

12.3.10.1 FREEZING AND STORAGE OF SPERM

WHAT DOES THIS INVOLVE?

The freezing of sperm has been performed since the early 1950's and has been undertaken at Concept Fertility Centre since the early 1980's. A semen sample, collected at Concept Fertility Centre is mixed with a cryoprotectant (similar to antifreeze in a car) and drawn into thin plastic straws, each of about ½ cc in volume. Normally between 5 and 20 straws may be prepared from each single ejaculate. The straws are coloured and a coloured plug is used to seal the end. These colour combinations are unique for each man. The man's name, Concept file number and sample number are recorded on each straw. These straws are then placed into a programmable freezing machine and liquid is pumped into it at a controlled rate. This allows the sperm straws to be frozen in a scientifically controlled manner.

At the completion of the freezing programme, the straws of semen are stored in liquid nitrogen at -196 C in a state of suspended animation. Sperm can stay in this situation for many years without any detrimental effect.

WHO WOULD STORE SPERM?

The freezing and storage of sperm is undertaken for many reasons:

a) Pre-vasectomy / Pre-chemotherapy

Men may store sperm before undergoing vasectomy (chemotherapy) as an insurance policy. Vasectomies (chemotherapy) should be considered as irreversible because repair and reconnection of the vas some time after vasectomies (chemotherapy) usually is accompanied by a significant reduction in normal fertilizing capacity of sperm.

Under the WA Human Reproductive Technology Act 1991 the Clinic cannot accept a consent relating to the usage of his semen after the event of his death and is not permitted to carry out a posthumous (after death) procedure using his gametes (sperm).

b) Sperm Donation

Sperm donation may be anonymous or may be provided to known recipients. The storage of sperm allows artificial insemination to be performed without the complication of managing the sperm collection procedure. Sperm donors are also health tested and each sperm sample remains in quarantine for six (6) months. The sperm samples are cleared for use after final health tests are completed. This reduces the risk of transfer of the known viral diseases such as hepatitis and HIV.

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c) Management of Assisted Reproductive Treatment

Some men who are not going to be readily available when their partners are undergoing treatment for assisted conception or men who find semen collection on demand a difficult exercise, could consider the storage of sperm a convenient option.

MANAGEMENT OF FREEZE / STORAGE OF SPERM

Men who choose to store their sperm need to be aware of the costs. Concept Fertility Centre charges \$225.00 for the freezing and storage of 2 (two) samples.

All men who wish to store sperm need to undergo blood tests for HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C.

Request forms to store semen must be signed by men before storage, and this consent will last for 5 (five) years up to a maximum of 15 (fifteen) years. Special applications will be required to extend storage beyond 15 (fifteen) years.

Semen samples are collected in the men's room or at home. For convenience it is important to book the men's room at a suitable time (Monday-Friday, 7.30am -2 pm). We advise abstaining from sexual relations for 3 days prior to collection. Because the men's room is used by others it is important not to be late for the appointment.

Concept will inform you if there is any concern from the laboratory about the quality of the sperm or if the sperm is unsuitable for freezing.

It is important to inform Concept of any change of address. If men are not contactable for renewal of the consent after (5) five years, the samples will be discarded. Under the Human Reproductive Technology Act, no posthumous use of semen is permitted. In the event of death, Concept will need to be informed so that decisions can be made regarding the continued storage of the semen.

USE OF SPERM

The sperm will be thawed and used only with specific written consent of the man who owns the stored semen. Men who choose to donate their sperm have the right to vary or withdraw their consent at any time.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Should you require any further information please call the Scientific Director at Concept on (08) 9382 2388.