

Centre universitaire  
de santé McGill



McGill University  
Health Centre

Centre de la reproduction  
Reproductive Centre



**INFORMATION GUIDE  
FOR POTENTIAL EGG DONORS**  
YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Thank you for your interest in egg donation. This booklet has been written to answer your questions about egg donation and help you decide about egg donation. If after reading the information, you are interested in egg donation, or if you would like to learn more, please call:

## **Nursing InfoLine**

**(514) 843-1650, Option 4, Monday to Friday from 11:30 am to 4 pm**

*A Glossary of terms is available on page 11*



**“ This past summer I did something out of the ordinary, something that made a difference in people’s lives... I was an egg donor.”**

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***Why is egg donation necessary?***

Many women are unable to have children because their ovaries do not produce eggs. This (ovarian failure) may be due to genetic causes, cancer treatment, or premature menopause; other women may produce eggs that are of poor quality or that contain genetic abnormalities (in other words they may be carriers of heritable diseases) and will have a poor chance of achieving a healthy pregnancy. In the past, there was no treatment available to these women. Today, treatment can be an egg donation from another woman. Egg donation can help many to realize their dream of having children.

***What does the treatment involve? How is egg donation done?***

Egg donation treatment relies upon the techniques of in vitro fertilization (IVF): eggs are collected from the donor’s ovaries and mixed with the sperm of the recipient’s partner in a laboratory dish, and then fertilized eggs (embryos) will be transferred to the womb of the recipient for pregnancy.

***Is more than one egg donated?***

It is possible to donate just the one egg that naturally develops each month but IVF treatment works best when a number of eggs can be fertilized and transferred (because not every egg will give a pregnancy). Also, it is always hoped there will be enough remaining embryos to attempt a second “try”. For these reasons, donors will usually donate a number of eggs – eggs that would have been lost during that month anyway - with a single donation.

### ***I have heard that I may have to take medications – Is this true?***

Most egg donors will take medications before the egg retrieval procedure in order to be able to donate a maximum number of eggs. Some women will not have to take medications before their donation; about 1 in 3 women have polycystic ovaries that naturally contain numerous developing eggs. These women are able to donate a number of eggs without the need for medications.

The medications that are used in egg donation are very similar to the medications taken by the thousands women undergoing conventional IVF. Donors can usually expect to take:



**Marvelon** This is an oral contraceptive pill that is taken for about two weeks in order to temporarily block natural hormone secretion and prevent any loss of eggs (ovulation) before egg retrieval. Donors who are already on the “Pill” will simply continue as usual but may need to change brand.

**Synarel** Synarel is taken as a nasal spray for the remaining three weeks until egg retrieval. Like the Pill, Synarel will block natural hormone secretion so that ovulation is prevented.

**FSH/LH** During the latter part of treatment, gonadotrophins (FSH/LH) are prescribed. These are the hormones that your body normally produces to signal your ovaries to produce eggs. By taking a larger amount than usual, donors can produce more than the one egg usually produced each month (because the eggs that would have been lost that month will continue to grow to maturity).

Gonadotrophins are taken by subcutaneous (under the skin) daily injection for about 12 days. You will be taught how to do this simple injection so that you will not need to come in to the clinic for each injection.

**HCG**  
**Ovidrel** HCG is prescribed 35 hours before egg retrieval and is taken just once by subcutaneous injection. HCG is necessary for egg maturation and fertilization.

***Will the medication give me side effects?***

Very few people report side effects from the medications that are used in egg donation treatment – generally, the women who are most likely to experience side effects will be those women who are very sensitive to hormonal changes occurring during their own menstrual cycle. If you do have side effects, they are likely to be those symptoms that are associated with hormonal changes, so that Synarel can produce premenstrual- or menopausal- like side effects (hot flashes, headache, irritability, etc.) while FSH/ LH can produce mid cycle changes (breast swelling/tenderness, mood swings, increased vaginal secretions, fatigue, etc.). Side effects should not be severe and will disappear once medications are stopped at the end of treatment. Of course, any side effects should be reported.

***How many times will I have to come to the clinic during treatment?***

Our goal is to provide convenient yet safe treatment. Every effort will be made to minimize your number of visits to the clinic. During treatment, you will be asked to come to the clinic for vaginal ultrasound examinations so that the growth of the follicles (“sacs” that contain eggs) in your ovaries can be carefully monitored. Normally, donors can expect 2–3 ultrasound appointments (30 – 60 minutes each) before the day of egg retrieval – the exact number will depend on how quickly or slowly your eggs are growing; once your follicles are large enough, the egg retrieval will be planned. You will need to take a day off on the day of egg retrieval. A final follow up visit will be scheduled at your convenience a week after egg retrieval.

In all, you should expect about 4 or 5 visits during your treatment. Once the plan for donation is completed, you will be given a detailed treatment calendar to help guide you through treatment. We will be happy to provide a medical letter for each one of your clinic visits.



### ***What happens at the egg retrieval?***

The egg retrieval (or egg collection) procedure takes about 20 minutes to complete. During egg retrieval a vaginal ultrasound is done to identify the position of the ovaries. Once the ovaries and the follicles contained in the ovaries are seen, a fine needle is passed through the vaginal wall and is used to pierce each follicle. The fluid inside each follicle is drained and will yield a number of eggs (Note: because the eggs are collected this way, it does not matter if you have had your “tubes tied”).

It is very important to us that you are comfortable during your egg retrieval so that your donation remains a positive experience. For this reason you will be given a sedative. Egg donors are asked to take the day off of work on the day of egg retrieval because of the need for sedatives during the procedure. Most donors return to work the following day.

### ***Is egg donation treatment safe?***

In general, IVF treatment is considered to be very safe; however, no treatment is entirely without risk. There are some rare risks that we would like you to know about. It may be possible for example, to have some excessive bleeding at the time of egg retrieval or to develop an infection a day or two afterward.

In rare circumstances (about 1% of the time), it may also be possible to develop Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome (OHSS). OHSS occurs in women who over respond to the treatment medications and can produce symptoms like abdominal distension (bloating) and pain, vomiting and diarrhea. Donors are unlikely to develop OHSS but are carefully monitored so that individuals who will be at risk for OHSS can be advised to cancel the treatment cycle.

Of course throughout your treatment, a nurse or physician is always available to answer any questions or concerns you may have about treatment.

### ***Will egg donation affect my fertility?***

Egg donation should not decrease your natural fertility. In fact the opposite may be true – you will be more fertile during and just after treatment.

You should bear in mind however that your natural fertility will decline with time. For this reason you are encouraged not to delay your own childbearing.

***Will I have to stop the birth control pill during treatment?***

At some point during (or just before) treatment, you will need to stop the birth control pill and you will be at risk for pregnancy.



***Can I remain sexually active during egg donation treatment?***

You may remain sexually active throughout egg donation treatment however because fertility medications will put donors at risk for multiple pregnancy (!), use of an effective contraceptive method is essential during treatment and until the return of menstruation two weeks after egg retrieval.

Also, all donors must observe precautions to prevent sexually transmitted disease.

***Do I have to change my lifestyle during treatment?***

It is not usually necessary to make changes to your lifestyle in treatment however it will be best to act “as if” pregnant; In other words, medications (including herbal therapies) that are unsafe in pregnancy, alcohol and other recreational drugs, as well as high impact exercise, should be avoided during treatment.

***Can anybody donate?***

Any woman who is between the ages of 21–34 years can be considered for egg donation. Before treatment can start, it is important to confirm that each donor is fertile and in good health. For this reason you will be asked to complete a health history and some tests (see page 8) before you can be accepted for treatment.

Also, because we want to be absolutely certain that you have thought about this carefully, we require all prospective donors to meet with one of our counsellors (before treatment begins) to discuss the implications of egg donation.

***Can I donate eggs to someone that I know?***

If you wish, you may donate to someone that you already know. If however, you are not planning a specific donation to someone you know, the recipient will be selected by the clinic and will be anonymous.

***What information will I be given about the recipient? Will I meet her?***

You will not meet the recipient nor be given information about the recipient. Following the egg retrieval, you will be told the number of eggs that were collected but you will not be given details about the fertilization or results of recipient's treatment.

***How will my privacy be protected in treatment?***

Recipients will be given all (and only) the non-identifying information in your file. During treatment, your appointments will be arranged so that there is no opportunity for you to meet the recipient.

***What information will the recipient be given about me?***

The recipient will be given only the non-identifying information you provide on your health history; at no time will your identity be revealed to the recipient without your written consent. The clinic will keep record of your donation however and may submit this record if required by Assisted Human Reproduction Agency of Canada.





***Will I have to pay for treatment? Will I receive compensation for my egg donation?***

It will not cost you anything to donate your eggs. Your treatment fees and medication will be provided without charge. You may be reimbursed for your treatment related expenses (such as travel) by the recipient couple, if you provide your receipts. However, you cannot receive payment for donation (In Canada it is illegal to buy or sell eggs).

***Do I have any legal responsibility to any child that is born through my donation?***

The recipient (who will be the birth mother) is recognized as the legal mother and assumes the rights and responsibilities of any child born of egg donation. While there is no law governing this, it is generally held that the donor has no rights and no responsibilities. Donors have an obligation to inform the clinic of any new information concerning inherited disease.

***Can I donate more than once?***

You may donate more than once; however, each donation will be considered separately and must be separated by a minimum three-month interval.

***How many people will I help with my donation?***

Unless you specify otherwise, your eggs will be divided between two recipients on the waiting list at the MUHC Reproductive Centre. In this way you are able to help two people with a single generous act.

***I would like to be an egg donor. What's my next step?***

Before starting treatment you will need to visit the clinic twice. At the first visit you will meet the egg donation nurse and complete some initial tests. Following this, a second visit will be arranged for the counselling session and review of your test results with a clinic Physician (who will also answer your questions about treatment), and to complete your plan for treatment.

If you would like to learn more or if you are ready to organize your tests, please call the Nursing InfoLine (514) 843-1650, Option

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CMV AND EGG DONATION

### ***What is Cytomegalovirus (CMV)?***

It is a common virus from the herpes viruses' family. It is harmless to most people, and most people have caught the virus by the time they reach adulthood.

### ***What Are the Symptoms of CMV Infection?***

On occasion, CMV infection will cause temporary symptoms such as fever, sore throat, fatigue and swollen glands.

### ***How is CMV Transmitted?***

CMV is transmitted by close contact with body secretions such as urine, saliva, feces, blood, semen and cervical secretions.

### ***Who is at Risk from a Contact with a Person with Active CMV?***

Two groups of people are particularly at risk. Immunosuppressed patients will be at risk because they can develop an acute illness. The unborn children of women who catch CMV (for the first time) during pregnancy are also at risk because CMV may cross the placenta and causing "Congenital" infection.

### ***What are the Risks of Congenital CMV?***

Congenital CMV may affect the central nervous system causing

varying degrees of mental retardation or hearing loss. It may also lead to pneumonia, liver and spleen infection or smaller-than-normal head size (Cytomegalic inclusion disease).

### ***What are the Implications of Donation between a CMV (+) Donor and CMV (-) Recipient?***

In normal circumstances, fewer than half of the women who catch CMV during pregnancy will pass it to their babies and only some infected babies will develop symptomatic infections, either at birth or during the first few years of life. It is not known whether CMV transmission can occur through egg donation from a donor who carries the virus. If CMV transmission can occur, it is not known what the risk is that the mother will contract the infection or what the outcome would be for the foetus. For this reason, egg donation from a donor who carries CMV to a recipient who has not been infected with CMV is not generally recommended. One study has shown that CMV is not present on eggs from CMV positive donors<sup>1</sup> however no other studies have been done that repeat this finding and at present it must be concluded that the risk of transmission via egg donation is more likely theoretical but may be possible.

1. Is there a risk of cytomegalovirus transmission during in vitro fertilization with donated oocytes? Witz CA, Duan Y, Burns WN, Atherton SS, Schenken RS. Fertil Steril. 1999 Feb; 71(2): 302-7.

## **GLOSSARY OF TERMS**

### **AFC**

(Antral) Follicle Count is the follicle count at start of cycle

### **BCP**

Birth Control Pill

### **Donor**

Person donating eggs

### **Follicle**

Fluid filled sac containing an egg

### **FSH**

Follicle Stimulating Hormone

### **Gonadotropins**

Pituitary hormones (FSH, LH) that cause follicles to grow

### **HCG**

Hormone of pregnancy (will cause egg maturation)

### **IVF**

In vitro fertilization

### **OHSS**

Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome

### **Recipient**

Person receiving eggs

If you are interested in becoming an egg donor, please refer to the other documents contained in this package:

- Microbiology Requisition
- Baseline Investigations
- Basic Blood Requisition
- Egg Donation Details of Donor
- Egg Donor Consent

**MUHC Reproductive Centre**

888 de Maisonneuve Blvd. East, Suite 200

Montreal (Québec) Canada H2L 4S8

**T** 514 843-1650 **F** 514 843-1496 [info@mcgillivf.com](mailto:info@mcgillivf.com) [www.mcgillivf.com](http://www.mcgillivf.com)