



Réseau de  
cancérologie  
Rossy

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Cancer  
Network

# Kids After Cancer?

Consider fertility preservation  
**before starting** your  
oncology treatment



**Fertility preservation care for  
women diagnosed with cancer**



**McGill**

Centre universitaire  
de santé McGill



McGill University  
Health Centre



Hôpital général juif  
Jewish General Hospital



Centre hospitalier de St. Mary  
St. Mary's Hospital Center



**“Diagnosed at 34, I saw fertility preservation as a safety net. It afforded me the time to survive past the 5-year mark and made the birth of my first child possible.”**

— Caterina, cancer survivor and mother of 2

## **Can cancer treatments affect my ability to have a child?**

Cancer treatments such as chemotherapy, surgery and radiation can damage your fertility (ability to have a child). This effect can be temporary or permanent. Your risk depends on the type of cancer you have, the treatments you receive, your age and your fertility status before cancer treatment.

## **What can I do to preserve my fertility?**

There are different ways to preserve fertility such as egg freezing, embryo freezing, ovarian tissue banking and hormonal therapy (i.e. ovarian suppression). Egg freezing is the most common fertility preservation option.

## **How does embryo freezing differ from egg freezing?**

Egg freezing allows you to save your eggs. In future, your frozen eggs can be fertilized through assisted reproduction to conceive a child.

Embryo freezing is a two-step process. First eggs are collected and then they are fertilized with sperm in a laboratory to form an embryo (the early stage of a baby's development). Embryos are then frozen and stored.

## **What does the egg freezing procedure involve?**

You will be asked to come to the clinic for 2-3 appointments to do a vaginal ultrasound and blood tests (during a 10-day period). You will likely need to take hormonal medication (through self-injection) to stimulate the growth of follicles. Next, your eggs will be collected through a minor surgical procedure. You will receive pain medication and be awake during this procedure. It is common to experience some pain at this time.

## **Can I preserve my fertility without delaying my cancer treatment?**

In situations where cancer treatment needs to start immediately, fertility specialists will try to retrieve your eggs within a 48-hour window of time.

## **Who legally owns frozen eggs or embryos?**

While the ownership of frozen eggs rests with the woman, frozen embryos are the property of both partners and they cannot be used without the consent of both partners.



## **“Reproductive goals and fertility planning are an essential part of the initial consultation visit.”**

—Dr Ashley Davidson, Medical Oncologist  
St. Mary's Hospital Center

### **How long can eggs/embryos stay frozen?**

Your eggs/embryos can stay frozen until the day you are ready to use them to have a baby. However, the fertility preservation guidelines recommend that women do not attempt pregnancy past the average age of natural menopause. This is generally interpreted as 50 years of age.

### **How much does it cost to freeze and store eggs/embryos?**

Egg or embryo freezing for women diagnosed with cancer is covered under the Quebec Health Insurance Plan (RAMQ) as per bill 20 (chapter 25-34.3). However, coverage for hormonal medication varies depending on your health care plan.

Patients on private insurance are expected to pay the portion of the cost not covered by their insurance. For patients who do not have private insurance, the cost of hormonal medication is covered by the RAMQ with a deductible.

Storage of eggs or embryos is covered by the RAMQ for the first 5 years and then you are expected to pay an annual storage fee. If in future, you decide to use your frozen eggs or embryos to achieve pregnancy then there is

a cost associated with assisted reproductive options.


For more information on fees, go to the section “What You Need to Know” of the MUHC Reproductive Centre website: [muhc.ca/reproductivecentre](http://muhc.ca/reproductivecentre).

### **If I froze eggs prior to cancer treatment, but am still producing eggs after treatment, should I use the frozen eggs or try to conceive naturally?**

If your menstrual cycles are back to normal, you can try to conceive naturally. If after one year, no pregnancy occurs, it is recommended that you make an appointment at the fertility clinic to get a complete evaluation of your fertility status and to discuss your fertility preservation options with a specialist.

### **Do children born to cancer survivors have higher risks of getting cancer themselves?**

There is currently no evidence that children born to cancer survivors are more likely to develop cancer than children whose parents did not have cancer. The only exception is children born to parents with hereditary cancer syndromes (e.g. inherited retinoblastoma).



**“Informing patients of their fertility preservation options and enabling them to make an informed decision are central to providing good quality care for all cancer patients.”**

—Dr. William Buckett, Medical Director,  
MUHC Reproductive Centre

## **How long do I have to wait for an appointment?**

At the MUHC Reproductive Centre, patients with cancer are given priority in booking fertility preservation appointments. Every effort is made to schedule your appointment as soon as possible.

## **How do I book an appointment to freeze eggs or embryos?**

Ask your oncology provider for a referral or call the MUHC Reproductive Centre at 514-843-1650 (select option 0).

**For more information**

### **MUHC Reproductive Centre**

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**[muhc.ca/reproductivecentre](https://muhc.ca/reproductivecentre)**