



Human
Fertilisation &
Embryology
Authority

Giving consent

A guide for donors

Before you donate eggs, sperm or embryos, you must fill in one or more of our consent forms. This leaflet is for people donating to another person or for training purposes. It explains more about consent and why you need to complete these forms, what you should consider when giving your consent and how your clinic should support you.

First, a little bit about us

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

Legally, your clinic can only use and store your eggs, sperm or embryos if you give your consent. We produce the consent forms your clinic will ask you to fill in to help ensure you and your clinic have covered everything required by the law.

You can also come to us for free, clear and impartial information about donation and different fertility clinics – find out more on our website, www.hfea.gov.uk.

Why do I have to fill in a consent form?

Choosing to donate to someone in need is an amazing, selfless act that gives some people their only chance of fulfilling their dream to have a family.

But it's a decision that has lifelong implications for you and so it's a legal requirement that you record your wishes on a consent form.

Giving consent is a process which involves carefully thinking through the options, implications and consequences of donating and discussing your questions and concerns with the experts at your clinic.

This is not just a signature on a piece of paper; giving consent is a process which involves carefully thinking through the options, implications and consequences of donating and discussing your questions and concerns with the experts at your clinic.

This is incredibly important – you must be fully aware of what could lie ahead and have thought about all the things you need to before you donate.

Donating eggs, sperm or embryos to be used in training is also a wonderful thing to do as it allows health professionals to learn about, and practice, the techniques involved in fertility treatment. Real-life experience is the best kind of practice and helps to improve care.

Again, it's a legal requirement that you think through your decision thoroughly beforehand, discuss any questions you have with your clinic, and record your wishes in a consent form.

What you need to know

If you're donating at a clinic to another person, you will **not**:

- be the legal parent of the child
- have any legal obligation to the child
- be named on the birth certificate
- have any rights over how the child will be brought up, and
- be required to support the child financially.

What is my clinic responsible for when it comes to consent?

As we said earlier, consent is much more than a signature on a consent form. For your consent to be valid, your clinic must offer you an opportunity to have implications counselling and must support you throughout the process by talking you through the forms and making sure you are given all the relevant information you need to make fully informed decisions.

This includes giving you information about:

- the different options set out in the forms
- the implications of giving your consent (or not giving consent)
- the consequences of withdrawing your consent, and
- how to make changes to, or withdraw your consent.

If you feel you haven't had this support, talk to your clinic – you need to decide on some complex issues so it's very important you understand and thoroughly discuss your options with them.

Once you have had an opportunity to receive counselling and have been given all the relevant

information, your clinic should make sure they give you the right consent form(s) to fill out

Depending on your situation, you might have to fill in one, two or several HFEA forms. Your clinic may also ask you to complete some of their own forms too.

You should not be given the form(s) to complete by yourself without any guidance, nor should your clinic complete the form(s) for you.

Information for lesbian couples

If you're in a same sex couple and are donating your eggs to your partner, you will be asked to complete a donor consent form. However, as you intend to be the child's second parent, some of this leaflet is not relevant to you – ask your clinic to explain anything you're unsure of.

If you're not married or in a civil partnership, it's essential that you and your partner fill out our legal parenthood consent forms to enable you to become the legal parent of your child. Our [legal parenthood leaflet](#), available on our website, explains more.

Why should I be offered counselling?

Choosing to donate to another person has lifelong implications and that's why counselling is so important.

It gives you the chance to discuss the wider implications with an expert, such as the impact it could have on your own family, or any future family, and the fact that anyone conceived from your donation could contact you in future. If you're donating as part of an egg sharing agreement, it can also help you think through issues such as how you'd feel if the woman you donated your eggs to gets pregnant and you don't.

If you're donating your eggs, sperm or embryos for training purposes, counselling can help prepare you for what's involved and to talk through any questions you might have.

What do I need to make sure I've done?

Take your time

You should take your time to think through the implications of donation and all the information you've been given. If you're unsure of anything, ask your clinic.

What you need to know*



Your clinic is legally required to submit information to us about you which we hold on our secure database (known as the Register) and release to any people conceived from your donation once they are 18 if they ask for it.

At 16, a child conceived from your donation can ask us for the non-identifying information we hold about you, such as a physical description, year of birth, ethnicity and occupation. Their parent(s) can also access this at any time.

At 18, a person conceived from your donation can ask us for your identity (including your full name, date and place of birth and last address supplied to us). This may mean that they contact you directly. We'll always try to contact you first to let you know they've asked for this information but if, when and how they contact you is ultimately up to them.

You can find out the number of children born, their gender and their year of birth from us. You cannot find out their identity.

Once you're confident you've been given all the information you need and donation is right for you, read the consent form(s) thoroughly in a quiet place with no distractions. Think through your answers carefully – it's very important you don't rush – and go back to your clinic if you have any questions.

You should not be given the form(s) to complete by yourself without any guidance, nor should your clinic complete the form(s) for you.

Ask your clinic to make sure you've completed all the right form(s) and all the relevant sections of the form(s), ticked the right boxes, and signed the page declarations at the bottom of each page. You must also sign and date the declaration at the end.

Make informed decisions

If you're donating to another person, you'll need to think about how many families you're comfortable donating to and state this on the consent form – you should discuss this with your counsellor and more information is available on our website.

* This information is not relevant if you're in a same sex couple and are donating eggs to your partner as you intend to be the child's second parent.

The 10 family limit

The maximum number of people you can donate to is 10. This is to minimise the possibility of two children conceived from your donation having a relationship with each other without knowing they are genetically related.

This is a concern both because of the emotional effect of the couple discovering they are related and because of the increased risk of them having children with health problems.

If you're donating to someone you know and you only want them to use your sperm, eggs or embryos, you'll need to state this on the form under the restrictions section. This section can also be used to state any other restrictions you want to put on your donation – but you mustn't be discriminatory (eg, you cannot refuse to let lesbian couples use your sperm).

To donate, you must also consent to storing (by freezing) your eggs, sperm or embryos. Legally, you have a right to store them for any period up to 10 years.

In certain circumstances, it may be possible for you to consent to store for up to 55 years if you, your

partner or the person using your eggs, sperm or embryos are prematurely infertile. Your clinic will be able to advise whether this applies in your circumstances.

Don't forget...

Remember that if you're donating embryos, both the egg and sperm provider need to give their consent.

Ask your clinic for a copy of your completed form(s) so you have a record of what you have consented to. This can prove invaluable in the unfortunate event that your clinic consent forms go missing.

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If you're donating to another person, it's important that your clinic knows if your contact details change in future. This is so that if any children conceived from your donation ask us for your details when they're over 18, we can give them the right information. We will always try to contact you first to let you know if they have asked us for this. If you can't inform your clinic for any reason (eg, because it has since closed), you can inform us directly.

How do I change or withdraw my consent at a later date?

Consent to donation can be changed or withdrawn at any time until the point of sperm, egg or embryo transfer. If your donation has been used but you don't want it to be used again, you can withdraw your consent. Consent to storage can be changed at any time.

In all cases, you can change or withdraw your consent by completing a new form which you can get from your clinic.

Find out more

Our website, www.hfea.gov.uk, has lots more useful information. If you have any questions, you can contact us by emailing enquiriesteam@hfea.gov.uk or calling 020 7291 8200.





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