

Donating: what else does it involve?



You may be considering donating sperm, eggs and embryos and wondering what else it involves and what information you will have to provide.



What details will I have to give about myself and why?

People conceived using donated sperm, eggs or embryos are often curious about their origins. For example, they may want to know whether they look like you or have a similar personality. They may also wonder why you decided to donate and whether you have children of your own.

The form we send out to clinics aims to answer these and similar questions.

The details we ask donors for include:

- Your name
- The name you were born with if this is different to your current name
- Your date and place of birth
- Your NHS or passport number
- Your address at the time of donation
- Whether you have children of your own and, if so, how many and whether they are boys or girls
- Your appearance – height and weight, and colour of eyes, hair and skin
- Your ethnic group and your biological mother and father's ethnic group
- Your medical history, any physical or mental health problems or disabilities you have
- Whether there are any medical conditions that you know of in your own biological family that could potentially be passed on
- Your job
- Your religion
- Your skills and interests
- Your reasons for donating

You will also be invited to write a description of yourself and a goodwill message to any child or children born as a result of your donation. You will be encouraged to include information about your education, achievements, views, values and life experiences.

This information enables the child's parents to talk to them about their origins as they grow up and helps them build a mental picture of you.

Where will this information be stored and will it be safe?

All the details you provide will be kept on the HFEA Register. The information is carefully protected and is not available to the general public. Only those with a right to this information by law, namely donor-conceived people aged 18 or over, will have access to it.

Can I get any information about a child created from my sperm, eggs or embryos?

The clinic where you made your donation should be able to tell you whether any children were born as a result of your donation. They may also be able to tell you the sex of any such children and/or the year they were born. They will not, however, be able to tell you their names or other identifying information. If the clinic is unable to help you, you can contact the HFEA.

What if a child created from my sperm, eggs or embryos wants to get information about me?

If you registered to be a donor before 1 April 2005 (and did not re-register after the change in law), a child can only obtain non-identifying information about you and will not have the right to know who you are.

If you registered (or re-registered) to be a donor after 1 April 2005, a child born from your donated eggs, sperm or embryos can apply to the HFEA for identifying information about you. If this happens we will inform you as soon as possible. It is therefore important that we have your up-to-date details. We will not be able to tell you the name of the person who wishes to contact you or any of their identifying details.

What will happen if a child wants identifying information about me?

For donors who registered and donated for the first time after 1 April 2005, any resulting child born may request identifying details we hold about you when they reach the age of 18.

If you donated sperm, eggs or embryos between 1991 and 2005 you can choose to be identifiable by re-registering yourself.

How information is provided to donor-conceived people:

(a) Non-identifying information (step 1)

1. The donor-conceived person requests information about their donor.
2. An application pack is sent which includes a leaflet outlining the process and issues to consider, together with the contact details of relevant counsellors and a recommendation to seek counselling.
3. The applicant will return the form together with original proofs of ID to the HFEA, enabling a search of the Register.
4. Their original proofs of ID will be copied and returned immediately.
5. If information related to the applicant is found on the Register, they will be provided with the non-identifying details of their related donor together with a further suggestion that they might wish to seek counselling.

Where a donor-conceived person (the applicant) is found to be related to an identifiable donor:

(b) Identifying information (step 2)

1. The HFEA will attempt to contact the donor using the last known address held on the HFEA Register to advise them that a request for identifying information has been made by a person born as a result of their donation. The donor will be provided with a leaflet explaining the process and the issues to consider together with the contact details of relevant counsellors.
2. A minimum of 14 days after the original request was received by the HFEA (to allow sufficient time to contact the donor), written confirmation of the donor's identity and contact details will be provided to the applicant. If contact with the donor is intended, then the HFEA would suggest that this is initially in writing. Mediation or counselling services may be particularly helpful at this stage.

What advice and support can I get?

Your decision to donate sperm, eggs or embryos is an important one, with life-long implications. There are many issues to consider and some of them are complicated. We strongly recommend that before coming to a final decision, you discuss these issues with a clinic counsellor. This can be particularly helpful in exploring how the decision will affect you and any current or future partner, and any children you may have now or in the future. In this way, you will be much more confident that you are making an informed decision.

Useful contacts

British Infertility Counselling Association (BICA)

BICA aims to promote high quality, accessible counselling services for those with fertility problems.
www.bica.net Tel: 01744 750 660

Donor Conception Network (DC Network)

Information and support for people planning, or who have, children conceived using donated sperm or eggs.
www.dcnetwork.org Tel: 020 8245 4369

Infertility Network UK (I N UK)

Charity providing practical and emotional support for people experiencing difficulties in conceiving.
www.infertilitynetworkuk.com Tel: 08701 188 088

National Gamete Donation Trust (NGDT)

A registered charity and central reference point for donors, recipients and health professionals.
www.ngdt.co.uk Tel: 0845 226 9193

Further reading

Donating sperm, eggs or embryos factsheet

Download a copy from the 'Publications' section of 'For Patients' on www.hfea.gov.uk

Donating your eggs for research factsheet

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