

Information for donor-conceived people conceived from donations made before 1998

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Application to the Central Register

July 2019

From anonymity to openness

When donor conception was first practised, sperm and egg donations were made anonymously. However, experience has shown that donor-conceived people, their parents, and donors often want to learn more about one another and are willing to share information about themselves. People may be interested to know about medical history, personality, appearance, hobbies and interests. The way in which people connected by donor treatment exchange information and/or have contact will depend on the wishes of those involved.

VARTA manages the Central Register which contains information about the parties involved in donor conception and can provide support and information to all parties affected by applications. Assistance with the initial exchange of information or contact can also be provided.

If you would like information about your donor

You can apply to the Central Register under the *Assisted Reproductive Treatment Act 2008 (Vic)* (the Act) for **identifying information** (name, date of birth, donor code and contact details) and/or **non-identifying information** (more general information e.g. height, eye colour, occupation etc) about your donor.

If your donor can be found, they will be contacted on your behalf and advised of your application. Your donor will be offered support and counselling through the process.

Your donor may lodge a **contact preference** to specify how they would like you to contact them, or they may not want any contact. Penalties may apply if a contact preference is breached. Before any identifying information is disclosed to you about your donor, you must provide an undertaking to comply with any contact preference that your donor chooses to make.

If VARTA is unable to locate your donor after a four-month search, you will be given the donor's name, date of birth, donor code and contact details so long as you provide an undertaking not to contact the donor and to provide VARTA with any information you receive subsequently that may lead to the donor's location. VARTA will then contact your donor and notify them of your application, offer them counselling and the opportunity to complete a contact preference if they wish.

VARTA staff will support you throughout your application process and are also available to help during the early stages of donor linking. Those close to you who may be impacted by your application are also welcomed to access VARTA support services.

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Process

1. **You submit an application** to the Central Register at VARTA for information about your donor. Application forms can be found on the VARTA website and can be completed online or printed and posted to VARTA. If you have siblings in your family from the same donor you can apply at the same time. Each of your siblings will need to complete their own application to the Central Register. If you would like to apply for non-identifying information about any other donor siblings, you can apply to the Central Register for this information too (see below). A separate application fee applies for information about donor siblings but this application can be made on the same form as your application relating to your donor.
2. You will be required to attend an **information and support session** with a counsellor from VARTA. The session is free. It helps you explore the implications for all parties affected by their application. **It is not an assessment.**
3. With the help of a VARTA counsellor or on your own, you may write a **Statement of reasons** which explains why you have applied and your hopes and aspirations for contact/information exchange in the short and long term.
4. If a search of Central Register records indicates a reliable link to your donor, VARTA will then begin to **search** for your donor. If VARTA is unable to locate a donor it can use the services of a specialist search agency. VARTA also has power in certain circumstances to request records about donor treatment procedures, request information in order to identify pre-1998 donors and request genetic testing of suspected donors.
5. If the donor is located, VARTA will write to him/her advising of your application. Your **Statement of reasons is forwarded to your donor** to help them understand why you have applied and what expectations you have about any contact with them.
6. Your donor is invited to attend an information and support session. He/She is advised of their right to lodge a contact preference to manage any contact with you and/or their children. The donor may only want to have contact with you in a **specified way** such as email, phone or letter. They can also choose to have **VARTA act as a third party** for the exchange of information or to decide to have **no contact** with you at all.
7. Before any identifying information about your donor is disclosed to you, you must **sign an undertaking** that you will abide by any contact preference lodged. A copy of any contact preferences will be provided to you. **It is an offence to breach an undertaking** and penalties may apply.
8. **Identifying information about your donor, including name and date of birth, is then released to you.** If your donor is open to exchanging information or meeting, a VARTA counsellor can help both you and your donor with the initial stages of connection.
9. If your donor cannot be located, or has died but their identifying information is available, the information will be provided to you within four months of VARTA attempting to notify your donor so long as you provide an undertaking not to contact your donor and also to provide VARTA with any information you subsequently receive that might lead to his/her location.

Note: If there is no available information about the donor - or where available information does not provide VARTA with enough evidence demonstrating that you are genetically linked to the donor - no information will be released. VARTA will only release where it is satisfied of a relationship in accordance with the Act.

Options for contact

Contact between donors and donor-conceived people varies enormously and there is no etiquette for how best to approach this. Options range from agreeing to exchange information (e.g. medical, letter/email exchange) to occasional meetings and friendship.

If you would like non-identifying information about your donor siblings

You can also apply to the Central Register for non-identifying information about other people created from your donor's egg or sperm donation – your donor siblings. This information will include their gender, year and month of birth. It is not possible to apply for identifying information about donor siblings.

Some donor-conceived people may be concerned that they are dating or in a relationship with a potential half-sibling. This information can help rule out potential donor siblings. However, if the dates you receive correspond with your partner's birth, you can ask them to apply to see if their details are found on the Central Register.

You may also want to consider lodging an application for information held on the Voluntary Register. If any of your donor siblings have previously lodged information, this may assist you in making contact with them.

Fee for Central Register applications

Payment of a fee per application is required. For example, you may make an application for information about your donor. This can be for identifying information, non-identifying information or both. An application fee applies. Separately or in addition, you may also make an application for non-identifying information about donor siblings. An application fee applies.

Deciding whether to apply

Before applying for information about your donor you may want to consider:

- Is this a good time?
- What else is happening in your life?
- Are your siblings conceived from the same donor? If so – what are their views about this? You can apply together if they are also interested in knowing more.
- How might this impact on your wider family?
- What support do you have?

Contact VARTA

During the application process, VARTA staff will remain neutral and respectful of people's choices and opinions, **maintaining confidentiality at all times.**

For further information:

Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority

Phone: (03) 8601 5250

Email: dcrs@varta.org.au

Web: www.varta.org.au