

REFERRING ONCOLOGY PATIENTS FOR PRE-TREATMENT GAMETE OR EMBRYO STORAGE

Introduction

Some of the treatments involving chemotherapy or radiotherapy can affect a patient's future ability to have children. RCP/RCR/RCOG joint guidelines¹ recommend that the possible future effects of chemotherapy or radiotherapy on fertility should be discussed with all patients with reproductive potential.

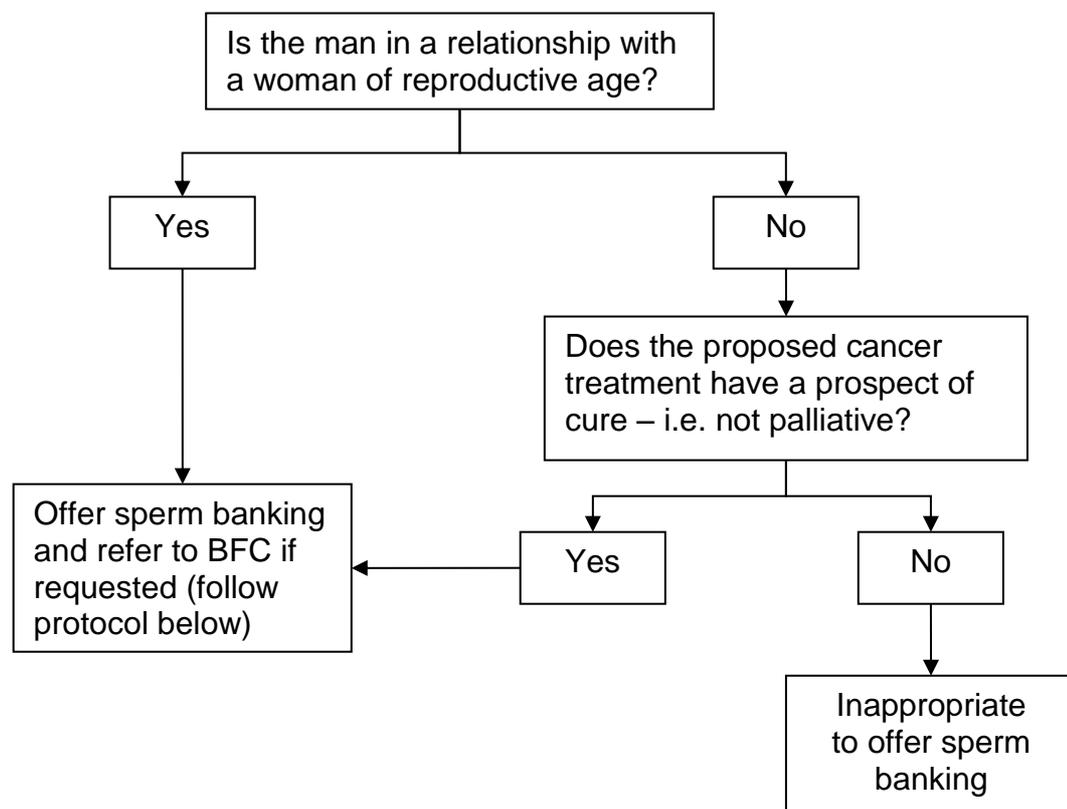
Where relevant, patients who are about to undergo chemotherapy or radiotherapy may wish to consider storing samples of their sperm, eggs or embryos, which could be used at a later date if needed.

The storage of gametes and embryos is an activity licensed by the Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority (HFEA) under the terms of the HF&E Act of Parliament (1990) as amended (2008).

This document describes the steps to be undertaken when referring patients for gamete or embryo storage prior to oncology treatment.

MALE PATIENTS

All post pubertal males who may develop gonadal dysfunction should, whenever relevant, be offered sperm banking. Please see flow diagram below to assess whether offering sperm storage is relevant.



If a man decides he would like to take up the offer of sperm storage, take the following action:

Download the following from the Bath Fertility website under section Information for GP's:

- Patient information for sperm storage. https://bathfertility.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Sperm_Freeze_Patient_Information-3.pdf
- Pre-screening questionnaire https://bathfertility.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Mans_Health_Questionnaire.pdf
- Sperm storage referral form https://bathfertility.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Sperm_freeze_referral_form.pdf

Give the patient the information leaflet and arrange viral screening and referral (see below).

Viral Screening

Ask the man to complete the pre-screening questionnaire, available on the BFC website. The purpose of this is to determine whether he is at high risk of HIV or Hepatitis B or C infection.

If any of the questionnaire answers are 'yes' the man should be offered counselling before screening – contact GUM clinic at the RUH. For these patients storage cannot be offered until screening test results are available and negative.

If the answers to the questionnaire are 'no', the man is in a low risk group and will not need counselling prior to HIV and hepatitis screening. Take blood and send to virology for HIV, hepatitis B (antibody and core antigen) & hepatitis C. **NB:** Bath Fertility will not store samples until screening bloods have been taken, although for low risk patients results can be outstanding as sperm can be stored in a quarantine tank until the results are available.

If a man is known to be HIV or hepatitis B or C positive, BFC does not have facilities to store such samples and the man will have to be referred to a London clinic (contact BFC for details).

Referral

Complete ALL sections of the referral form. It is important that the form is signed by a registered medical practitioner as this allows BFC to store samples for up to 55 years, otherwise the maximum storage period is limited to 10 years.

Email the completed referral form and pre-screening questionnaire to BFC on from an nhs.net email address to ruh-tr.enquiries-bfc@nhs.net. Please ensure the patient contact details are correct, upon receipt of the referral Bath Fertility will contact the patient to arrange a sperm freeze appointment.

Funding

Funding for sperm freezes isn't always granted and must be agreed prior to the sperm freeze appointment. Patients who already have a child or children may not be eligible for funding, however Bath Fertility can check this with the relevant CCG. When referring patients please ensure the GP details for the patient being referred is detailed correctly on the referral form, so that Bath Fertility can contact the relevant CCG immediately to arrange funding. If a patient is eligible for NHS funding the cost of the sperm freeze and a pre-agreed length of storage time will be covered. After this period of time, if a patient wishes to keep the samples in storage, the patient will have to pay an annual storage fee. Bath Fertility will inform the patient how many years of storage will be funded by the NHS.

FEMALE PATIENTS

Do not refer patients unless they meet referral criteria listed below.

Download the referral form for egg or embryo storage form the Bath fertility website and complete all sections.

<https://bathfertility.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Bath-Fertility-Egg-Freezing-form-1.pdf>

The cost of treatment and storage can be up to £6000, which will have to be met by the patient unless CCG funding has been agreed.

Criteria for referral

- Proposed cancer treatment has a prospect of cure – i.e. not palliative
- Proposed treatment has significant risk of causing sterility
- If single, must be under 36 years of age; if in a stable relationship, must be under 40 years of age
- Sufficient time exists for cycle of ovarian stimulation without detriment to treatment of malignant condition. Absolute minimum time required is two weeks and it may be up to six weeks depending on the woman's menstrual cycle.
- No previous indication of ovarian failure, or previous cancer treatment which may have caused ovarian failure.

Referral

If the woman meets the relevant criteria, telephone Bath Fertility on 01761 434464 for an urgent appointment to see a consultant (specify appointment is to discuss egg or embryo storage prior to cancer treatment).

Download the egg referral form available on the Bath Fertility Website (GP page) and complete ALL sections. Patient information can also be downloaded. Complete ALL sections of the referral form. It is important that the form is signed by a registered medical practitioner as this allows BFC to store samples for up to 55 years, otherwise the maximum storage period is limited to 10 years.

Clinical information can be emailed securely to ruh-tr.enquiries-bfc@nhs.net

Funding

Funding for egg/embryo freezes isn't always granted and must be agreed in advance. Patients who already have a child or children may not be eligible for funding, however Bath Fertility can check this with the relevant CCG. When referring patients please ensure the GP details for the patient being referred is detailed correctly on the referral form, so that Bath Fertility can contact the relevant CCG immediately to arrange funding. If a patient is eligible for NHS funding the cost of the egg/embryo freeze and a pre-agreed length of storage time will be covered. After this period of time, if a patient wishes to keep the samples in storage, the patient will have to pay an annual storage fee. Bath Fertility will inform the patient how many years of storage will be funded by the NHS.

References

¹Royal College of Physicians/Royal College of Radiologists/Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists joint report: The effects of cancer treatment on reproductive functions: Guidance on management.