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Egg donors earn cash, help others

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Editor's Note: This is the first of a three-part series on bodily donations.

Some women don't have the option of having their own children and need to turn to the kindness – and eggs – of others.

Caelyn VerCande, 22, mother of one, has discussed the possibility of donating her eggs with her husband.

VerCande had two miscarriages before she was able to conceive her son.

"Having a miscarriage changes your whole look on life," she said.

Women usually decide to donate their eggs for one of two reasons.

First, they may want to help out someone who has had problems with infertility. VerCande said she was scared by thoughts of her miscarriage and others not being able to have children of their own. She said this is the reason she is in the process of donating.

Secondly, women often donate for financial reasons, such as sending their child to college, said Nancy Block., registered nurse and co-owner of The Center for Egg Options, an Illinois-based company.

An egg donor can receive \$3,000 to \$5,000, said Dr. Randy Morris, practice director and medical director for IVF1 (in vitro fertilization) Clinic, Naperville.

In Illinois, egg donors are paid \$5,000 for their time and effort even if it doesn't result in a pregnancy, Block said.

"I wouldn't even do it for the money, " VerCande said. "I'd do it just to give someone the joy of having a child."

Many donors are anonymous, but others often are a sister or friend of the recipient, according to Integamed.com.

There are 24 infertility clinics in Illinois.

"We do not recruit donors of any kind," said Dr. Edward Marut, practice director and medical director of the Highland Park IVF Center. "If a sperm or egg donor is required for infertility treatment, we use outside independent agencies or labs."

Egg recipients are screened at infertility clinics, Block said, and are then sent to the Center for Egg Options.

The age requirements vary from doctor to doctor, she said. To donate eggs at the Center for Egg Options, the person must be between the ages of 18 and 32, although some clinics take donors up to age 42.

A female donor must be healthy with no history of infertility, Morris said. The donor's blood is tested for various diseases, including hepatitis B and HIV (AIDS).

After the donor releases her medical history and genetics, the doctor will prescribe hormones to prompt her ovaries to produce many eggs.

Once the donor's progress has been monitored, the procedure can begin. Under intravenous sedation, the egg removal takes less than an hour, according to Integamed.com.

Eggs are immediately fertilized with sperm from the egg recipient's partner or donor. The resulting embryos will grow in a laboratory for three to five days, Block said. Next, they are placed in the recipient's uterus to develop and grow.

Men have an infinite amount of sperm, whereas women have a limited amount of eggs, according to a Web site called "So You Wanna Donate an Egg?" (at www.soyouwanna.com).

Women, unlike men, must be placed under anesthetics to donate. For eggs, the female donor is



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placed under IV sedation, Morris said, and a needle is inserted into the ovaries to remove the eggs.

An outpatient, minor surgical procedure is performed to retrieve the eggs, Block said. The patient is placed under IV sedation, and a needle is guided through a vaginal ultrasound, Block said. Ten to 20 eggs are then taken out of the donor's ovaries, Block said.

There is no pain because the patient is asleep, Block said. The procedure takes 10 to 20 minutes.

The recipient's insurance usually covers the egg retrieval, Morris said, but the recipient must pay the donor for the IV sedation and necessary drugs.

Potential donors are put on fertility drugs for three-and-a-half weeks prior to the procedure, Block said.

Since medical exams and consultations must be performed prior to the egg retrieval, it's very likely that the donor will miss work for several days, according to Integramed.com. 

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News Makers



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- City Manager Jim Connors

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