

## DONOR SPERM FACT SHEET

The term “donor sperm” implies that the sperm used for insemination or IVF comes from someone other than the patient’s husband or mutually monogamous partner.

### Sources

Donor sperm can come from an anonymous donor through a sperm bank or from a “directed (known) donor”. A directed donor is someone chosen by the woman through her own efforts who has agreed to provide semen samples for the purpose of producing a conception in that woman. There are advantages and disadvantages to both sources.

**Anonymous donor** sperm from a cryobank has some assurance of both quality and freedom from infectious organisms. Each cryobank guarantees a certain minimum number of motile sperm per sample. All certified commercial sperm banks require a battery of tests on each donor to be negative before samples are obtained. The battery includes testing for sexually transmissible diseases including HIV. When obtained, the semen sample is processed and frozen for a minimum of 6 months at which time the donor must test negative for HIV again before the specimen is released for use. Using an anonymous donor also eliminates the need for complicated legal agreements between donor and recipient. But, using banked sperm can be more expensive and less “personal” than known donor sperm.

**Directed donors** provide the ability to identify to the offspring who provided their genetic heritage. While samples from a directed donor might be less expensive to obtain, directed donor samples have no guarantees of either quality or safety. It is incumbent upon the recipient to obtain these assurances for herself. A recipient may choose to work through a certified cryobank to have the directed donor samples screened and quarantined similar to an anonymous donor. Although this procedure reduces the risk of exposure to transmissible diseases, it adds expense and a minimum of 6 months wait to accommodate the quarantine. From a legal standpoint, it is also more risky to use sperm from a known donor unless the recipient intends for the donor to be involved in the child’s upbringing. If no involvement is the expectation, then a well executed legal agreement between donor and recipient is strongly recommended. Even with such a document, a donor may change his mind and request legal rights as a parent under Washington’s Uniform Parentage Act.

### Procedure

When working through a sperm cryobank using anonymous donors, a recipient chooses prospective donors from a list which includes pertinent characteristics such as height, weight, eye color, etc. Once the list of possible donors has been narrowed down, more extensive information may be obtained from the bank to aid in making the final decision. All certified commercial banks test the donors and quarantine the samples as described above. Donors are also interviewed in depth to obtain information about their personal and family medical histories, their personality traits and life experiences

Once you choose a donor, you must purchase the samples from the bank. It can be difficult to determine how many specimens to buy. A single cycle of insemination or IVF requires one sample. But, it is impossible to predict how many cycles may be required to achieve a pregnancy. If you buy enough for just one cycle, then the donor may no longer be available for your next cycle if conception doesn’t occur and you might need to go through the selection process again. If you buy enough for several cycles, the bank will keep the extra samples in storage for you for a modest fee. But, you may never use the additional samples if you do get pregnant quickly.

A cycle of insemination begins with a period. Depending on your cycle treatment plan, one or two samples must be shipped to the office in time for ovulation. A cycle of IVF begins with ovarian suppression (Lupron). You must call the sperm bank soon after your cycle begins to arrange for shipping of the specimen to NCRS. The sample(s) must be shipped to the Evergreen NCRS office in a liquid nitrogen tank. This will keep them frozen for only 5 days so overnight shipping is preferred. On arrival in the office, we will transfer the samples to our own liquid nitrogen tank so that they can remain frozen until the day of use. We are unable to store specimens long term due to the limited size of our tank. So, we ask that only the samples intended for use in the current cycle be shipped. For insemination cycles, we will make your appointment for insemination when the time of ovulation is determined. How the time of ovulation is determined depends on your treatment plan. Our staff will instruct you on when to come in. For IVF, we determine the day of egg retrieval based on follicle size. The specimen must be in the office before the hCG shot is given. If you are using a directed donor, your donor must be available to collect a specimen on the day(s) we determine that insemination or egg retrieval should be done.



## Legal Issues

The Washington Uniform Parentage Act establishes paternity when a father-child relationship is established by: 1) marriage, 2) DNA determination of paternity, 3) written acknowledgement of paternity, 4) agreement to be named on a birth certificate, 5) valid surrogate contract or 6) adoption. There is no legal recognition of the partner of an unmarried woman who undergoes insemination by donor. When unmarried partners or single women using donor sperm undergo insemination, a legal agreement should be executed to detail the intent of all parties with respect to the offspring.

## Side effects, risks and alternatives

Please refer to the Fact Sheet on Artificial Insemination or IVF for this information.