

# Fertility and Transplant For Women

Blood and marrow transplant (BMT) can affect your fertility (your ability to have children). Talk with your doctors **now** if you may want to have children in the future. There are ways to help you keep (preserve) your fertility. Even if you've already had a BMT, there may be ways your doctors can help.

This information is for teens and adults. Right now, there's no standard way to preserve fertility in children.

## THIS FACT SHEET TELLS YOU:

- How BMT can sometimes cause infertility (inability to have a child)
- What you can do to preserve fertility
- Questions to ask your doctor and insurance company
- Where to get more information about fertility preservation

## TRANSPLANT AND FERTILITY RISKS

- The transplant process starts with high doses of chemotherapy and sometimes radiation. This is given to prepare your body to receive the blood-forming cells.
- High doses of chemotherapy and radiation can make you infertile.
- **Eggs** are the female reproductive cells. They can be damaged by radiation and chemotherapy.
- An **embryo** is an egg that is fertilized by sperm, the male reproductive cell.

## FREEZING EGGS OR EMBRYOS

- **Freezing eggs:** First, you get shots of female hormones that cause many of your eggs to start to mature, or grow. Then, these maturing eggs are collected, frozen and stored in a storage facility, where they're kept safely until needed.
- **Freezing embryos:** First, you get shots of female hormones that cause many of your eggs to start to mature, or grow. Then, these maturing eggs are collected and fertilized with sperm in a lab. This is called in vitro fertilization, or IVF. A few days later the embryos are frozen and stored.
- Eggs and embryos can be frozen and stored for many years. When you want to become pregnant, they are thawed, fertilized if needed, then placed into your uterus.
- Egg and embryo freezing are becoming more common. But, they aren't perfect, and can't guarantee a pregnancy.

## NEW AND UNPROVEN OPTIONS

- Doctors are still learning about these fertility preservation options. These options may be expensive and they may not work.
  1. **Ovarian tissue freezing:** You have surgery to remove most or all of your ovarian tissue. This can be done quickly and without hormone medicines.
  2. **Ovarian suppression:** You get hormones during chemotherapy to protect the ovaries from the treatment.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

It's important to ask questions so you know all of your options. Sometimes people feel uncomfortable talking about fertility, but doctors and nurses are used to answering these questions.

Ask your doctor:

- With my treatment, what are my chances of being able to have children in the future?
- Can you refer me to a fertility doctor to talk about freezing eggs or embryos?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR INSURANCE COMPANY

Egg or embryo freezing and storage can be expensive. Your insurance policy may pay for all, some or none of the process. Ask if your insurance policy pays for:

- Collection of eggs
- Fertilization of eggs
- Storage of eggs or embryos

If your insurance doesn't pay for all of the process, there are other resources that may be able to help with the costs. Some states have laws that require insurance companies to pay for egg and embryo collection and storage for certain patients.

## KEEP IN MIND

- Whether or not you have your period isn't a sign of your fertility. Ask your fertility doctor about the best way to test your fertility.
- As your immune system recovers from transplant, it's important to avoid sexually transmitted infections:
  - Ask your doctor about your risk.
  - Use condoms to prevent infection.

## RESOURCES FOR YOU

Talk to someone who can help:

- Contact a BMT Patient Navigator:
  - Call: 1 (888) 999-6743
  - Email: [patientinfo@nmdp.org](mailto:patientinfo@nmdp.org)
- Contact a Fertility Navigator:
  - Call: 1 (866) 708-FERT (3378)

Access an online tool at [BeTheMatch.org/fertility](https://www.bethematch.org/fertility) to learn more about:

- Freezing eggs and embryos
- New and unproven options for fertility preservation
- Family planning options
- Health insurance and financial aid
- Legal and ethical considerations

Other online resources include:

- [Cancer.net](https://www.cancer.net) (search “fertility preservation”)
- [Livestrong.org/fertility](https://www.livestrong.org/fertility)
- [Mayoclinic.org](https://www.mayoclinic.org) (search “fertility preservation”)
- [Oncofertility.northwestern.edu](https://oncofertility.northwestern.edu)
- [Resolve.org](https://www.resolve.org)
- [Savemyfertility.org](https://www.savemyfertility.org)



## AT EVERY STEP, WE'RE **HERE TO HELP**

Be The Match has a team dedicated to providing information and support to you before, during, and after transplant. You can contact our Patient Support Center to ask questions you may have about transplant, request professional or peer support, or receive free patient education materials.

CALL: **1 (888) 999-6743** | EMAIL: [patientinfo@nmdp.org](mailto:patientinfo@nmdp.org) | WEB: [BeTheMatch.org/one-on-one](https://www.bethematch.org/one-on-one)



Every individual's medical situation, transplant experience, and recovery is unique. You should always consult with your own transplant team or family doctor regarding your situation. This information is not intended to replace, and should not replace, a doctor's medical judgment or advice.