

Fertility preservation options before transplant

What did the authors want to share?

The authors wanted to share information about:

- How transplant can affect a patient's fertility (ability to have children)
- Options for patients to keep, or preserve, fertility

A blood or marrow transplant can cause patients to become infertile (unable to have children). But there are ways some patients can have children even if they become infertile (fertility preservation).

Why did the authors write this article?

In a [2013 study](#), researchers emailed a survey to transplant doctors to find out how they talk with patients about fertility preservation. 185 doctors completed it.

The researchers found there are many reasons doctors don't talk to patients about fertility preservation. Some doctors:

- Think there isn't enough time because the patient needs a transplant right away.
- Worry about the high cost of fertility preservation for patients.
- Don't know that patients want to talk about fertility preservation.

Many doctors said they don't give their patients educational materials on fertility preservation. The doctors feel most materials aren't helpful to transplant patients because they are written for other patients.

The researchers found that doctors need educational materials and guidelines about fertility preservation. So the authors share that information in this article.

What did they find?

Doctors and patients should talk about fertility preservation options as soon as possible. Transplant doctors should also refer patients to fertility doctors for more information.

Before transplant, men can freeze their sperm, and women can freeze their eggs or embryos (eggs that have been fertilized with sperm). For women, this could take up to 3 weeks. But men can freeze their sperm right away. The frozen eggs, embryos or sperm are stored safely at a lab until the patient is ready to have children.

Important Point:

Tell your doctor right away if you want to talk about fertility preservation.

Why is this important?

Many patients want to have children after transplant. They have options for fertility preservation. If you want to talk about fertility preservation, tell your doctor. This is very, very important!

What else should I keep in mind about this report?

The researchers reported on fertility preservation options for men and women who need transplant. But some patients might be infertile before transplant because of other treatments or health issues. Also, the researchers found that there are no standard options for children who haven't gone through puberty yet. Researchers need to do more studies to find safe ways to preserve fertility in children.

Fertility preservation options are becoming more common. But they aren't perfect, and they can't guarantee a pregnancy.

Questions to ask your doctor

If you are considering transplant, you may want to ask:

- Will my treatment cause me to become infertile?
- What options do I have for fertility preservation?
- Could you refer me to a fertility doctor?

Learn more about

- [This research study](#)
- [Blood and marrow transplant](#)

Sources

Joshi S, Savani BN, Chow EJ, et al. Clinical guide to fertility preservation in hematopoietic cell transplant recipients. *Bone Marrow Transplantation*. 2014 Apr 1; 49(4):477-484. doi:10.1038/bmt.2013.211. Epub 2014 Jan 13. PMC4071767.

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