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the royal women's hospital

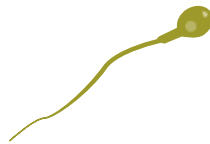
# Can I still have children?

Information for men  
having chemotherapy  
and radiotherapy



This booklet was produced by the Andrology Unit and Reproductive Services at the Royal Women's Hospital and edited by the Women's Consumer Health Information team.

If you would like to make any comments about this booklet, please contact the Women's Consumer Health Information team on (03) 8345 3040 or email [rwh.publications@thewomens.org.au](mailto:rwh.publications@thewomens.org.au).

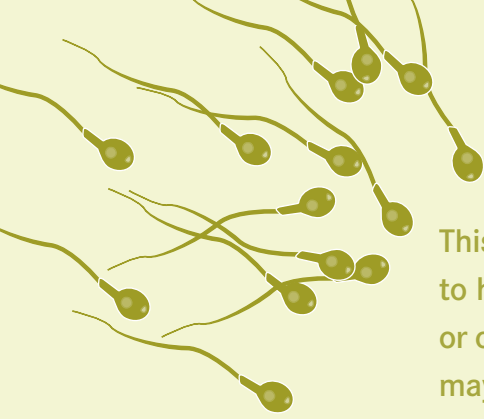


#### Disclaimer

The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any liability to any person for the information or advice (or use of such information or advice) that is provided in this booklet or incorporated into it by reference.

We provide this information on the understanding that all persons accessing it take responsibility for assessing its relevance and accuracy.

Men and women are encouraged to discuss their health needs with a health practitioner.



This booklet is for men who are about to have chemotherapy, radiotherapy or other treatments or procedures which may affect their fertility. It aims to help you make decisions now which may increase your chance of having children in the future. We hope that it answers all your questions, if not, please speak to your doctor. We have also provided some important contact information at the end of the booklet for your reference.



## What are the effects of my treatment?

Chemotherapy and radiotherapy can affect a man's ability to father children. This is because the treatment is likely to stop sperm production. For some men this will only be temporary. After a time, they will start producing healthy sperm again. For many however it will be permanent – they will never produce sperm again.

## What are my options?

Before you start chemotherapy or radiotherapy some of your semen, containing sperm, can be frozen and kept until you wish to start a family.

The semen will need to be produced and collected at the hospital, preferably by masturbation. If you have difficulty collecting a sample by masturbation, then it may be possible for you to collect it by having sex at home whilst wearing a special non-toxic condom. Please contact staff at the Royal Women's Hospital Andrology Unit for more details on (03) 9344 2692.

If you are collecting semen by masturbation there are a few practical details that you need to know:

- Samples are collected in a private room in the Andrology Unit so that the scientists can prepare and freeze the semen as soon as possible before the sperm die.
- You should not use lubricants as they can damage the sperm and make the semen difficult to freeze.
- Make sure you collect all of the semen – the first portion often contains most of the sperm.
- Where possible two or more samples are collected.

## What is a testicular biopsy?

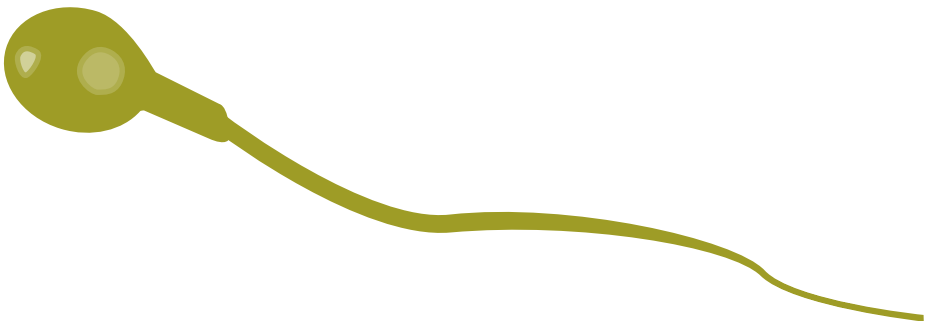
Some men may be unable to collect semen or there may be no sperm in the semen because of illness, or for other reasons. In this situation it may be possible to collect sperm from your testicles by a small operation called testicular biopsy. Sperm collected from the testis may be frozen and used later by intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI).

## Does freezing damage the sperm?

The sperm are prepared for freezing by mixing them with a protective solution and reducing the temperature gradually. They are stored in liquid nitrogen at  $-196^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Some of the sperm are killed in the process of freezing, the results do vary but usually 25% to 50% will survive.

## How long can sperm be frozen?

Sperm have been used successfully after being frozen for many years. Victorian law states that sperm can be stored initially for ten years. After ten years approval must be obtained from the Infertility Treatment Authority (ITA - [www.ita.org.au](http://www.ita.org.au)) for continued storage.

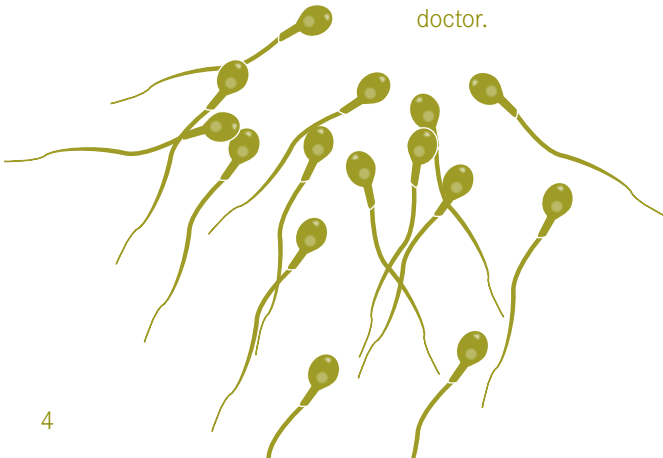


## What happens when I want to start a family?

Different fertility methods are used depending on the quality of the semen after storage and your partner's fertility.

- **Artificial insemination (AI)** – your semen is thawed and the sperm is prepared and injected into your partner's uterus. This method can be used if there is plenty of semen containing large numbers of motile (moving) sperm.
- **In-vitro fertilisation (IVF)** - eggs are collected from your partner and fertilised with your sperm in the laboratory, the embryo/s are then placed in her uterus. This is used if there are female factors causing infertility or if artificial insemination has been unsuccessful.
- **Intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI)** - this is done as part of IVF and is used when there are only small numbers of sperm available, the semen sample has poor quality sperm or if the sperm are collected from the testicles using biopsy. In this method a single sperm is injected into each egg in the laboratory and the embryo/s are then placed into your partner's uterus.

If any of the procedures listed above are to be performed through Reproductive Services at the Women's or another infertility specialist, you will require a referral from your doctor.



## **What are my chances of having a child?**

There is no guarantee of success. While many couples have had children through AI, IVF or ISCI, many others have failed. However, with ICSI, the chances for men fathering children after chemotherapy and radiotherapy have greatly improved. For more information on success rates, please visit the Melbourne IVF website at [www.mivf.com.au](http://www.mivf.com.au).

## **What does sperm storage cost?**

There is a yearly fee for sperm storage (concessions may be available). This fee is not covered by Medicare or private health insurance. Please ring the Andrology Unit on (03) 9344 2692 to check our current fees.

## **Are you experiencing financial difficulties?**

If you have a Health Care Card or you are on a Disability Support Pension our sperm storage fees are halved. You may also apply for assistance from the Cancer Council Victoria, visit [www.cancervic.org.au](http://www.cancervic.org.au) for more information.

## **What happens to frozen semen that isn't used?**

Any frozen semen will be kept until you are ready to decide what you want to do with it. It cannot be used for any other purpose without your permission. If you decide that you do not want to keep your sperm in storage, the Andrology Laboratory can dispose of it for you. It is important that you notify Andrology of any change of address and other contact details during the time your sperm is in storage.

## What happens if I die?

The law in Victoria is unclear about using sperm to produce a pregnancy after a man's death. (Ask for the information sheet *Sperm freezing for use after death*. Or visit the Infertility Treatment Authority website at [www.ita.org.au](http://www.ita.org.au) and click on the Treatment tab for information on posthumous sperm use.) The MIVF and Reproductive Services counsellors may be able to assist you with working through this process.

## I've already started chemotherapy or radiotherapy, can anything be done?

Unfortunately we are unable to store sperm after you have commenced your cancer treatment. This is because your sperm may carry genetic damage from the treatment that might result in developmental or genetic problems in your offspring. If you have started chemotherapy or radiotherapy and you do not have sperm stored, we suggest that you make an appointment with Reproductive Services to test your testicular function six months after you have completed your treatment.

**We strongly advise you to contact the Andrology Unit before commencing chemotherapy or radiotherapy treatment if you would like sperm storage.**

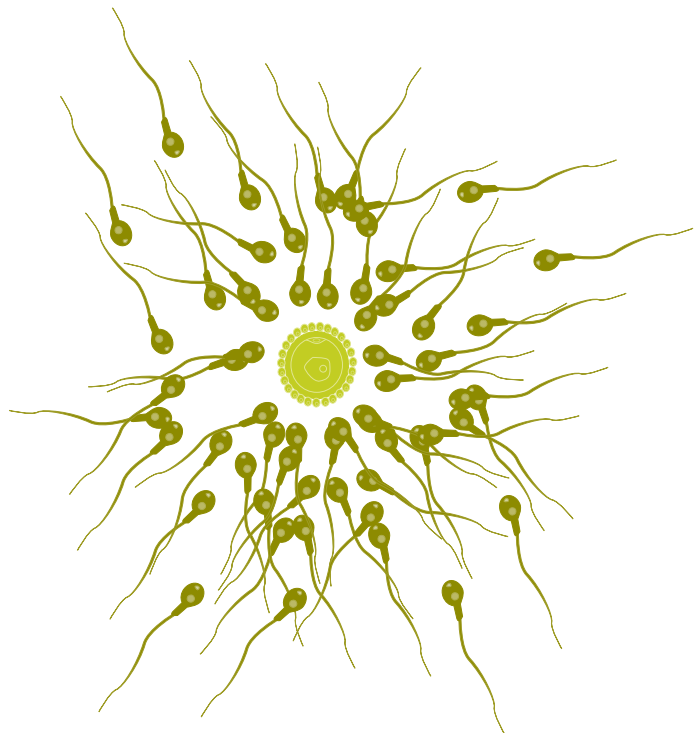


## Talking it over

A diagnosis of cancer can be extremely difficult to adjust to. Making decisions about freezing sperm may seem like just one more thing you have to consider.

Talking it over may help you to work through any concerns. Counsellors and infertility specialists are available through Melbourne IVF and Reproductive Services at the Women's. The counsellors can be contacted on (03) 8345 3200 (a referral is required to see a specialist).

The Cancer Council's Help line can provide you with information on cancer support services and a wide range of topics related to your cancer. They also have trained counsellors available for brief telephone counselling. Please phone **13 11 20** Monday to Friday 8.30am to 8.00pm or visit their website at [www.cancervic.org.au](http://www.cancervic.org.au).



## Contact information

For further information or to make an appointment for sperm storage, please phone the Andrology Unit at the Women's, Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm on (03) 9344 2692.

Visit our website at [www.rch.org.au/andrology](http://www.rch.org.au/andrology) for more information about our service.

The Andrology Unit is located at:  
321 Cardigan St  
Carlton, Victoria 3053

## Other important contacts

Reproductive Services  
Royal Women's Hospital  
Level 2, Cnr Grattan Street & Flemington Road  
Parkville, Victoria 3053  
Tel: (03) 8345 3200

### **Melbourne IVF**

10/320 Victoria Parade  
East Melbourne 3002  
Tel: (03) 9473 4444  
Web: [www.mivf.com.au](http://www.mivf.com.au)

### **The Cancer Council of Victoria**

Tel: 13 11 20 (Monday to Friday)  
8.30am – 8.00pm  
Web: [www.cancervic.org.au](http://www.cancervic.org.au)





MelbourneIVF  
Excellence in fertility care