

EGG FREEZING FAQ

Shady Grove Fertility

EGG FREEZING 101

WHAT IS EGG FREEZING?

Egg freezing is a process in which we stimulate a woman's ovaries to create multiple eggs that we then retrieve, freeze, and store for potential future use. Egg freezing is intended to maintain your existing fertility at the time of retrieval.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF AGE ON FERTILITY?

Female fertility starts to decline in the early 20s; however conception rates remain high into the 30s. By the mid-30s, the decline accelerates, reaching nearly zero pregnancy potential by the time a woman reaches 45. In addition, the risk of miscarriage and/or genetic abnormalities begins to rise in the mid-30s, as a result of age-dependent changes in egg quality.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF EGG FREEZING?

Since fertility is known to decline with age, freezing your eggs now will maintain your current level of fertility. By freezing eggs at an earlier age and before there is evidence of declining ovarian reserve (quantity of eggs) or declining ovarian function (one's ability to produce one healthy egg each month), a woman extends her fertility potential, creating a back-up option.

WHAT IS THE BENEFIT OF FREEZING AT SGF?

It is important to consider the experience of a fertility center in terms of both the freezing process and pregnancy outcomes following thaw. Shady Grove Fertility has been freezing eggs using the vitrification technique since 2009, performing over 1,800 egg freezing cycles.

WHO SHOULD CONSIDER EGG FREEZING?

Egg freezing is a good option for women between the ages of 30 and 40 who wish to create future family building options beyond their normal reproductive years.

There may also be a medical reason to freeze, such as endometriosis, premature ovarian failure, diagnosis of cancer, or a family history of early menopause.

WHAT IS THE BEST AGE TO FREEZE YOUR EGGS?

Deciding when to freeze your eggs is a delicate balancing act: if you freeze too early, it is less likely you will need to use your frozen eggs; but if you freeze too late, the quality and quantity of eggs are diminished and success rates are impaired.

The best time at which to freeze your eggs is while your ovarian function is still normal. Doing so allows you to freeze high-quality eggs, maintaining high pregnancy potential when you return to use them. Many women in their 20s and early 30s have normal ovarian function. Unfortunately, your body does not give you a warning that your ovarian function is starting to decrease, and many women are caught off-guard when they discover their ovarian reserve is already beginning to shift, which is not the ideal point to freeze eggs.

WHAT ARE MY CHANCES OF TAKING HOME A BABY?

At Shady Grove Fertility, women 37 and younger who freeze the recommended 15-20 mature eggs have a 70 to 80 percent chance of taking home a baby. Women 38-40 who freeze the recommended 25-30 mature eggs have a 65 to 75 percent chance of taking home at least one baby.



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THE EGG FREEZING PROCESS

HOW CAN I DETERMINE MY OVARIAN RESERVE AND FUNCTION?

Your clinical team will assess your ovarian reserve and function through two tests:

- An ultrasound to measure your antral follicle count, or count of the number of resting eggs in your ovaries.
- Blood test to measure various reproductive hormone levels including: anti-Müllerian hormone (AMH), follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH), luteinizing hormone (LH), and estradiol (E2).

At Shady Grove Fertility, we give women who are freezing their eggs an Ovarian Assessment Report from ReproSource, which provides a comprehensive look at your unique ovarian reserve by assessing several important reproductive hormone levels. Based on your ovarian function and age, your clinician will provide guidance about moving forward with egg freezing. Typical recommendations include:

- Great egg freezing candidate, but if you wish, you can delay egg freezing.
- Good candidate for egg freezing and right now is the opportune time to freeze.
- Egg freezing is less likely to be beneficial.

WHAT IS THE RECOMMENDED NUMBER OF EGGS TO FREEZE?

Whether you're trying to conceive on your own or with fertility treatment, not every egg will result in a pregnancy. The same situation exists with egg freezing, which is why we recommend freezing 15 to 20 mature eggs for women who are 37 and younger, and 25 to 30 mature eggs for women ages 38 to 40.

Another important factor that influences the recommended

number of eggs to freeze is the thaw process. Thawing eggs is a very sensitive technique and not every egg will survive the thaw.

Our studies have proven that freezing the recommended number of eggs by age ensures multiple chances at pregnancy and the best chance of taking home a baby.

WHAT IS AN EGG FREEZING CYCLE?

An egg freezing cycle stimulates your ovaries to produce mature eggs out of the undeveloped eggs, also known as follicles. We use medications similar to the ones naturally made by the body in this stimulation. Once eggs reach maturation, we collect those eggs during an egg retrieval, an intravaginal procedure. We then freeze the eggs via a "flash-freeze" process called vitrification.

HOW MANY CYCLES WILL I NEED?

Ovarian reserve test results help women and clinicians anticipate the number of cycles needed. Women 37 years or younger, with normal ovarian reserve, retrieved an average of 13 eggs per cycle. Therefore, it will take most women at least two cycles to reach the optimum number of 15 to 20 eggs. One-third of women will require three or more cycles. It is also important to note that although it doesn't happen often, it is possible that zero eggs are available for retrieval.

HOW LONG DOES THE PROCESS TAKE?

On average, the entire egg freezing process will take about 2 months; however, it is important to note that the majority of the process does not include stimulation or regular doctor's office visits—that portion lasts only about 2 weeks. Additionally, the process can take longer depending on when you schedule, when your menstrual cycle begins, and how quickly you are ready to begin treatment.



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COMMON CONCERNS

IS AN EGG FREEZING CYCLE PAINFUL?

Slight discomfort during the stimulation and in the days following the procedure is common. Though most people are able to work up to the day of their retrieval and return to work the following day, some women choose to take an additional day off during their recovery.

HOW LONG CAN MY EGGS REMAIN FROZEN?

While long-term data on egg freezing is not available, our experience and research indicates that eggs can remain frozen for long periods of time.

DOES FREEZING DEplete MY EGG SUPPLY AND THEREFORE NEGATIVELY AFFECT MY FUTURE FERTILITY POTENTIAL?

No. Egg freezing treatment only stimulates the development of eggs that are recruited continuously each month (and are discarded by the body otherwise). There is no depletion of a woman's future fertility potential during a normal cycle of egg freezing, even if a woman undergoes more than one cycle.

ARE THERE ANY HEALTH RISKS?

Egg freezing is very similar to in vitro fertilization (IVF), a medical treatment that millions of people worldwide have successfully used. There is no evidence of an increased risk of cancer or other long-term health consequences. The most common side effects come from the medications, sometimes in the form of bloating and mood swings.

In approximately 1 to 2 percent of all ovarian stimulation cycles, women will experience ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome (OHSS). We incorporate a number of measures into the cycle to minimize the risk of OHSS, which highlights the importance of the monitoring visits during your cycle. Other risks relevant to any surgical procedure include the small possibility of infection or bleeding, but the risk of this is well under 1 percent.

We recommend you consult your provider regarding the health risks associated with any medical treatment or procedure.



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ASSOCIATED COSTS

WILL MY INSURANCE PAY FOR EGG FREEZING?

Coverage for egg freezing depends on individual insurance and the benefits purchased by your employer. While most insurance providers will not cover the egg freezing treatment, 90 percent of patients will have diagnostic coverage, and some will have coverage for their medication.

WHAT DOES IT COST TO FREEZE MY EGGS?

For women without insurance coverage, there are several costs to consider when freezing your eggs, including:

- Ovarian Reserve Testing and Consultation: \$340
(\$300 is paid to SGF and an estimated \$40 is paid to ReproSource for additional testing)
- Additional options include Assure 20 or Assure 30, both allowing for multiple cycles for one fee.
- Medications: the cost of medications is dependent on your ovarian function and can range from \$3,500 to \$6,500 per cycle
- Monthly Storage: \$50 per month, beginning year 2.

Financing for all Egg Freezing Options is available.

WHAT DOES IT COST TO USE MY FROZEN EGGS?

When a patient is ready to come back and use her frozen eggs, there are two financial programs available:

- Fee for Service: \$6,500
- Shared Risk 100% Refund for Returning Egg Freezing Patients: \$15,000 to \$18,000 depending on age and ovarian reserve at time of freezing.
- Medications: the cost of medications can range from \$400 to \$800 per cycle

WHAT IS THE 100% REFUND PROGRAM?

The Shared Risk 100% Refund Program for Returning Egg Freezing Patients guarantees that the patient will either take home a baby or receive a full refund of the Shared Risk costs. The cost of the Shared Risk Program includes:

- Ultrasound and Hormone Monitoring
- Egg Thaw and Fertilization
- Embryo Transfer and Refreeze of Additional Embryos
- Subsequent Frozen Embryo Transfer (FET) Cycles
- Storage fees

At the time of freezing, the patient must meet age requirements, meet the favorable ovarian reserve guidelines, and have at least 10 mature eggs frozen.



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