



## How does it work

For couples with male factor infertility and single women, sperm donation may be an option. Regulations around sperm donation varies between countries. In some countries sperm via a fertility clinic is anonymous, and the recipient and child will not know the donor's identity, but an increasing number of countries have made donation non-anonymous so the child can trace their donor at a certain age, usually 18.

Sperm donors who donate via a fertility clinic will have a number of health checks. Their blood group will be determined, and they will be screened for common genetic diseases and sexually transmitted infections. Donated sperm is stored for six months before it can be used for treatment, in order to screen for Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). Once cleared, donated sperm can be used in many different types of fertility treatment including intrauterine insemination (IUI) and In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) (see information leaflet on IVF).

In almost all countries there is a limit to the number of families a donor can contribute to, and the legal status of the donor is very clear; they will have no legal or financial responsibility for any children.

## Why would someone become a sperm donor?

In many countries donors can be paid but men also donate for purely altruistic reasons. This can be because they have a friend or relative with fertility problems. Many sperm donors report feeling a sense of pride, knowing the joy they have brought to people who could not otherwise have become parents. Sperm donation is highly regulated in most countries, ensuring that legal and medical standards are followed.

It is important for anyone who has donated sperm to tell their family about the donation in case they get contacted by the donor conceived child. This is more likely now because of ancestry testing.

## Who needs donor sperm?

There are several reasons for needing donor sperm including:

- Couples experiencing male factor infertility
- Single women and same-sex female couples
- People affected by genetic disorders that they want to avoid passing on to their children



## How is sperm donation done?

Using donor sperm is relatively easy because the sperm is simply thawed and prepared in the laboratory and can then be used in either intrauterine insemination (IUI) or in vitro fertilization (IVF).



## What to tell children born from donation?

It is important for people using donor eggs or sperm to be open with their children about how they were conceived. Ideally, discussions about how they came to be should start at a young age.

When people find out later in life, or by accident, that they were donor-conceived this can seriously affect their relationship with their families and make them question their identity. It is very possible that a person who did not know they were donor conceived finds this out through genetic testing (ancestry testing). With genetic testing, donor-conceived people can find genetic relatives, including half siblings and donors.

The Donor Conception Network has developed many resources to help parents of donor conceived children tell their children about their origins. <https://www.dcnetwork.org/>

## What about meeting a sperm donor online?

Using a donor that you meet online can lead to social and legal problems. Some women use sperm donors found via online introduction websites specifically established for this purpose, such as via Facebook.

This way of obtaining sperm has many risks for the woman and the donor. It is likely that these donors have had no tests to ensure they are fit and healthy, and some donors encourage the women to have intercourse to increase their chances of conception which has been termed Natural Insemination (NI).

The identity of the donor is not always established. Men donating sperm via these sites need to be careful because they may be considered the legal father of any children born and be financially liable. There have been media reports where men claim to have fathered hundreds of children and any child resulting from such donations will have hundreds of half siblings.



## Further information

<https://fertilityeurope.eu/>

<https://www.dcnetwork.org/>

