



Fact sheet 4: Treatment with donor embryos

This fact sheet provides information for people who are thinking about treatment using donated embryos (donor-assisted conception) as a way of having a family. Take time to consider the implications of treatment with donated embryos and what this means for you, your family and those close to you.

Access to information

When a person conceived with the assistance of a donor on or after 1 December 2004 reaches 16 years of age they have a legal right to identifying information about their donor. This information can only be released after the donor-conceived person has undertaken counselling.

Fertility clinics are required by law to provide your details to the Department of Health. This information is recorded in a secure computer database called the Reproductive Technology Registers, which can only be accessed by specially appointed officers.

The fertility clinic can provide you with non-identifying information about the:

- number of families with the same donors
- the gender of the children
- number of children born
- year of birth of the children.

A donor can help create up to a maximum of five families in Western Australia. There is no limit to the number of children in each family. You may be possible to obtain more information about your donor or donor-related families. Further details can be found in Fact sheet 7 [Access to Information](#).

Open disclosure

People who have children by donor-assisted conception are encouraged to tell their children early and often about their origins (open disclosure). In the past, this was often kept secret and it is now known that this causes great distress to everyone involved. When to tell children about their origins will vary from family to family see Fact sheet 9: [Talking to children about donor-conception](#) for further details.

Access to treatment

People need access to donated embryo treatments for different reasons. This may be the only option for people with a medical condition, genetic condition, or a specific fertility issue. However it is important that you understand that there is often a long waiting list for donated embryos.

Treatment with donated embryos

Many embryo donors have completed their treatment and want to help others to have a family. The donors will have undergone tests for common genetic disorders, such as cystic fibrosis or genetic conditions that are specific to particular ethnic groups. Donated embryos are not used until donor screening for infections such as HIV is completed.

Your clinic is required to ensure that the risk of transmission of infections and genetic conditions from donors is minimised.

If a donated embryo becomes available your clinic staff will prepare you for your treatment. The embryo transfer procedure is very similar to having a PAP smear.

Donation programmes

Most fertility clinics have a donor coordinator who is often the first point of contact for people who are thinking about sperm donation. A list of service providers is available on the Reproductive Technology Council website (rtc.org.au).

Unknown donors and known donors

Unknown donors are usually people who have completed their fertility treatment and have chosen to donate their remaining embryos to the clinic, so that other people might have the opportunity to have children. Sometimes a donation is made by relatives or friends who have gone through fertility treatment. They become a known donor as the donor and recipient know each other. There are special requirements for known donation due to the close relationship see Fact sheet 8: [Counselling](#)). Donors cannot be paid for their donation, but the clinic may offer donors reasonable expenses.

Donors complete a lifestyle questionnaire and undergo screening to check their health (see Fact sheet 6 – [Donor Lifestyle Questionnaire Example](#)). The clinic provides donor profiles as part of the treatment plan. A donor profile includes a description of the donor's physical appearance, health and personal background (see Fact sheet 5 - [Donor Profile Example](#)).

The fertility clinic is also required to provide information about the law relating to donor-assisted conception. This is called the *Artificial Conception Act 1985*. This makes clear that a donor is legally not a parent of any child that is born as a result of their donation. The person(s) who consent to the donor-conception procedure are the legal parent(s).

Counselling

People who are considering treatment with donor embryos are required to see an approved fertility counsellor. Some complex issues can arise when people are thinking about treatment options. There may be issues that emerge when considering that any child that is born to you as a result of embryo donation will have no genetic connection to you and your partner (if any).

The counsellor provides information and support so that you can carefully consider your treatment options. There may be emotional stresses associated with these life-significant decisions and it can be of great benefit to talk this through with your counsellor.

Donors also go through counselling so they understand the significance of their donation and consider the complex issues that donation involves (see Fact sheet 8: [Counselling](#)).