

ABOUT SPERM DONORS

❖ Who is A Sperm Donor?

A sperm donor gives his sperm to a woman with whom he is not romantically or sexually involved in order to facilitate pregnancy and birth of a child.

❖ Who Needs Sperm Donors?

- Single Women
- Lesbian Couples
- Partners of men with or carrying hereditary/genetic disorders
- Partners of men with poor sperm quality

Poor sperm quality includes:

- Low sperm count
- Low sperm motility
- Complete absence of sperm production

❖ Why Use A Sperm Donor?

- **Single women** may decide to use a sperm donor because:
 - They like being single; they want a baby but not a relationship
 - Ticking Biological Clock
 - Tired of waiting for Mr Right
- **Heterosexual women** in relationships may decide to use a sperm donor because:
 - Their partner has male factor fertility problems such as low sperm count
 - Their partner carries a heritable disorder or disease.
 - Their partner has had a vasectomy.
- **Lesbian women** in relationships use sperm donors because of biology; they are physiologically incapable of becoming pregnant with the help of their same sex partner.

❖ Why Do Men Become Donors?

Men become donors for three main reasons:

- **For Altruistic Reasons**

Some men become donors out of the kindness of their hearts, they know there is a need for donors, they know they can help and they do. A charge may be made for expenses such as travel but there is usually no charge for actual donation.

- **Continuity of genes**

The urge/desire to procreate is one of the basic needs of human beings to ensure the survival of the species. Like women, men also feel this urge. Some men find themselves single and childless; other men have partners who cannot have children or who do not want children, donating sperm might be a way of becoming a parent or at least ensuring continuity of their genes.

- **Money**

Some men become donors for monetary reasons; they get paid to donate sperm. It is illegal to pay for sperm donation in the UK; however from the 1st April 2006 donors are allowed to be compensated for 'reasonable expenses' for sperm donation.

Reasonable expenses include cost of travel to the clinic and compensation for earnings lost during donation.

Maximum compensation for expenses is £55.19 per day and £250 per course of sperm donation.

❖ Who Can Become A Sperm Donor?

For private donation, recipients generally ask for their sperm donors to be fertile, free of any STIs, be in relative good health and not have a history of inheritable disorders/diseases. Private donors can be as young as 18 with no upper age limit.

To become a sperm donor for a licensed clinic in the UK, men have to:

- Be between 18 and 45 years old
- Pass several medical tests (see '**Donor Testing**' below) and
- Give consent in writing allowing the use of their sperm.

❖ Types of Donors

There are two types of donors:

- Anonymous Donors and
- Known Donors

Anonymous Donors

The identities of anonymous donors are not disclosed to recipients or children conceived however, physical characteristics and distinguishing traits are usually revealed to the recipient; UK fertility clinics use anonymous donors.

Under the 1990 Act, the identity of a sperm donor was confidential unless it was already known to the individual undergoing treatment however children conceived after the first of April 2005 can find out identifying information and non-identifying information once they turn 18 or earlier if they need to find out if their fiancé/fiancée is related to them.

Identifying Information include donor's:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Place of birth
- Last known address

Non-identifying information include donor's:

- Physical attributes (height, weight...)
- Race
- Marital Status
- Interests
- Pen sketch

A donor who donated prior to 1st April 2005 may re-register as an identifiable donor; if he chooses not to his donation will not be used to treat patients.

An anonymous donor can re-register by contacting the clinic where he made his donation.

Known Donors

Identities of known donors are disclosed to recipients and sometimes to the child/ren conceived.

Donors may choose (in agreement with recipient) to have or not to have further contact or involvement with recipient/child after conception.

Where contact is agreed it may be:

- **Casual Contact**

This is contact once in a while or may just be as far as introducing donor to child/ren conceived when they are old enough.

- **Non-Physical**

The donor does not have actual contact with the child but he is kept informed of the child's well being and progress regularly or periodically via photos and letters/emails.

- **Regular**

This does not necessarily mean the donor wishes to be a parent or will be regarded as a parent of the child but he will have interaction with recipient and child perhaps as a friend/big brother/uncle...

Co-Parents

Co-Parents are known donors and recipients who decide to raise a child together even though they are not romantically or sexually involved with each other.

Please see our document '**Coparenting**' to find out more.

Implications of Using A Known Donor

Under UK laws the biological father of a child is financially liable for the child even if he is not the child's legal parent unless the recipient was married/in a civil partnership at the time of donation and her husband/civil partner consented to it.

This means the recipient or the Child Support Agency may ask the donor for financial support for the child, it also means the donor may and could file for parental responsibility and access or custody of the child.

Please see our document '**About Parental Responsibility**' for more about this.

❖ Donating and Inseminating

There are two types of insemination:

- Natural Insemination and
- Artificial Insemination

Natural Insemination

Some donors and recipients believe the 'natural' and best way to effect pregnancy is via sexual intercourse, this is natural insemination.

Artificial Insemination

Semen is introduced into the woman's reproductive tract using a syringe and/or catheter. The donor makes a donation by masturbating, then ejaculating into a container; they may also collect semen during normal intercourse using a special sperm friendly condom. Artificial insemination may be achieved using fresh, cooled or frozen semen.

❖ Donor Testing

Recipients will (or should) ask for medical tests from donors prior to accepting a donation from them; this is not only to protect the recipient but also any child that may be conceived.

Some recipients will accept results of a medical tests that's a few months old (usually not over 6 months) others will require donors to be re-tested.

If the recipient is receiving treatment from a fertility clinic, the donor will need to be tested for the following:

- HIV
- Chlamydia
- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- Syphilis
- gonorrhoea
- Other tests may be required by the fertility clinic/recipient

They will also check if you carry /suffer from genetic conditions* such as:

- Tay Sach's Disease
- Sickle Cell
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Thalassemia

*These should not disqualify a person from donating unless the recipient is also a carrier/sufferer of the same condition.

It is a good idea to get tested for all of the above even if the recipient is not receiving treatment from a clinic. STI tests can be done free or at little cost at GUM clinics across the country. Visit www.condomessentialwear.co.uk to find a clinic near you.

❖ Reference

Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority. For Donors. Available:
<http://www.hfea.gov.uk/24.html>