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Human
Fertilisation &
Embryology
Authority

Should I freeze my eggs?

**A guide to the latest information and
statistics on egg freezing in the UK**



About us

We are the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), the UK's independent regulator of fertility treatment. We are responsible for licensing and inspecting UK fertility clinics and setting the standards they must meet.

We collect data from fertility clinics on the treatments they carry out. This allows us to monitor trends in the sector to make improvements and publish useful information. We're your first port of call for clear, impartial and reliable information about fertility clinics and treatments – find out more at www.hfea.gov.uk.

About this guide

Our new report, '[Egg freezing in fertility treatment: trends and figures](#)', gives detailed statistics and information on current trends in egg freezing, including how many egg freezing cycles are taking place and what the success rates are.

We have produced this guide for people who are considering freezing their eggs to summarise the key points from the report and the things you should think about before going ahead.

What is egg freezing?

Egg freezing can be viewed as a way of attempting to preserve your fertility so you can try to have a baby in the future. The process involves:

- 10-14 days of hormone injections to stimulate your ovaries to produce multiple eggs
- the eggs are then collected, usually while you're sedated
- the eggs are then immediately frozen and put into storage (for up to 10 years, apart from in exceptional circumstances).

When you're ready to have a baby, the eggs are thawed and used in [IVF treatment](#). This process is known as 'egg thawing' or an 'egg thaw treatment cycle'. It involves fertilising your eggs with your partner's or a donor's sperm using a technique called intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) where the sperm is injected directly into the egg and, if successful, transferring the resulting embryo to your womb. The aim is that this embryo will develop into a baby.

Why freeze your eggs?

Medical reasons

There are a range of medical reasons why you may choose to freeze eggs. If you're having medical treatment which can cause infertility (such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy), you might want to consider freezing your eggs.

If you're a transgender person who is transitioning, you may want to preserve your fertility before you start hormone therapy or have reconstructive surgery. Both treatments can lead to the partial or total loss of your fertility.

Non-medical reasons

Not everyone feels ready for motherhood at the same time in their life. You might want to preserve your fertility because you haven't met the right partner, you don't feel financially or emotionally ready, or you have other life plans you want to pursue.

What does the latest information tell us?

Our new report shows:

- Egg freezing and thawing are increasing but the number of people having these treatments are still very small. In 2016, egg freezing made up around 1.5% of the 68,000 treatment cycles carried out.
- The newer flash freezing technique – vitrification – is more successful than the traditional slow cooling method.
- Egg freezing and thawing are becoming more successful but it's still by no means a guarantee of having a baby. Although in 2016, 18% of IVF treatments using a patient's own frozen eggs were successful, this means that in around four in five cases, the treatment was unsuccessful.

In 2016, around one in five IVF treatment cycles using a patient's own frozen eggs were successful.

- The main factor influencing your chance of success is the age you freeze your eggs; the age at which you use them matters far less.
- 156 babies were born from frozen eggs in 2016 (39 from using a patient's own eggs and 117 from using a donor's eggs).

Deciding when, or whether, to freeze your eggs

Deciding when, or whether, to freeze your eggs is a balancing act.

Age

The age at which you freeze your eggs is key to your chance of eventually having a baby. Doctors say the best time is during your 20s and early 30s, as the quality of your eggs declines after the age of 35.

Our report shows that if you freeze your eggs

when you're under 35, using these frozen eggs in treatment will give you a higher chance of success compared to trying to conceive naturally, particularly from the age of 40 onwards.

But some women decide to freeze their eggs later. Firstly, because the younger you are when you freeze your eggs, the less likely you are to ever need to use them, because you may conceive naturally. Secondly, by law, eggs can only be stored for a maximum of 10 years (apart from in exceptional circumstances). So, if you freeze your eggs when you're 20, you'll only be able to use them in IVF treatment up until you're 30, and you might not be ready to have a baby at that time.

You should also consider the fact that if you freeze your eggs in your late 30s, when your fertility is already in decline and your chance of those eggs leading to a successful pregnancy are lower, you may need more than one cycle of treatment to collect the preferred number of eggs for storage. That will be more invasive on your body, your life and, if you're paying for treatment, your bank balance, but on the other hand, you are probably more likely to use your frozen eggs in the future.

Some women who decide to try for a baby later in life decide to use eggs from a donor in IVF treatment, instead of their own eggs, as donor eggs can be higher quality and have higher success rates. You can find out more about this option on our [website](#).

Cost

Only certain people freezing their eggs for medical reasons are eligible for NHS-funded treatment. Otherwise, you'll be looking at £7,000-£8,000 for the whole process.

Risks

There are also the risks to consider, the major one being that freezing your eggs by no means guarantees that you will be able to have a baby – while egg freezing is becoming more successful, only 18% of patients using their own frozen eggs in IVF treatment currently end up having a baby.

There is some evidence of higher miscarriage rates in pregnancies from frozen thawed eggs. But these studies are limited in scope as only around 2,000 babies have been born worldwide from frozen eggs.

You can find out more about the risks of fertility treatment on our [website](#). It's also important to know that as you get older, there is more risk of pregnancy-related complications and health problems to both you and your baby.

Want to know more?

You can find detailed information and statistics about egg freezing and thawing in our [Egg freezing in fertility treatment: trends and figures](#) report.

Our website also has more information on egg freezing, IVF and things to consider when thinking about having fertility treatment.

Visit www.hfea.gov.uk.

Average cost of an egg freezing cycle



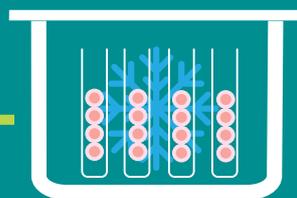
Egg collection and freezing:
£3,350

+



Medication:
£500-£1,500

+



Egg storage costs per year (up to 10 years): £125-£350 per year

+



Thaw cycle and embryo transfer:
£2,500

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Total cost:
£7,000-£8,000

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Did you find this information useful? Could it be improved? Please let us know by emailing enquiristeam@hfea.gov.uk.