



**Fertility Circle is CARE Tunbridge Wells' face-to-face support group** – whether you're our patient or not – for you to come along and share your experiences of fertility treatment and get some friendly advice and information. We hope we'll be able to resume **Fertility Circle** for 2022, but for now, we hope this month's Newsletter will give you some insights and knowledge about treatment options for single women who want to start a family with donor sperm with information about how altruistic donors are selected and screened.

CARE has the UK's leading sperm bank to help you find your perfect match with our thorough matching process. Each of our donors is fully screened and registered with the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA).

Our Donor Sperm Bank coordinator [CentralSpermBank@carefertility.com](mailto:CentralSpermBank@carefertility.com) will be able to give you the most up to date information on waiting times to be matched to a donor if you are looking for a donor with very particular characteristics or a donor with a specific ethnicity.

All our donors:

- have good sperm counts;
- are aged between 18-46 years;
- are in good health;
- with no personal or family history of genetically-inherited conditions; and
- no sexually transmitted infections (STIs)

You will be asked to complete a matching form and our Donor Coordinator will discuss any particular requirements. Matching involves consideration of ethnicity/skin tone; height, hair, eye colour and build. Once potential matches have been found, we will contact you to provide information about the donor's characteristics with copies of their pen portrait which gives a description of themselves and a goodwill message if you wish to see them. You then have 48 hours to respond to choose your donor. (If none of the donors is suitable, this doesn't mean that you'll lose your place at the top of the list.) Once you've selected your donor, your local CARE clinic's Donation team will be informed and your treatment protocol will be sent out to you. The identity of the donor is kept strictly confidential and only details of physical characteristics and non-identifying information is kept with us.

As there are currently waiting lists for donor sperm in most UK clinics, you may want to consider importing directly from well-established and trusted sperm banks abroad. **European Sperm Bank** (see link below) supplies a number of UK clinics with donor sperm. The recent EEC European Tissue Directive has standardized procedures for recruitment, selection and screening of donors across the EEC and simplified arrangements for the import of donor sperm.

**California Cryobank** is a well-established American sperm bank with HFEA-qualified donors available to ship to the UK (see link below).

Some women may be considering treatment with a known donor but be aware that this has legal (and financial) implications that need to be considered very carefully: the known donor can choose whether or not to be involved in the child's upbringing and is not legally obliged to contribute financially.

**London Sperm Bank** is also a UK sperm bank and offers a £50 discount to CARE patients using the code **LSBCare**.

Having done the research and wanting to go ahead with treatment, the next steps are to get an assessment of your fertility with some tests and investigations and arrange an initial consultation with one of our specialist doctors.

The tests we recommend before your initial consultation with our specialist doctors are:

- A Fertility Assessment: this would include a blood test for Anti Mullerian Hormone (AMH) to assess ovarian reserve, a scan with antral follicle count and measurement of BMI, blood pressure and noting any medical or family history.
- Ideally, a test to check vitamin D and TSH (thyroid stimulating hormone): both these help with rates of conception and TSH also plays a part in implantation of an embryo and we would like to see a TSH level towards the lower end of the normal range at below 2.4 iU/L.
- You will also need to check chlamydia and Rubella antibodies status before treatment can commence.
- A HyCoSy scan (for IUI).

### IUI vs IVF:

In terms of the costs involved for IUI and IVF, you need to bear in mind that the cost of medications is charged as extra to the procedure itself; there are also the costs of the pre-tests and consultation fee plus an HFEA charge and, of course, the cost of the donor sperm plus import costs if this has been sourced from abroad. You may also decide to add other tests or treatments. Although virology (screening for Hepatitis B and C, HIV 1 + 2) is not obligatory for IUI, we would recommend that this is done. Virology is required for IVF.

- ❖ **IUI** is less expensive and is relatively simple and straightforward but the drawbacks are that it may take more than one cycle of IUI to get pregnant and the success rate for IUI tends to decrease after the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle. You will need a tubal patency test to assess whether IUI is suitable for you; this is done with a HyCoSy scan where a fine tube is introduced into the neck of the womb and dye is instilled into both Fallopian tubes: we hope to see fill-and-spill of the dye from each tube to confirm tubal patency for IUI to be a suitable treatment for you.

IUI can be done in a couple of different ways:

- As a natural cycle: this doesn't involve medications and is planned around your menstrual cycle.
- As IUI with ovulation induction: this is where medication is used to stimulate the ovaries with injections of Letrozole or FSH (follicle stimulating hormones). A series of post-stimulation scans will monitor your response to the medication.

A viability scan to confirm pregnancy is done three weeks after a positive pregnancy test following IUI.

- ❖ **IVF:** this is a more directed, scientific approach and can be up to 5 times more successful than IUI. However, it is more expensive. If tubal blockage is identified at the HyCoSy scan, IVF would be the treatment of choice. If you find that you also need donor eggs to conceive, we can also advise you on this treatment option, using donor eggs from CARE's egg bank.

IVF involves the use of fertility medications to stimulate the ovaries into producing a large number of eggs to grow. As with a medicated IUI cycle, we monitor you carefully with a series of post-stimulation scans to make sure the ovaries are responding well to the medication. These are then collected and combined with the donor sperm with (intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI)). After the egg is fertilised, we then monitor the development of the blastocysts (a collection of cells which develop to form an embryo). At Day 5, the most suitable embryo is then transferred to the womb to implant and develop into a baby. A viability scan to confirm pregnancy is done three weeks after a positive pregnancy test.

CARE can also offer the option of **ZyMöt**: this is a sperm selection device that uses a chip to select the best sperm to inject into the egg by mimicking the body's natural mode of sperm selection. The accumulating evidence is very promising and we can provide you with more information if you would like to consider this. (There is an additional fee for this.)

If your treatment with IUI or IVF is successful, you may want to consider reserving sperm for a second pregnancy attempt and we can discuss this with you once your pregnancy is confirmed.

## NHS FUNDING

Here in Kent, Kent & Medway CCG's local policy includes funding for single women to have up to 6 cycles of IUI using donor sperm (sourced from CARE's sperm bank) or IVF where there is a known fertility problem. Eligibility criteria includes proof of 6 cycles of IUI having been undertaken at home or at a clinic. Other criteria include age (you must be under 40), non-smoking status, BMI less than 30, no previous children. See your GP in the first instance to consider a referral to a local hospital's fertility clinic for further investigations and referral, in accordance with the eligibility criteria and treatment pathway.

At your initial consultation, our doctor will evaluate the results of your investigations and put together a treatment plan for IUI or IVF.

Following the consultation, we strongly advise you to have a counselling appointment. Our independent counsellors will discuss the implications, legal requirements and future issues that you may encounter.

Our Embryology team will then get in touch with you to discuss donor sperm selection and advise you on the timelines involved. When the matching process is complete (or import of the donor sperm has arrived if you've sourced your donor sperm elsewhere) and delivery booked for treatment, they will let our Donations Nurse team know so they can put your treatment plan into action.

**CARE** is proud to be partnered with **Donor Conception Network (DCN)** as a member of their Clinic Supporter Scheme. **DCN** can help support you along each step of your journey and can put you in touch with other single women. They offer workshops and have books and resources available to help you and your child in the longer term, to teenage and young adulthood. **DCN's A Letter from Emily (see link below)** is addressed to single women thinking of becoming a mother through donor conception. It's a refreshingly honest and direct account about the ups and downs of becoming a mum as a single woman and the importance of building support networks.

**Book a 1-2-1 appointment** to tell us about your fertility journey so far and hear about the options available to you as a single woman to have your treatment here at **CARE Tunbridge Wells** by contacting our Central Bookings team on **0800 564 2270**.



## Links and resources:

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**Our next CARE Online Support Meeting is on Wednesday 3rd November at 7 pm – to register, contact [Kelly.DaSilva@carefertility.com](mailto:Kelly.DaSilva@carefertility.com)**

**California Cryobank:** [www.cryobankuk.co.uk](http://www.cryobankuk.co.uk)

Free Access Code: W0316UKC (for a free 'Level 3' subscription to view extensive donor details, medical history and more)

**European Sperm Bank:** [clinics.europeanspermbank.com/CareLondon](http://clinics.europeanspermbank.com/CareLondon).

As a lot of CARE patients use European Sperm Bank, ESB has provided CARE patients with full access to their website – please use the link to gain full access.

**London Sperm Bank:** [info@londonspermbank.com](mailto:info@londonspermbank.com)

**Donor Conception Network** [Letter from Emily Donor Conception Network \(dcnetwork.org\)](http://Letter%20from%20Emily%20Donor%20Conception%20Network%20(dcnetwork.org))

**Fertility Network** ([fertilitynetworkuk.org](http://fertilitynetworkuk.org)) [support@fertilitynetworkuk.org](mailto:support@fertilitynetworkuk.org)

**Fertility Information Events | CARE Fertility**

**Fertility Awareness Week 2021 1 – 5 November: check CARE's schedule of events on our Instagram page. Events include:**

- 1 November: Optimising Fertility Treatment**
- 2 November: Egg Donation & Egg Donation IVF**
- 3 November: Fitness & Nutrition for Fertility**
- 4 November: PCOS & Fertility Treatment**
- 5 November: Paths to Parenthood (Livestorm)**

With love from  
CARE Tunbridge Wells XX

*For more information about Fertility Circle, please contact: [Jan.Reece@carefertility.com](mailto:Jan.Reece@carefertility.com)*