



## Fact sheet 8: Counselling

This fact sheet outlines what counselling services are offered and the different aspects of counselling for fertility treatment in Western Australia (WA). Counselling is an important service that provides you with information and support.

A counsellor can help with your information needs and allow you to discuss your emotions and feelings, which can help you to better manage your treatment. Many people benefit from counselling as fertility treatment can have a profound emotional and social impact on an individual, their relationships, and their friendships.

### Access to approved counsellor services in WA

Counselling with an approved counsellor is offered as part of your treatment. An approved counsellor has specialist knowledge of fertility issues. The cost of at least one consultation with an approved counsellor is included in the overall treatment cost for each cycle of in vitro fertilisation (IVF) you start. You can arrange with the clinic to transfer the consultation costs to see an approved counsellor of your choice. A list of approved counsellors is available from the Reproductive Technology Council ([rtc.org.au](http://rtc.org.au)).

### Types of counselling

#### Information counselling

Information counselling is intended to help you understand your options so that you can make an informed choice on treatment that is right for you. Your counsellor will help you to consider the possible implications for you, your family and for any children that might be born. You will be given information about the practical, physical and emotional demands of fertility treatment, the legal requirements of your treatment, and your legal rights and responsibilities. Your counsellor will also explain how the confidentiality and privacy of your personal information is protected by law.

#### Support counselling

Support counselling aims to give you emotional support at times of particular stress. A counsellor can help you to explore how you feel and help you to develop coping strategies to get you through the difficult times. You might find support counselling useful when you are given information about your fertility condition, the result of a test, or if your treatment is not successful.

#### Therapeutic counselling

Therapeutic counselling aims to help people cope with the consequences of fertility problems and treatment, and to help them to resolve the issues they may encounter. It may include helping people to adjust their expectations and to accept their situations (e.g. when deciding to end treatment).

### Counselling for donor-assisted conception

Counsellors can assist people who are thinking about donating sperm, eggs or embryos (donors) or people who are thinking about using donor sperm, eggs or embryos (recipients). Donor-assisted conception is a significant decision with lifelong implications. You and your partner (if any) will see an approved counsellor before any donation process

can start. The counsellor will help you explore the possible implications of your decisions, express your concerns, resolve or accept differences or difficulties, and help you to consider what your decisions might mean for those who are close to you.

It is important to address all the issues and implications to avoid problems and unanticipated consequences in the future, which could affect the welfare of any children born from donor-assisted conception. Counselling will also include information about the legal implications of donor-assisted conception for the donor, recipients and the children born from donor-assisted conception.

#### **Issues recipients might consider:**

- How you/your partner feel about the options.
- Is there any uncertainty or conflict?
- Is my partner doing this just for me? What if they say no?
- Do I / we feel ready for this treatment?
- Do I / we feel we can talk to family and friends?
- How and when is a child told about their origins?

#### **Issues donors might consider:**

- How would you feel having a child you may never know?
- How will you feel if you do not have your own children?
- How will your current or future partner or children feel about this?
- What might be the future needs of the child and their family?
- What might the child expect or want in the future and how will you / your family react?

### **Counselling when the recipient and donor know each other**

Known donation is when the recipient and donor know each other. The donor may be a close friend or a relative, which has both advantages and disadvantages.

The donor and partner (if any) and the recipient and partner (if any) are seen by the counsellor separately and then all together. This is followed by a six months cooling-off period in the case of sperm donation (three months for egg or embryo donation). The cooling-off period allows time for people to reconsider their decision and protects the donor from feeling obligated because of the relationship with the recipients.

The counsellor then confirms with each person that they are willing to proceed. The counsellor must provide an interview for people who decide not to proceed.

### **Counselling for release of identifying information**

A donor-conceived person or parents of a donor-conceived child may decide to seek information about a donor or families who share the same donor. The counsellor will help you to explore your motivations, expectations and to consider how this choice might affect you and your family. There are several requirements that need to be met before identifying information can be released. Additional information can be found in [fact sheet 7 - Access to Information](#).