

Sperm banking

Information for teens with cancer

Your teenage years are a time of enormous change. You often don't know what you want to do with your life. However, when you are diagnosed with cancer, you will be faced with many tough decisions. One of the biggest may be deciding if you want to have children of your own in the future. Talking about plans for your future may not be what you are expecting at this time, but it is important because infertility (not being able to conceive a child) may be one of the side effects of your cancer treatment.

You might not be thinking of having children today, but you might want them in the future. Just in case, we want to talk to you about sperm banking. This means freezing some of your sperm so that it can be used in the future when you are ready to have a family. This topic may be embarrassing, but you need to think about it now because, if you decide to go ahead, it must be done before you start your cancer treatment.

Why would I need sperm banking?

We're sorry to have to tell you bad news, but 1 out of every 3 men will not make normal sperm after cancer treatment. The sperm count may be low, sperm may swim slower than normal or there may not be any sperm at all. This can make it difficult or impossible to have a baby.

We cannot tell you today if your sperm will return to normal or not after your treatment. In case you are one of the men who cannot make normal sperm after cancer treatment, we want to give you the choice of banking your sperm before you start treatment.

What is sperm banking?

Your sperm can be saved for several years by freezing and storing it in liquid nitrogen (-195°C). If you decide to have children in the future, the sperm can be thawed and used for assisted conception (medical ways of helping make a pregnancy).

You provide a sample of sperm by masturbating. The fluid that comes from your penis contains the sperm. Depending on where you live, you may collect the sample at home or in a private room at a fertility centre. If there is time before you start cancer treatment, you may bank more than one sample.

Your sperm sample will be frozen and stored. If your sperm returns to normal after cancer treatment, you may choose to throw out the banked sperm. If your sperm is not normal, you may choose to leave the sperm in the bank for future use. If you choose to keep your frozen sperm sample, you will need to pay a yearly storage fee.

Do I have to decide right away?

Yes, you need to start cancer treatment soon and sperm banking must be done before your treatment starts. We know you must feel rushed in making such an important decision. Try to take some time to think about your future plans. If you have questions, talk with your family doctor or oncologist. It may also help to talk with a close family member or friend.

If you decide to go ahead with sperm banking, the rest of this information booklet will guide you through the process.

How do I get started?

The nurse at your doctor's office or clinic will make an appointment for you at the fertility centre closest to McMaster Children's Hospital (ONE Fertility) and give you a collection container.

ONE Fertility
3210 Harvester Road
Burlington ON L7N 3T1

If you have questions or need to change your appointment, call ONE Fertility at 905-634-4440 or 1-877-663-0223.

Who should come with me to the appointment?

Having to go to a fertility centre may seem weird to you, and knowing what you are going to do there can add to this uncomfortable feeling. Ask yourself these questions and then decide what will work best for you:

- How will you get there?
- Who would you feel most comfortable going with?
- Who would you not feel comfortable going with?

Many young men come to the appointment with their parents. For some, this doesn't cause a problem. However, some guys feel uncomfortable with their parents and would prefer to go with someone else. Think about what is right for you. If you don't wish to go with your parents, the health care providers at the oncology clinic or on the ward may be able to help you make other arrangements.

Bring your Ontario Health Card to your appointment.

Where do I go for the collection?

You have 2 options:

- If you live within 1 hour of ONE Fertility and you feel more comfortable at home, you may collect the sample at home. Get a sterile collection container from your doctor. Keep the sample at body temperature and take it to ONE Fertility.
- You may collect your sample in a private collection room at ONE Fertility. There are sexual/erotic movies and printed material available in the rooms to help motivate you. If you are under 16 years of age we will need your parents consent for you to use these materials.

Who do I see at the fertility centre?

Check in with the receptionist at ONE Fertility. A member of the fertility team will accept the sample you have collected, or give you instructions for collecting the sperm sample and take you to a private room. You will be asked to sign a consent form, giving your permission to freeze the sample.

What happens after the collection?

After the collection, the lab checks the sample and tells the fertility doctor how much sperm is available to freeze. The doctor will talk with you about freezing the sperm and how to use the sample in the future. This process takes about 3 hours, but much of this time is waiting for the sample to be processed and checked by the lab.

How much does sperm banking cost?

There is a fee to freeze each sample, plus a yearly storage fee. Please check with ONE Fertility about their fees.

Who can use the frozen sperm samples?

Only YOU have the legal right to your banked sperm. You cannot leave the frozen samples to your parents or siblings. You can leave your samples to your partner or spouse. This person's name must be clearly identified on the consent form.

In the future, if you want to use the frozen sample, you and your partner will need to make an appointment at the fertility centre to discuss ways to use the samples.

If you wish to stop storage of the sperm, make an appointment at the fertility centre. You will be asked to sign a consent form, giving your permission to discard the frozen samples.

If you have questions:

- **talk with your family doctor or oncologist**
- **call ONE Fertility at 905-634-4440 or 1-877-663-0223**
- **visit: www.onefertility.com**