

Fertility Preservation and Gender Diverse Parenthood

What You Should Know

Family building for gender diverse people can take different forms, depending on their partner(s) and preferences. Choices for gender diverse parenthood are influenced by many biological and social factors. When building a family, some people choose to do so through fostering, adopting, sex or with the help of assistive reproductive technology (ART). ART refers to medical procedures that help people have children.

What is Fertility Preservation?

Gender-affirming healthcare may include hormones and/or gender-affirming surgery. Fertility, or the ability to have biological children, can be affected by hormones and certain types of surgery. After some surgeries it is impossible to make sperm or eggs, or to carry a pregnancy. Gender diverse people thinking about starting gender-affirming medical care should talk to their doctor about fertility before starting treatment.

Fertility preservation is a way to save eggs, sperm or an embryo before taking hormones and/or having surgery. For those who have already started hormones, fertility preservation may still be possible. It is best to talk to a doctor about reproductive wishes as soon as possible.

How Does Fertility Preservation Work?

For Trans Men

- **Egg Preservation:** Trans men may take testosterone, a masculinizing hormone. Testosterone may limit the ability to produce fertile eggs. This effect can be reversed in some trans men, but not in others. Some trans men also choose to have their ovaries surgically removed. Once the ovaries are removed, a trans man can no longer make eggs. If a trans man wants to preserve fertility, eggs can be removed from the ovary, frozen and stored (or

“banked”) until he is ready to use them. In vitro fertilization (IVF), a type of ART that brings together eggs and sperm outside of the body to form an embryo, can be used to start a pregnancy with his eggs in the future.

- **Embryo Preservation:** IVF can be performed immediately after the eggs are removed. The embryos created through IVF are then frozen. These embryos can be used to start a pregnancy in the future.

For Trans Women

- **Sperm Preservation:** Trans women may take feminizing hormones. Androgen blockers decrease the masculinizing effects of testosterone. Estrogen and progesterone increase the feminine appearance of the body. These hormones may decrease or completely stop sperm production. Some trans women also choose to have their testes surgically removed. Once her testes are removed, a trans woman can no longer make sperm. Sperm can be saved any time after puberty for future use. Sperm is usually collected through masturbation, either at home or a medical clinic. Other options are available when masturbation is not feasible. The sperm can then be frozen and stored until a trans woman is ready to use it to build a family.
- **Embryo Preservation:** IVF can be performed immediately after the sperm is collected. The embryos created through IVF are then frozen. These embryos can be used to start a pregnancy in the future.

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Frequently Asked Questions

What if I already take gender-affirming hormones?

Talk to your doctor about any hormones and other medicines you take. Your doctor will work with you to discuss your options for family-building and the best steps to preserve your fertility.

As a trans man, is the process to collect and freeze eggs the same as IVF, even if I do not want IVF right now?

Yes. You will get specialized hormone injections to help the ovaries make eggs. You will have ultrasound checkups on the development of the eggs. When the eggs are ready, your doctor will use an ultrasound and needle to collect and freeze them. Your eggs can stay frozen for many years and may successfully be used to start a pregnancy.

Is fertility preservation expensive?

There are costs for the medical procedures to collect eggs and sperm, to prepare them for freezing and to have them used with other ART to start a pregnancy. There are also often annual fees charged for storing frozen eggs or sperm. These costs vary between clinics, storage facilities and states. Depending on your insurance, some costs maybe covered. Speak with your doctor's office to learn more about specific costs for you.

How are babies made from frozen eggs or sperm?

Once you are ready to have a baby, your eggs or sperm will be unfrozen and checked for their level of health. Your eggs or sperm will be combined with sperm from a partner or a donor to create embryos. This step is called fertilization. Embryo(s) will then be moved into your uterus or a partner's uterus, a step called embryo transfer.

People are unique, so it is important to speak with a doctor about what is right for each person.

About the Urology Care Foundation

The Urology Care Foundation is the world's leading urologic foundation –and the official foundation of the American Urological Association. We provide information for those actively managing their urologic health and those ready to make health changes. Our information is based on the American Urological Association resources and is reviewed by medical experts. To learn more, visit the Urology Care Foundation's website, **UrologyHealth.org/UrologicConditions** or go to **UrologyHealth.org/FindAUrologist** to find a doctor near you.

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