ARE YOU INTERESTED IN

FREEZING YOUR EGGS?



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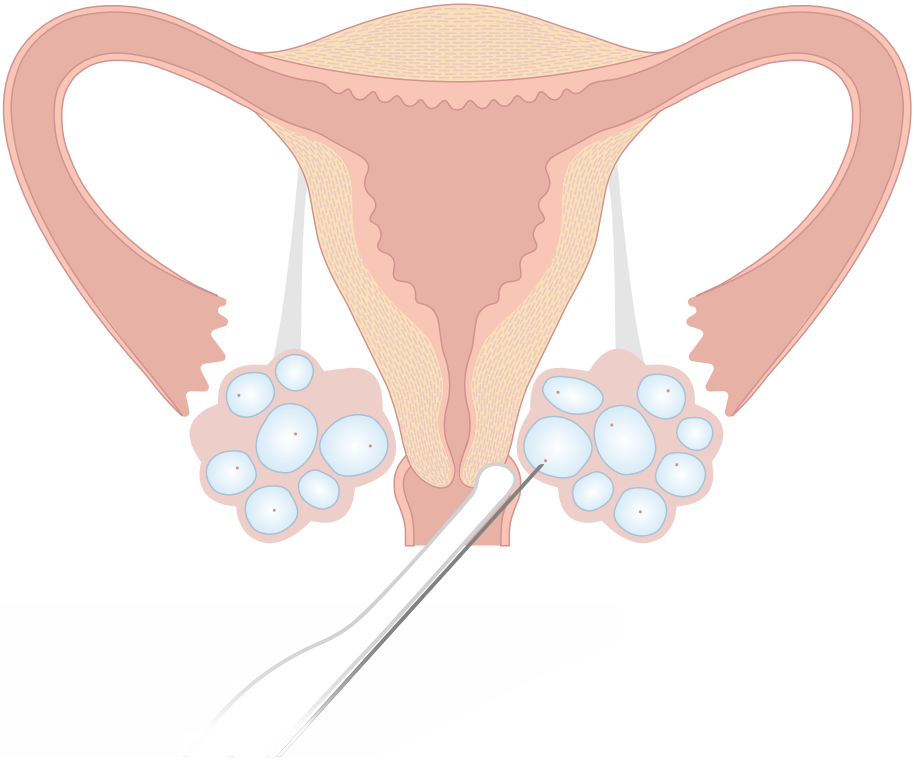


INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, both women and men start families later in life. For women, postponing childbirth can make it more difficult to become pregnant, because their eggs age and eventually run out completely.

This leaflet is aimed at women who want to freeze and save their eggs for the future. Perhaps you are worried that you won't get the chance to start a family before your fertility declines, have not yet met a partner, or have separated after a long-term relationship.

This leaflet was prepared in collaboration with
Dr. Anna Lena Wennberg, Nordic IVF Center Göteborg

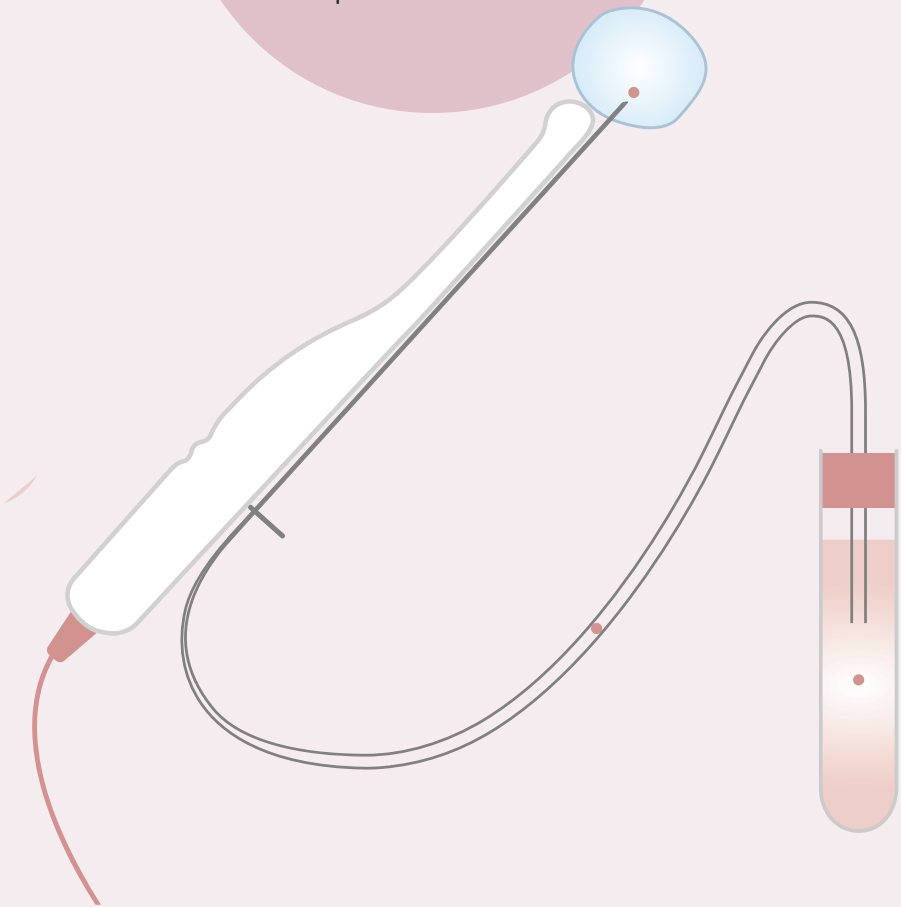


HOW DOES IT WORK?

The process is very similar to IVF treatment. To be able to retrieve eggs from a woman's ovaries, they need to be stimulated with hormones that cause multiple eggs to mature at the same time. To prevent premature ovulation, the body's own hormone production is also suppressed using other hormone injections or special nasal sprays. This phase of the treatment, known as ovarian stimulation, lasts about 10–14 days. In the meantime, follicular development is monitored using ultrasound and/or blood tests.

A swollen and sore stomach is a normal side effect of ovarian stimulation. Abundant vaginal discharge is also common.

The eggs are retrieved from the ovaries via the vagina, using a fine needle guided by an ultrasound probe. The procedure is quick and can usually be carried out with only local anaesthesia and fast-acting pain medication.





Unfertilised eggs are very sensitive. With earlier freezing methods, they had low survival rate when thawed and a high rate of failure when it came to achieving pregnancy.

The technology now in use is called vitrification. It was developed in Japan in the early 2000s. With this technique, the unfertilised egg cells are frozen very quickly to a temperature of -196°C.

The frozen eggs can be stored for many years, survive thawing well, and can help women to become pregnant even after their natural fertility has declined.

HOW LONG CAN YOU KEEP YOUR EGGS FROZEN?

If your eggs have been frozen for non-medical reasons, national agreements say the longest they can be stored is until you reach age 45.



WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF HAVING A BABY?

Both the chance that the eggs will survive thawing and the chance of having a baby depend on the woman's age at the time of freezing. The younger a woman is when she freezes her eggs, the better the prognosis.

Most clinics recommend that women freeze their eggs before age 38 and that they try to freeze at least 20 eggs. Mathematical models have calculated that the chance of having at least one baby is about seventy percent.

WHAT ARE THE RULES?

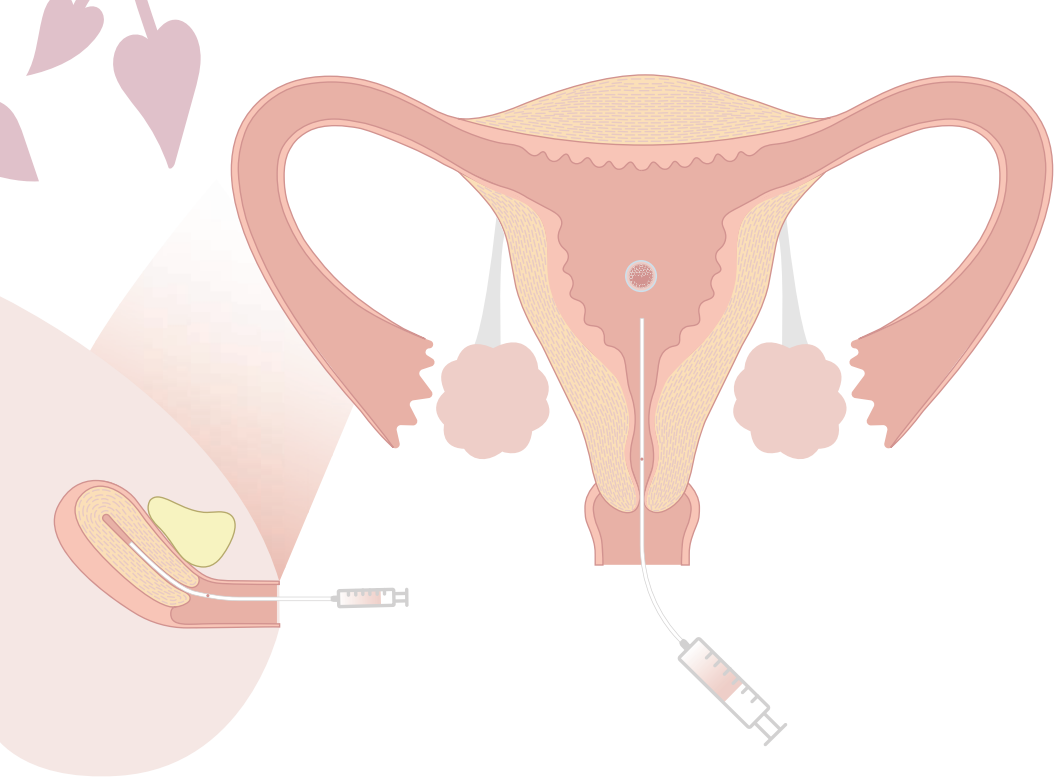
In Sweden, there is no specific law that regulates the freezing of unfertilised eggs. On the other hand, if eggs are frozen without special medical reasons, there are national agreements in place to which all of Sweden's fertility clinics adhere. Among other things, these agreements set age limits.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST?

Unless there is a medical reason for a woman to freeze her eggs, egg retrieval and cryopreservation must be paid for privately, along with the full cost of the medications used in the treatment.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS?

The risks are minor and the same as with other IVF treatments. A small number of complications can occur, the most common of which is hyperstimulation syndrome, in which the ovaries develop too many follicles. Severe overstimulation is uncommon, as are other complications such as bleeding, infection, or ovarian torsion.



HOW CAN I USE MY EGGS IN THE FUTURE?

When you want to try to get pregnant with the help of your cryopreserved eggs, you must undergo new examinations and then sit down with your doctor to make a plan for the actual transfer. If you have a male partner, his sperm must also be analysed. The lining of the uterus often needs to be prepared for the transfer with hormone tablets. The timing of the transfer is then synchronised with the thickening of the endometrium.

The same day that the eggs are thawed, they are fertilised with sperm from the male partner, or with donated sperm. This is done using a microinjection technology known as intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI). The fertilised eggs are cultured for 2–5 days before an embryo is transferred to the uterus. The transfer procedure is usually simple and is done by inserting the embryo into the uterus via the vagina using a thin plastic catheter.

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