



Semen cryostorage

***Information for
patients and carers***

**Fertility Centre
Aberdeen Maternity Hospital**

This leaflet is to provide you with information regarding the freezing and storing in liquid nitrogen of semen samples for use in fertility treatment (known as “cryostorage”). We hope this leaflet will answer some of the questions you may have. If there is anything that you are unsure of, please ask the clinic staff.

Who can store samples?

Storage is offered when there is a medical indication, if the male partner works routinely away from home or might be called away at short notice. Interruptions to your treatment can be minimised if frozen sperm are available for back-up use.

If you will be having privately funded treatment in the future, you will be asked to pay for the storage of your samples. The clinic staff will provide details.

How do I arrange this?

Your consultant or doctor will have first arranged for you to have a blood test to screen for HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C. This is a requirement of the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA) to minimise the risk of spreading any infection within the storage tanks.

When a negative screening result is obtained, the nurse will refer you to the Andrology Laboratory and you will be asked to call the laboratory (this is where you had your semen analysis done), to let them know that you need to have some semen frozen. They will arrange a time for you to attend. This will usually be first thing in the morning or early afternoon.

You should not have sex or masturbate for at least 3 days but no longer than 7 days before producing your sample.

If you live close to the hospital you can produce your sample at home. If you want to do this you must be able to guarantee to deliver it within 1 hour. If you can't guarantee this, you will need to produce your sample in the room provided at the laboratory. Please do not leave these arrangements to the last minute as we need time to assess the sample.

What else will I have to do?

Samples for freezing must be handed in by the male partner. All storage and use of human sperm is regulated by the HFEA. The Fertility Centre is licensed by the HFEA to store sperm. On the first visit the male partner will need to complete a patient information form and sign the HFEA form consenting to storage, use and disposal of his samples. These consent forms include questions for the male partner about what he wants to happen to his stored sperm if he should die or become mentally incapacitated. The options to consider are whether you would wish the semen samples to be disposed of, whether you would wish them to remain in storage for your partner to use or whether you would wish the centre to use your sample for research or training purposes. It can be useful to discuss this as a couple before you attend.

What happens to the sample?

The sample will be analysed in a similar manner to the Routine Semen Analysis. It will then be mixed with a solution to protect the sperm through the processes of freezing and thawing before being divided in small amounts (straws) for freezing. The number of straws that you will have in storage will depend on the volume of the sample. A few days later, one straw will be defrosted to test how well the sample has survived. This information will enable us to assess the number of straws needed for your particular treatment. One sample may be sufficient for several treatment cycles, but the survival of sperm after freezing is highly variable and you may be required to freeze more than one sample. The laboratory staff will let you know if this is necessary.

How long can the sample be kept?

We are able, by law, to keep your sperm in storage for 10 years. We will contact you every year to ask if you want the sperm storage to continue. The form we send out **must** be signed by the male (consenting) partner. If this is a problem (for example if he is away on business) please contact us by telephone so that we can accommodate your wishes. **You must keep in touch with the laboratory and keep us informed of any change of address.** If we cannot contact you or if we do not hear from you, we will have to assume that you do not wish us to continue storing your sperm. We will then dispose of your stored sperm.

Is there anything else that we need to know?

Freezing and thawing diminishes the fertility of a semen sample. We cannot guarantee a subsequent pregnancy, as the subsequent pregnancy rate is always lower than would be the case with fresh semen, even though sperm has been successfully stored. We tell you this so that you might be prepared for any disappointment later.

We cannot be held liable if there is any problem during the storage period which renders the sperm non-viable (for example a problem with the storage tank, or a fire on the premises). This is extremely unlikely but you should be aware of this possibility.

Contact telephone number

If you have any questions about semen cryostorage please contact:

**Andrology Laboratory
Aberdeen Fertility Centre**

☎ (01224) 553211 ☎

This leaflet is also available in large print and on computer disk.

Other formats and languages can be supplied on request. For a copy please call Quality Development on (01224) 554149. Ask for leaflet 0133.

Feedback from the public helped us to develop this leaflet. If you have any comments or suggestions about how we can improve this leaflet, please let us know.

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