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**Egg Donation Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why Are Egg Donors Needed?**

Most of our clients are looking to be matched with an egg donor due to age-related fertility issues, as many women start to experience a decline in fertility in their late thirties and early forties. Other clients need an egg donor because of genetic issues and have been advised that they either should not or cannot conceive a child using the intended mother’s own eggs. We also have worked with couples needing an egg donor because the intended mother has had cancer or other illness and is no longer able to produce viable eggs on her own. Finally, we work with gay male couples who use an egg donor and a gestational carrier (surrogate mother) to help them create a family.

**What are the Qualifications for Becoming an Egg Donor?**

In order to qualify to become an egg donor, you must:

1. Between 21 and 32 (you can cycle up until your 33rd birthday);
2. Have a Body Mass Index of 30 or less ([Click here](#) to calculate your BMI);
3. Be a non-smoker; and
4. Have no major genetic illnesses in your family history.

If you have any questions about the qualifications, please contact us. We will review your questionnaire with you to determine whether there are any issues that would cause a fertility clinic to disqualify you as a candidate for egg donation.

**How are Eggs Retrieved?**

Egg donation is done through the *in vitro fertilization* (“IVF”) process. The American Society for Reproductive Medicine defines IVF as “A process in which an egg and sperm are combined in a laboratory dish to facilitate fertilization. If fertilized, the resulting embryo is transferred to the woman’s uterus.” ([See ASRM “Assisted Reproductive Technologies: A Guide For Patients”](#))

In a traditional IVF cycle, the eggs are retrieved from the intended mother and fertilized with the intended father’s sperm. In egg donation, eggs are retrieved from the egg donor, fertilized with the intended father’s sperm and the resulting embryos are transferred to the intended mother’s uterus.

For a more detailed description of the egg donation process, including how IVF is done, please see “Assisted Reproductive Technologies: A Guide For Patients”. Additional medical information can be found in “Third Party Reproduction (Sperm, Egg and Embryo Donation and Surrogacy), A Guide for Patients”.

You also will have several opportunities to speak with the physician and nurses at the IVF Clinic after you are matched with intended parents. They will happily answer questions that you may have about how the process will work. Please also feel free to contact us at any time, and we will explain the process to you and answer any questions that you may have.

**How Does the Egg Donation Process Work and How Much Time Commitment is Involved?**

Egg donation does involve a significant time commitment by the egg donor. The first step in the process is to complete our Egg Donor Questionnaire and email it back to us with some photographs. Most donors tell us it takes between one to two hours to complete the questionnaire. Once we receive your questionnaire, we will contact you to review it with you and to answer any questions that you may have about the process. We will then add you to our password-protected egg donor database. Intended parents log into the database to find a donor they feel is a good match for them. Intended parents will be able to view your profile (without any identifying information) and photographs directly on the database. As such, your profile is being viewed by many couples every day.
Once we have intended parents who are interested in working with you, we will send you a copy of their Intended Parents Questionnaire (without any identifying information) for your review and to confirm that you are willing to proceed with them. You will then become officially matched with that couple.

After being officially matched with intended parents, we will contact their IVF Clinic to let them know you are matched with those intended parents so that the Clinic’s screening process can begin. While every Clinic differs slightly in how the egg donation process works, in general, donors will first be “phone screened” which usually takes 15 – 30 minutes. You will also have to complete paperwork for the particular IVF Clinic with whom the intended parents are working. Most IVF Clinics require that you provide them with a copy of a recent PAP smear and physical (typically within the last 12 months). If you have not had a recent PAP and physical, you should contact your primary care physician and/or gynecologist to schedule an appointment.

After the phone screen and after completing all of the paperwork for the IVF Clinic, a representative from the Clinic will contact you to schedule the screening appointment. Many Clinics do all of the screening in one day, although you should be prepared to have to go to the Clinic on two separate days for the screening. Screening appointments involve a meeting with the IVF physician during which he or she will explain the medical process to you and answer any questions that may have. You will also meet with a nurse for medication training. Many of the medications are administered through injections, and you will be trained by a nurse on how to properly give yourself these injections. As such, in order to be an egg donor, you need to be willing to inject yourself with a needle. You will also be required to take a psychological evaluation and meet with a mental health professional to make sure that you have fully considered the emotional issues involved with egg donation. Finally, the Clinic will take blood to test for communicable diseases, evaluate your fertility, etc. Again, you should plan on spending up to two full days for the screening appointment.

Once you are fully screened, the Clinic will set up the IVF cycle. A cycle typically takes six weeks. Most Clinics have donors start the cycle by taking birth control pills only for the first three weeks. You will then begin taking a hormone medication by injection which is intended to suppress your ovaries. After a number of days of taking these injections, you will go to the Clinic for “baseline” testing to determine whether your ovaries are properly suppressed.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) implemented new regulations in 2005 that require IVF Clinics to repeat infectious disease testing on donors once they start the cycle. Most Clinics do that testing when the donor comes in for her “baseline” testing.

You will then be instructed to start a hormone medication intended to stimulate your ovaries to produce multiple eggs. During these last three weeks of the cycle, you will have to go to the Clinic for frequent monitoring appointments. On average, donors attend 5-6 monitoring appointments during the last three weeks of the cycle. At these monitoring appointments, you will have blood draws and/or ultrasounds to ensure that everything is proceeding according to plan. If necessary, the Clinic may have you increase or decrease the amount of medications that you are taking based on the results of the blood draws and ultrasounds. All monitoring appointments are done in the early morning and most donors are able to monitor without missing work or school.

Most donors are on stimulation medications for approximately 8–10 days. The Clinic then will advise you that you are ready for an egg retrieval. You will be required to take an hCG (human chorionic gonadotropin) injection that causes ovulation to occur. Typically, ovulation will occur within 40 hours of taking the hCG injection. Therefore, the egg retrieval procedure must take place approximately 36 hours after the hCG injection. Donors are typically instructed to take the injection in the evening so that the retrieval will occur in the morning two days after the injection is administered. It is CRITICAL that the retrieval procedure take place when it is scheduled. The Clinic will NOT be able to reschedule the retrieval around your schedule. Donors typically spend approximately 3-4 hours at the IVF Clinic on the day of the retrieval. You will be instructed to rest the remainder of the day.

In sum, most donors spend a couple of hours completing the paperwork and gathering medical records, up to two days for a screening appointment, 15–30 minutes for monitoring appointments on approximately 5-6 days during the last three weeks of the cycle, and then a full day for the retrieval procedure.

**Will My Husband or Partner Have to Be Tested?**

If you are sexually active, your partner may have to be tested for sexually transmitted diseases. In most cases, your partner can do this testing either at the fertility Clinic or at a local facility that performs sexually transmitted disease testing. We will be able to assist you in locating a place for your partner to be tested.

**Are There Any Risks Involved with Egg Donation?**

According to the book *Having Your Baby Through Egg Donation*, Ellen Glazer and Evelina Sterling, 2005:

As with all medications, some of the fertility medications may have side effects. This is why it is so important that both donor and recipient are monitored very closely throughout the process. Some side effects that occur in about ten percent of women can include pelvic pain, nausea and vomiting, hot flashes, bloating, abdominal
cramping, mood changes, breast tenderness, blurred vision, and rashes or hives. It is vital that recipient or donor call your Clinic immediately if either experiences any of these side effects at any point in treatment.

For [the] donor, some of these side effects may be early warning signs of Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome (OHSS) since her ovaries are being prepared to produce many eggs at the same time. OHSS occurs in about one to two percent of donors. It occurs when too many follicles are stimulated, causing the ovary to become enlarged. If left untreated, OHSS can worsen quickly and develop into a serious medical condition. Again, we stress that if a donor experiences any adverse side effects or if she suspects that she could have OHSS, she should call the doctor right away. It is much better to be safe than sorry.

Again, you will be counseled by the IVF Physician of the small risks associated with egg donation. You will not be expected to participate in an egg donation IVF cycle until you are completely comfortable with all aspects of the process.

**Can I be on Birth Control and Still be an Egg Donor?**

You can be on birth control pills and still be a donor. You will be instructed by the IVF Clinic if and when to stop and start birth control.

If you have an IUD, you will need to have it removed before participating in an egg donation cycle. You should contact your primary care physician and/or gynecologist to talk about having the IUD removed. If you do not have health insurance to cover the cost of removing and reinserting the IUD after the egg donation cycle, intended parents have agreed in the past to pay for these costs.

If you are using depo provera for birth control, you will need to cease taking it. Again, you should discuss this with your physician. On occasion, donors who have taken depo provera are not able to donate for many months until their cycle becomes regular again.

It is extremely important that if you cease using one of these forms of birth control you make arrangements for an alternative form of birth control.

**Can I be an Egg Donor if I have had my Tubes Tied?**

Having a tubal ligation will not affect your ability to become an egg donor.

**Will I have to Abstain From Sexual Activity?**

As with all aspects of the egg donation process, you will receive detailed information and instructions about if and when you will need to abstain from having sexual intercourse. While Clinics may differ on the precise instructions they give to donors, most Clinics tell donors that once the IVF cycle begins they either have to abstain from having intercourse or to use protection, i.e., condoms, from when the donor gets her period until the egg retrieval occurs. After the retrieval has taken place, most Clinics require that donors do not have ANY sexual intercourse, with or without protection, until the donor begins her next period. Typically, a donor will get her period approximately two weeks after the egg retrieval. This is because donors are at a very high risk of becoming pregnant and of infection after the retrieval has taken place. Again, it is extremely important that you receive and abide by all instructions given to you by the IVF Clinic on this and all other aspects of the egg donation procedure.

**Can I Donate More than Once?**

We abide by the ASRM Guidelines on Repetitive Oocyte Donation. Those guidelines limit egg donors to 6 cycles. Some fertility Clinics will not allow a donor to cycle more than 5 times.

**Why do you Need my Social Security Number?**

We ask donors to provide us with their social security number so that if we need to contact you in the future, we will be more likely to be able to locate you. On rare occasions, a medical issue will arise that will require us to obtain more information from a donor. We also would like to be able to inform donors if a child develops a medical condition that is genetically-related. We will not disclose your social security number to any third party or use it for any reason other than to locate you in the future.

**Will I be Financially or Legally Responsible for any Child Resulting from the Egg Donation?**

You and the intended parents will enter into a legal agreement that will govern each party’s legal rights and responsibilities. That agreement will state that the intended parents shall be the legal parents of any child created through the egg donation process and shall be completely responsible for the child. You will receive independent legal advice from an attorney who specializes in the field of reproductive law. That attorney’s fee is paid by the intended parents. Your attorney will review the legal agreement with you to ensure that you are comfortable with all of the legal issues.
Will I have to Travel?

The majority of our clients work with fertility Clinics in the Boston area. However, we work with intended parents from around the country and around the world. Sometimes these couples work with an IVF Clinic in other parts of the country. International couples are required to do the egg donation cycle at an IVF Clinic in the United States.

If you do not live near the intended parents’ IVF Clinic, you will be required to travel to that Clinic three times: once for the screening appointment, once for FDA testing, and once for the retrieval procedure. Our office will take care of all travel arrangements and assist you throughout the process. Typically, donors will be away from home for 2-3 days for the screening appointment, 1 day for the FDA testing, and 2-3 days for the retrieval procedure. Some IVF Clinics require donors monitor at their Clinic for the last week to 10 days of the cycle. As such, you may need to be willing to be away from home for a week to 10 days. If you are not available to travel for that length of time, you will not be able to be matched with intended parents who are patients at IVF Clinics that have this requirement.

All other monitoring appointments can be done at a Clinic in your local area. We will make all arrangements for this monitoring.

Will I Meet the Intended Parents and/or the Child?

The vast majority of egg donation cycles are done anonymously. The intended parents will know a significant amount of information about you that is necessary for us to determine whether you are a qualified candidate to become an egg donor and for the intended parents to determine whether you are a “good match” for them. Likewise, you will receive information about the intended parents. However, neither party typically receives identifying information about the other party.

On occasion, some intended parents want to have contact with their donor prior to cycling with her. You obviously will have to agree to such contact. If you are agreeable, this contact can be in the form of anonymous email, a phone call exchanging first names only, or an actual in person meeting. Again, you have to be comfortable with such contact.

As part of the legal agreement that you will enter with the intended parents, there will be a provision addressing what, if any, contact there will be between you and the intended parents and/or the child in the future. Such future contact can be limited to updating medical information, answering questions from the intended parents and/or the child, or actually meeting the intended parents and/or the child. You will be represented by your own independent attorney who will assist you in drafting the contract so that you are comfortable with any future contact.

Will I Incur Any Expenses?

No, you will not incur any expenses in connection with being an egg donor. In addition to compensating you for being an egg donor (see Egg Donor Compensation form), the Intended Parents are responsible for paying for the following expenses. In most cases, these expenses are paid directly by the intended parents through our agency. Otherwise, you will be reimbursed for any expenses that you have incurred within 5 days of the retrieval procedure.

1. All medical costs;
2. Legal fees for review of the Egg Donor Agreement;
3. Travel Costs:
   a. Local Donors (those who are in driving distance of the IVF Clinic)
      i. Mileage at the IRS Standard Rate (currently $0.445) per mile for trips over 50 miles;
      ii. Parking;
      iii. Childcare costs incurred as a result of participating in the egg donation process;
      iv. Medical Escort if needed (most donors have a friend or family member accompany them to the retrieval procedure);
   b. Distant Donors (those not within driving distance of the IVF Clinic)
      i. All of the expenses listed above for Local Donors;
      ii. Airfare for Donor for screening appointments and for donor and companion for retrieval procedure;
      iii. Hotel;
      iv. Local transportation (rental car, taxis, etc.); and
      v. $50.00 per day meal allowance.

Donors are not reimbursed for lost wages incurred as a result of participating in the egg donation process as this is intended to be covered by the donor fee.
Egg Donation Process – Step by Step

The following is a step by step outline of the egg donation process. While the process generally proceeds according to this outline, different fertility clinics have different ways of handling the egg donation process. As such, it is critical that you follow all instructions given to you by the fertility clinic, even when it differs from this outline.

Step 1 – The Application Process

In order to be accepted into our egg donor program, you must:

a. Complete the Egg Donor Questionnaire. This can be done electronically or by hand.

b. Submit Signed Certification Page. We require that you certify that all of the information you have provided in your Egg Donor Questionnaire is true and accurate. We also require that you read all of the information that we have provided to you in connection with the egg donation process. This is for your benefit so that you have a good understanding of what the egg donor process involves. As always, please do not hesitate to contact us at any point if you have any questions or concerns about the process.

c. Submit Photographs. Most intended parents are looking to be matched with a donor who has similar physical features to the intended mother. Therefore, the more good quality photographs that you are able to provide, the more likely intended parents will be able to determine if you are a good match for them. We recommend that you submit at least 5-10 photographs, including at least one close-up. Childhood photographs are very helpful but not absolutely required.

d. Provide a copy of your Driver’s License. This can be a copy that is mailed, faxed or emailed.

Step 2 – Review of Questionnaire and Acceptance into Program

After we receive your egg donor questionnaire, certification page, and photographs, we will contact you to go over your questionnaire. We may ask you for additional information about your background or medical history. We also will answer any questions that you have and will make sure that you have a good understanding of the process. Finally, we will review your requested compensation and reimbursable expenses with you.

Step 3 – Donor Database and Matching Process

Once you have been accepted into the egg donor program, we will add your profile to our password-protected donor database. The database contains a brief description and a thumbnail photograph for each donor. We refer to this as the donor’s short profile. Intended parents are able to browse through these short profiles or search for donors with specific characteristics, e.g., brown hair, blue eyes, certain height, ethnic background, etc. in order to find a donor that the intended parents believe is a good match for them. The intended parents are also able to download each donor’s complete profile and view larger photographs. Donor’s identifying information, which is contained on the first page of the Egg Donor Questionnaire, is not included in the donor database in order to maintain each donor’s anonymity.

Intended parents then contact us to tell us that they are interested in a particular donor. In most cases, the intended parents will have questions about several donors. As such, you may be contacted by our office to provide additional information. While we try to be as accommodating to the intended parents as possible, we always reserve the right to refuse to ask donors for information that we believe is irrelevant or unreasonable.

After a set of intended parents informs us that they want to work with you, we will send you a copy of their Intended Parents Questionnaire. Again, no identifying information is included. You will be asked to review the intended parents’ information.
to make sure that you are comfortable donating to these intended parents and that you are available to participate in an egg donor cycle at that time. At that point, the match becomes official.

**Step 4 – The Screening Process**

We will let you know during the matching process which fertility clinic the intended parents are working with and any particular requirements of that clinic. We will then notify the clinic that you are matched with these intended parents. You likely will be required to first submit a copy of a recent physical and PAP smear, as well as complete a questionnaire for the fertility clinic. You will then be contacted by a representative of the fertility clinic and given detailed instructions about the screening process. We encourage you to stay in close contact with our office during the screening process so that we can assist you and answer any questions that you may have.

**Step 5 – The Legal Contract**

At the same time that the screening process is taking place, we will discuss with you the process of negotiating the legal agreement that you will enter with the intended parents. We will refer you to an attorney with expertise in the area of reproductive law. While you have the right to choose your own attorney, we require that the attorney have experience in reproductive law so that we can be sure that you are receiving adequate legal advice from a knowledgeable attorney. Your attorney's fee will be paid by the intended parents.

**Step 6 – The IVF Cycle**

After you have been fully screened by the fertility clinic, the clinic will give you detailed instructions for the IVF cycle itself. Please refer to the other written materials that we have provided to you about how an IVF cycle is done. Again, it is critical that you follow all instructions given to you by the fertility clinic, even if those instructions differ from what is stated in any of the materials that we have given you. We will be available to you throughout the cycle to answer any questions, provide assistance, make travel arrangements, etc.

**Step 7 – The Egg Retrieval**

You will be given instructions from the fertility clinic about when you will be required to come to the clinic for the egg retrieval. The date of the egg retrieval is determined based on when your ovaries have been sufficiently stimulated. The date cannot be planned precisely and once scheduled cannot be changed. Accordingly, in order to be a donor, you have to be available for the retrieval procedure when the clinic tells you it will be done. You will not be allowed to leave the clinic after the retrieval without a companion. Most donors bring a friend or family member to the retrieval. If you do not have anyone who is able to accompany you, we will make arrangements for someone to accompany you. However, we will need to know at least a couple of days in advance if you will need us to have someone accompany you. You should contact us after the retrieval has taken place so that we can send you a check to cover your fee and expenses. Donors are typically advised to rest for the remainder of the day following the retrieval. Most donors resume their normal activities the next day.
Egg Donation Dos and Don’ts

The Don’ts

The following is a list of things that women who are considering becoming an egg donor **SHOULD NOT** do:

1. **Tattoos** – You should not get a tattoo as this will cause you to be rejected by the fertility clinic for a period up to 12 months thereafter. If you have already gotten a tattoo in the last 12 months, it may still be possible to donate if you are able to obtain a certification from the place you received the tattoo that it was done in a sterile manner.

2. **Body Piercing** – A body piercing can delay your ability to donate for up to 6 months following the piercing.

3. **Smoking** – We do not accept women who will be smoking during the IVF cycle. The fertility clinic will do nicotine testing as part of the screening process.

4. **Drug Use** – You will be tested for drug use as part of the screening process. A positive drug test will likely cause the clinic to disqualify you.

5. **Birth Control** – Having an IUD inserted or taking the depo provera shot can substantially delay your ability to donate. Accordingly, if you are considering starting either of these forms of birth control and still want to be an egg donor, you should contact your physician to discuss alternative forms of birth control.

The Do’s

Here are some things that you **SHOULD** do:

1. **Communication** – It is important that we and the IVF Clinic be able to communicate with you either by phone or by email and that you are able to respond to any messages within a reasonable timeframe. As such, make sure that you check your voicemail and email routinely throughout the egg donor process. We also encourage you to contact us often if you have questions or problems.

2. **Updating Information** – Along the same lines, we need you to let us know if you move, change phone numbers or email addresses. Also, please let us know if there are any changes in your life that could affect your ability to donate.

3. **Ask Questions** – We strongly encourage you to ask questions about all aspects of the egg donation process if you do not fully understand what you need to do. We are available to assist you in any way we can. If we are not able to answer your specific question, we will get in touch with the appropriate person at the IVF Clinic to get your questions answered.
Egg Donor Compensation

We understand that the egg donation process involves a significant amount of time and effort on the part of the donors. Therefore, women who are willing to help others by becoming an egg donor should be adequately compensated for their time. We also understand that egg donation is a wonderful opportunity for women to help others have a family that they could not otherwise have without the assistance of an egg donor. While monetary compensation is an important part of the egg donation process, you will also feel rewarded by knowing that you have helped change another person’s life by assisting them with the creation of their family.

Our agency has agreed to abide by the American Society for Reproductive Medicine (“ASRM”) guidelines on Financial Incentives in Recruitment Oocyte Donors. To view a copy of those guidelines, click here.

Those guidelines state that “sums of $5,000 or more require justification and sums above $10,000 go beyond what is appropriate.” Based on these guidelines, we recommend that donors set a requested fee between $4,000 and $10,000.

We would encourage you to consider your requested compensation amount carefully. The amount of money that you will be compensated is only a small part of the total cost of doing an egg donation cycle for the intended parents. For most couples, the average cost is in the $13,000 to $15,000 range. For couples who do not have insurance that will cover the cost of the IVF treatment itself, the costs can increase to $25,000 per cycle or more. Therefore, fees significantly above $5,000 can mean that certain people will not be able to afford the cost of egg donation.

We will contact you after receiving your application to review your requested compensation amount and to answer any questions that you may have. If you would like to discuss the issue of compensation before completing the application, please do not hesitate to contact us.

It is important that you understand that we do not want you to work with a different egg donor agency simply because they promise to get you a higher fee. Some agencies attempt to recruit more donors by inflating the donors’ fees. However, it can take substantially longer to be matched with intended parents at some agencies. In addition, donors often do not receive the support and attention that they need and deserve throughout the egg donation process. Our agency prides itself on having established one of the best reputations in the field. We have done so by treating donors and intended parents with professionalism and respect, as well as having excellent working relationships with all of the fertility clinics in the Boston area and other parts of the country. We have a very significant number of intended parents looking for egg donors. As such, we are usually able to match donors quickly.

Be assured that we will do everything possible to make this process go as smoothly as possible for you and to make it one of the most rewarding experiences of your life. Part of this is monetary compensation. The other part is making sure that you receive the needed support and attention throughout the process.

Again, please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions about donor fees or any other aspect of the egg donation process.

If you are interested in becoming an Egg Donor, please click “HERE” to navigate to our Donor Program Page, where you can download the Egg Donor Questionnaire / Application.