treatment has been completed. Your doctor can arrange this for you.

If you have made a Will we suggest you register the fact that you have sperm stored at Bath Fertility Centre. It is a good idea to keep your copy of the consent forms with your Will or other important documents.

We can provide you with further information about the possible future use of your sperm samples when you attend BFC.

If you have any questions please feel free to ask them either at your appointment or by telephoning us (01761) 434464.

Further information about cancer and fertility can be found on the Macmillan website:

<https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/side-effects-and-symptoms/fertility-in-men>