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Make a couples' dream a reality

Article by: Jamie Luchsinger - Staff Reporter • jluchsinger@northernstar.info

Editor's Note: This is the second in a three-part series about bodily donations.

Having a baby is a privilege experienced by many. Unfortunately, not every couple has the ability to conceive its own children.

Sperm donations can help men burdened with infertility.

To donate sperm, a male must be generally healthy, said Dr. Randy Morris, practice director and medical director for IVF1 (in vitro fertilization) Clinic in Naperville.

A sperm donation can earn a man \$25 to \$200. Most sperm banks will offer a price list up front, although costs may vary from one sperm bank to another.

There are two sperm banks in Chicago. The University of Illinois at Chicago and the University Center for Urology and Male Reproduction both accept sperm donations.

A list of sperm donors can be obtained through www.spermdonorlisting.com. First, physical preferences are chosen, such as race, weight, height, hair and eye color and blood type.

A list of available donors is shown to would-be recipients. Each description includes the donor's name, sperm bank, physical features, education, blood type and interests.

Usually, there is a fee for counseling, collection and testing. In addition, fees for storage will be determined by how many specimens are banked and for how long.

Donors usually can choose where they would like to produce their specimen. A person may opt to make his sample at home, where he is more comfortable, rather than at a clinic.

If done at a clinic, visual material will be available to help the process along.

Once a sperm donation is made, it is frozen until it's ready to use, Morris said.

According to www.spermbankdirectory.com, the first step is to conduct a thorough semen analysis. This will determine the total number of mobile sperm. Successful pregnancies have occurred using just a few mobile sperm, according to the site.

Next, the specimen is prepared for freezing. Once transferred to vials, a special compound called cryoprotectant is added to the specimen to help with the freezing process, according to the Web site.

Initially, the vials are placed in liquid nitrogen vapor. After 30 to 60 minutes, they are moved to liquid nitrogen tanks for stabilization.


To avoid mix-ups, each specimen is placed in its own storage container and individually labeled with the patient's name and "accession number," which only pertains to him, according to the site.

Sperm can be frozen for up to 12 years. After that, the effectiveness of freezing is questionable.

Spermbankdirectory.com reports there are many reasons why someone would want to donate sperm. A sperm donation may be desired if:

- You are undergoing treatment that may weaken sperm production
- You are taking any medications that may weaken sperm production
- You have a medical condition that will affect your ability to ejaculate
- You are having a vasectomy
- You are exposed to reproductive toxins regularly
- You want to help someone who is infertile become pregnant

A list of sperm banks can be found at Spermbankdirectory.com. The largest sperm bank in the U.S. is the California Cryobank, said Edward Marut, M.D., practice and medical director for the Highland Park

IVF Center. 

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“The first couple of weeks we'll work with people,[but] they shouldn't be parking where there's yellow whether it's Garden Road or anywhere else.” ”

- City Manager Jim Connors

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