

Who can be referred to Bourn Hall Clinic for sperm / egg / embryo freezing?

Any individual at risk of becoming prematurely infertile, as a result of a necessary medical treatment or intervention, can be referred.

Typically, these individuals are planned to undergo:

- medical treatment (such as surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy) for cancer or other serious medical condition,
- or
- elective surgery to remove the pelvic reproductive organs (includes planned gender reassignment).

Individuals or couples who wish to freeze their gametes for social reasons can be referred to Bourn Hall Clinic through their GP or contact us directly.

Who can refer to Bourn Hall Clinic for sperm/egg/embryo freezing?

Any qualified specialist or GP can refer individuals (or couples) for consideration of sperm / egg / embryo freezing. If freezing is on the basis of a medical reason, the medical professional overseeing the patient's treatment is the most appropriate person to make the referral.

Who funds the fertility preservation process?

- Patients may secure NHS funding with the help of their referring consultant or GP. An Individual Funding Request (IFR) application may be required with the patient's Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). For individual CCG funding criteria please refer to their website or contact them directly.
- Please note that funding for fertility preservation does not guarantee funding for future treatment using any stored gametes. Patients wishing to use frozen gametes with the support of the NHS would need to follow the normal IVF referral pathway and meet the relevant CCG criteria.
- Patients may wish to self-fund the process (for pricing, please contact Bourn Hall Clinic Patient Services).

How long does it take?

We always try to meet the needs of the individual. If it is an emergency (before cancer treatment), we aim to complete sperm freezing within 7 days and egg/embryo freezing within 30 days.

Sperm freezing

- The patient receives an appointment to attend their local Bourn Hall Clinic.
- The first sample for freezing is produced on the same day, after signing the relevant consent forms.
- The laboratory staff will inform the patient if they could come back for further collections, depending on their personal wishes and time restrictions.
- Using frozen sperm for future fertility treatment can result in live birth rates that are similar to the ones achieved after routine fertility treatment.

Egg freezing

- The patient receives an appointment to see one of our consultants. During this appointment, the patient receives professional information on the benefits and risks of fertility preservation in order to be able to make an informed decision.
- If the patient commits straightaway, an internal scan is undertaken and provisional dates are planned with support from the nursing staff. If not, the patient can consider their options and contact Bourn Hall Clinic if they wish to proceed.
- The injection stimulation process followed by egg collection takes about 2 weeks.
- There is a recovery period of about 2 days to return to normal activity after stimulation and egg collection. However, it may take about 4-6 weeks for the pelvic organs and blood supply to resume their original size (this could be relevant if pelvic surgery or irradiation is planned urgently).
- The chances of having a baby using frozen eggs are expected to be similar to using frozen embryos.

Embryo freezing

Embryo freezing, instead of egg freezing, can be considered for women with a long-term male partner, depending on the wishes of the individual. There is substantial experience with embryo freezing and high live birth rates can be achieved after transferring these embryos nowadays.

Counselling

Every person referred for fertility preservation is able to access Bourn Hall Clinic's independent counselling service (without charge).

Is there any scenario where a patient cannot store their gametes at Bourn Hall Clinic?

A patient who is positive for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV 1&2 cannot store gametes at any Bourn Hall Clinic. Furthermore, a patient cannot store gametes if they have recently returned from a Zika virus affected country (6 months for a male or female in a relationship, 2 months for a single female).

Please check the latest information on affected countries <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/zika-virus-country-specific-risk>

A patient with any other potentially transmissible condition will be considered on an individual basis.