

## **Freeze and Share**

**Bridge's new programme develops the Egg Sharing concept further to encourage more UK egg donors, giving new options and choices for future life, careers, relationships and children.**

Our new Egg-sharing Programme enables healthy young women who are willing to share their eggs in exchange for fertility preservation to freeze their eggs for future use.

'Freeze and Share' results from the success of our Egg Freezing Programme and is based on the new vitrification technique which we have been using successfully since October 2007.

The 'Freeze and Share' programme provides egg freezing and five years storage to suitable donors, is accepting enquiries immediately and becomes fully operational on 1<sup>st</sup> October. We believe that it will help to address the current shortage of UK donor eggs which requires thousands of British women to go overseas for fertility treatment every year. The programme will be supervised by Bridge Deputy Medical Director, Nataly Atalla.

### **The Programme**

Egg freezing is now a serious consideration for many women up to the mid-thirties who, in their current lifestyle, are not yet ready for motherhood for various reasons. We are equally aware that a proportion of our enquirers find difficulty in meeting the costs of £4-5,000 (depending on drug dosage). 'Freeze and Share' overcomes this issue and provides other women with the precious opportunity of motherhood.

Candidate sharers will be treated before the dramatic decline in fertility which affects every woman – normally in their mid-thirties. There will, of necessity, be some qualifying medical criteria and counselling is another essential part of the decision process.

Women will qualify on the basis of their likely response to relatively low doses of fertility drugs and will undergo three treatment cycles over a 12 month period, with constant monitoring during and between cycles. Additional support will be provided by our specialist Egg Donation Team which we formed five years ago and which has guided hundreds of patients through egg donation and sharing in the UK and abroad.

### **Registration**

'Freeze and Share' will be guided by a series of explicit protocols. Interested participants will register using a specially-developed form which will establish their suitability for a comprehensive range of screening tests. Women proceeding to the tests and counselling sessions may still not be admitted to the programme if there is

any definable risk to their health and future fertility, or if their test results exclude them from fulfilling the necessary criteria.

A registration fee of £200 will be charged. This will be refunded to women who become donors. Those who cannot be treated will receive an Ovarian Reserve Assessment and Reproductive Health report – the results of tests worth substantially more than the registration fee.

### **Sharing Rules**

Donors will proceed to treatment with the knowledge that the rules governing the sharing and freezing of eggs are clear and fair.

We will inspect and grade every egg collected and will only freeze mature eggs of suitable quality. Although the Cryotop vitrification method is relatively new in the UK, it has been proven in over 100,000 procedures in 12 countries and 95% survival rates and 96% fertilisation rates (using ICSI) are now being reported. Once selected, the eggs are equally divided between donor and recipient, with the benefit of an odd number of eggs going to the donor. All divisions follow the procedures established in Bridge's existing HFEA-approved Egg Sharing Programme.

### **What next?**

From a donor's perspective, the key requirement is to be fit, healthy and under 35. You must also have thought through the issues carefully and be clear in your own mind that this is something you want to do. We expect a mix of donors who, for medical, social and career-linked reasons, will prefer to freeze their eggs rather than take the existing Egg Sharing option of immediate IVF treatment.

For further information or a Registration Form call Admissions on 020 7089 1449 or email [admissions2@thebridgecentre.so.uk](mailto:admissions2@thebridgecentre.so.uk).

### **Answers to some of your questions**

#### **Why Freeze Eggs?**

There are many reasons why women may want to freeze their eggs: -

#### **Medical:**

Premature menopause  
Ovarian failure  
Pre-chemotherapy  
Pelvic radiotherapy  
Surgical i.e. severe endometriosis  
Genetic – Turner's Syndrome, Fragile X

#### **Social:**

Wrong time  
Haven't met the right partner  
Career comes first  
Fertility insurance policy  
"Will feel better"  
Don't want to be told "it's too late"

## **Who should apply?**

### **Under 30?**

Immediate action is advised if you have a known medical condition which affects your fertility. A reproductive health check is, in any case, strongly advised as this will allay any fears you may have or identify any problems that may be laying dormant, making early treatment advisable.

### **Under 35?**

Yes – now is the time as 35 is, for most women, a key threshold in terms of fertility and, because of declining egg quality, we cannot accept women over 35 into the Freeze and Share programme.

### **Over 35?**

Alas, it's too late to apply for the 'Freeze and Share' programme but, if you have concerns about fertility preservation, come and have a Reproductive Health Check and Ovarian Reserve Assessment as soon as possible. Egg freezing may still be an option outside the programme and we can also advise on the alternatives.

### **Why three cycles?**

The suitability of the eggs for freezing is expected to be less than the total number produced. Three cycles are necessary to ensure that the donor holds an adequate stock for future treatment.

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