



***Semen
cryostorage
(long term)***

***Information for
patients and carers***

**Fertility Centre
Aberdeen Maternity Hospital**

This booklet is to provide you with information regarding the freezing and storing in liquid nitrogen of semen samples (known as “cryostorage”). We can provide information about the samples you choose to freeze, but questions regarding your treatment should be directed to your consultant. You will be given plenty of time when you attend the laboratory to discuss the storage and possible use of your samples.

Who can have samples stored?

The Andrology Laboratory offers long term storage of semen to men whose fertility is at risk due to a medical condition.

How is this arranged?

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, your consultant or doctor will telephone the laboratory to make a first appointment on your behalf. S/he will let you know where the laboratory is (second floor of the Aberdeen Maternity Hospital) and when to attend. S/he will give you an envelope containing a referral form that you should give to the laboratory staff.

If possible, you should abstain from sexual intercourse or masturbation for at least three days before producing your sample for freezing. Most men produce their samples in the facilities at the laboratory. If you feel strongly about this and do not live far from the hospital, arrangements can be made for you to produce your sample at home.

Most men are advised to freeze more than one sample. You can make arrangements yourself with the laboratory staff to freeze another sample(s).

What else will I have to do?

All storage and use of human sperm is regulated by the HFEA. This centre is licensed by the HFEA to store sperm. On your first visit you will need to complete and to sign the HFEA forms relevant to you. All men have to give consent to store their sample. Some men may also wish to complete consents to the storage, use and disposal of their samples. These consents include questions about what you want to happen to your stored sperm if you should die or become mentally incapacitated. The options to consider are whether you would wish the semen samples to be disposed of or whether you would wish them to remain in storage for your partner to use. If you have a partner it can be useful to discuss this as a couple before you attend.

What happens to the sample?

The sample will be analysed to assess how many sperm are present and how motile they are. 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.

There is a possibility that due to your illness or previous treatment that you may have had, the quality of your sperm may be too poor to freeze. If that is the case you will be told when you submit your first sample.

How long can the sample be kept?

In the first instance, your sperm will be stored for 10 years. This gives you time to recover from your treatment. If your fertility is impaired after that time, the storage can be extended at 10 yearly intervals up to a maximum of 55 years' storage.

We will contact you every year to ask if you want the sperm storage to continue. Please sign the form we send you and return it to the laboratory as soon as possible. **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.

After 10 years you will be sent an appointment to review your fertility and your consent forms.

Is there anything else that we need to know?

Freezing and thawing diminishes the fertility of a semen sample. If you request to use your frozen sample we will usually assess the quality of a defrosted sample. We cannot guarantee a subsequent pregnancy, even though sperm has been successfully stored. We tell you this so that you might be prepared for any disappointment later.

Can I find out if my treatment has affected my fertility?

You can ask either your GP or your consultant to refer you for a fertility assessment, but you should wait for at least 12 months after finishing your treatment to give yourself time to recover. We will also send out an information sheet about future fertility assessment with our first annual contact letter.

How do I arrange fertility treatment if I need it in the future?

If you discover that you are sterile or that your fertility is poor after your treatment and you wish to use your frozen sperm you will have to ask your GP to refer you and your partner to the Fertility Clinic, Aberdeen Fertility Centre.

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 0134.

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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