DONOR INFORMATION
Your Questions Answered (Sperm Donors)

What do I need to think about before donating?
Sperm donors give a wonderful gift to people who long for a child but it can have a wider impact on the people who received your donation, the donor child, and you and your family.

Legally and socially, the people who receive your donation will be the parents of any child that is born. The child inherits your genes, therefore any child of theirs will be genetically related to you. You should consider how you feel about this now and try to imagine how you may feel in the future. All of our donors will be offered the opportunity to speak to one of our counsellors if they want to discuss any concerns or implications.

What are my rights and legal responsibilities?
Providing donations and treatments are carried out in an HFEA licensed clinic, sperm donors have no legal obligation to any child born as a result of their donation – they will not be a legal parent and will not be named on a birth certificate, neither will they have any rights over how a child will be brought up or be asked to financially support a child. The person who carries the pregnancy and delivers the baby with her partner are the legal parents of any resultant children. If you want to find out more please visit www.hfea.gov.uk.

What is the HFEA?
The HFEA (Human Fertilisation & Embryology Authority) is the body that regulates fertility treatment in the UK, for which we are fully licensed and accredited to carry out. We keep a register of all licensed fertility treatments, which is designed to protect everyone concerned, including donors, the people having treatment and their donor-conceived children.

What about anonymity?
The law requires donors to register both non-identifying information and identifying information. This information is kept in a confidential registry at the HFEA. Recipients of donor sperm are allowed access to non-identifying information only.

At 16 years old, a donor-conceived person can obtain their donor’s non-identifying information:
- Physical description (height, weight, eye/hair/skin colour)
- Year and country of birth
- Ethnic group (and that of donor’s parents)
- If the donor was adopted* or donor-conceived (if they are aware of this) - Please note that we only accept donors if they are able to provide a detailed medical history of their biological family.
- If the donor had any genetic children when they registered, the number and gender
- Occupation, religion and interests (if supplied)
- Marital status (at the time of donation)
- Details of screening tests and medical history
- Skills
- Reason for donating and a goodwill message
- Pen portrait (donor’s description of themselves) – identifiable information will be removed from this and the good will message.
At **18 years old**, a donor-conceived person can obtain their donor’s **identifying** information:

- Full name (and any previous names)
- Date of birth
- Town or district of birth
- Last known postal address (or address at the time of registration).

**Note:** The HFEA notifies the donor before any information is released. Donors are entitled to request information from the HFEA about the number, sex and year of birth of any people born as a result of their donation. This is done via the *Application for Information* from the HFEA Register.

**How many children can be born from my donation?**

As set by the HFEA, there is a maximum limit of ten families that can be created from donated sperm from each donor, although the donor can set a limit for fewer in the relevant consent form. This does not limit the number of children within those families due to the possibility of multiple births (e.g. twins, triplets) or siblings.

**What tests are carried out?**

Blood samples are taken to screen for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV), Human T-lymphotropic Virus (HTLV), Syphilis, Cytomegalovirus (CMV) and the Cystic Fibrosis gene. A chromosome analysis (karyotype), haemoglobinopathy screening and blood grouping is also carried out. A urine sample is required to test for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea.

If test results are positive for the following, donors are excluded from the programme:

- Hepatitis B
- Hepatitis C
- HIV
- HTLV
- Syphilis
- Haemoglobinopathy
- Cystic Fibrosis gene (carrier)
- Chromosome abnormality

If you test positive for Chlamydia or Gonorrhoea you will be referred for treatment and deferred from donation. You will be retested after 6 months and if results are negative, you may be considered to become a sperm donor. CMV seropositive donors are not excluded but are only used for CMV seropositive recipients.

All sperm donations are quarantined for six months, after which donors need to come back for follow-up rescreening (Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV, HTLV, Syphilis, CMV, Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea). If results are negative, the sperm is moved into storage ready for use in fertility treatment.

**Does travelling abroad affect whether or not I can become a donor?**

It depends on where and when you travelled. We will ask about any travel within the last year. Geographical risks of transmitting specific diseases (e.g. Zika virus) change frequently but we check the risk at the time you apply to become a donor and we will be able to advise you if deferring from donation is necessary.
Why do you ask to contact my GP?
Our centre is required by the Human Fertility and Embryology Authority (HFEA) to be satisfied that there is no known reason why a donor might not be suitable. You will be asked to sign a consent form to enable us to contact your GP to ask to provide relevant factual information regarding you and your proposed sperm donation.

All information relating to sperm donation is kept separately from any other hospital records and is kept in the centre at all times to comply with the HFEA code of practice regarding confidentiality.

What happens to my sperm?
Your first sample will be assessed to determine the suitability as donor sperm. This is based on sperm count, how they swim and their shape. This original sample will undergo a freezing process in liquid nitrogen and is then thawed. The sperm is assessed again to identify the survival rate.

Once you start donating, samples are stored in straws carefully labelled with your unique donor number, date of birth and date of freezing. Each donation is checked by lab staff for quality before being frozen.

After the six month quarantine period and re-screening results are negative for Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, HIV, HTLV, Syphilis, CMV, Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea, the straws are transferred to storage for use in treatment.

Every part of our process involves strict checks and everything we do is double checked and witnessed by another scientist. By law, we can store donor sperm for a maximum of 10 years.

Do I decide who can receive my sperm?
The choice of recipient will be at the discretion of the medical staff who may be able to match blood group and physical characteristics. However, you can specify extra conditions for storing or using your donated sperm (or embryos created using them), provided the conditions do not discriminate potential recipients by treating them less favourably because of various protected characteristics that are covered by the Equality Act 2010.

Can I change my mind?
You have the right to change your mind and vary or withdraw consent up until your donated sperm has been transferred to a recipient or has been used in training / research (if you have consented to this).

Can donors be sued for any reason?
A donor-conceived person born with an abnormality could sue their donor for damages if it is proved that the donor had not told the clinic the relevant facts about their families’ medical history when they donated. This is why it is important to tell the clinic where you donate of any inherited disabilities or physical or mental illnesses that affect you or anyone in your family. However, provided donors are open and honest about their medical and family history, this is highly unlikely.
What if I’m not accepted as a sperm donor?
If we are unable to accept you as a donor, we will discuss all your results with you, including blood and urine tests, and organise a referral to a doctor if necessary. Sperm quality can fluctuate for reasons such as illness, stress and lifestyle (smoking, diet, alcohol consumption) so it is important that you are as healthy as you can be when you donate.

Sometimes we have to turn down a donor because, although the sample is within the normal range of fertility, tests suggest it does not freeze well.

For further information
- Edin.Donor@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk
- 0131 242 2464 (answer machine)
- www.nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk/edinburghivf