

Sometimes it takes three to make a baby



Explaining egg donor conception to young children.

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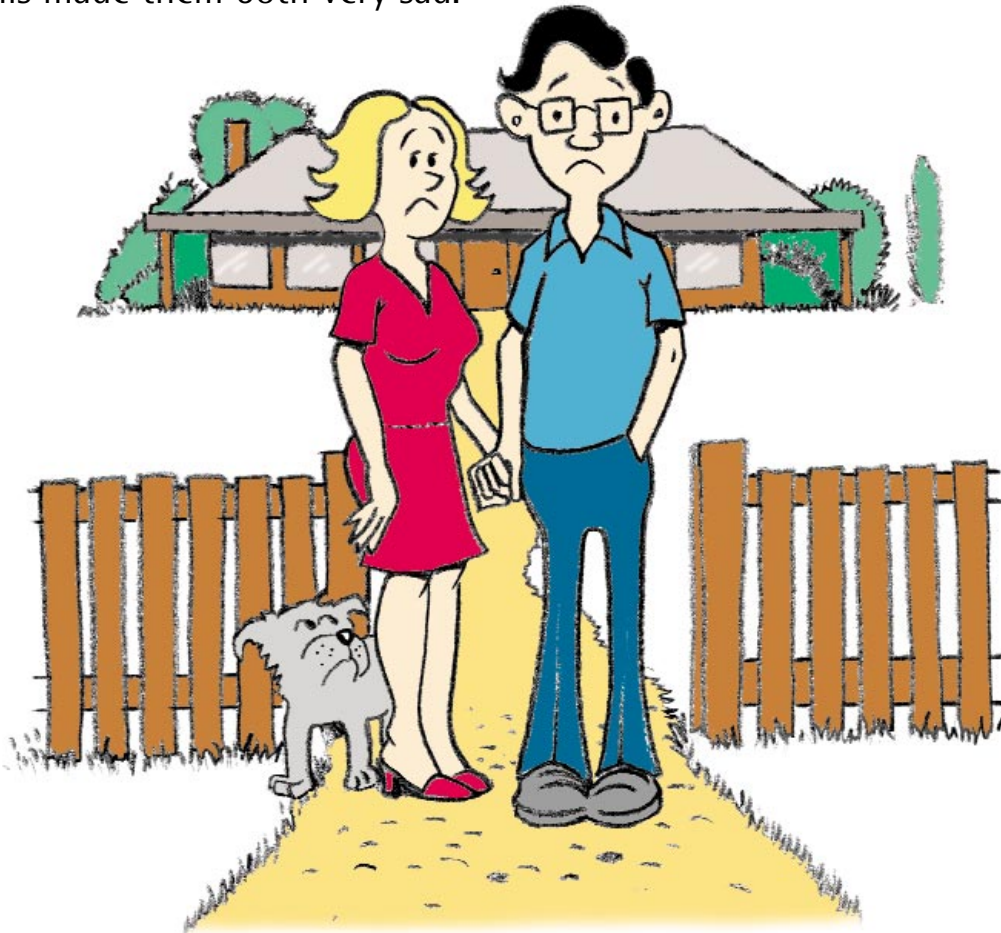
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Once upon a time there was a Mum and a Dad who loved each other very much. They both had jobs that they liked. They lived in a nice house with a garden. They had lots of friends and had lots of fun together.

.....But something was missing.
They wanted a baby!

The Mum and Dad tried to have a baby. They **tried and they tried.....and they tried and they tried!!!!.....** but no baby came.

This made them both very sad.





The Mum and the Dad went to a doctor to see if he knew why they couldn't make a baby. The doctor explained that to make a baby, three things need to be working:

1. An egg which comes from inside the woman's body (a part of the body called the ovary). It is so small you can hardly see it.
2. A sperm which comes from the man (in a part of the body called the testicles). It is even smaller than an egg.
3. The woman's uterus. (This is the part of the body in the Mum's tummy where the baby grows.)

The doctor did a lot of tests on the Mum and the Dad. The doctor said that the Mum's tummy (uterus) was working very well and so was the Dad's sperm.....

It was just that the Mum's eggs couldn't start a baby.

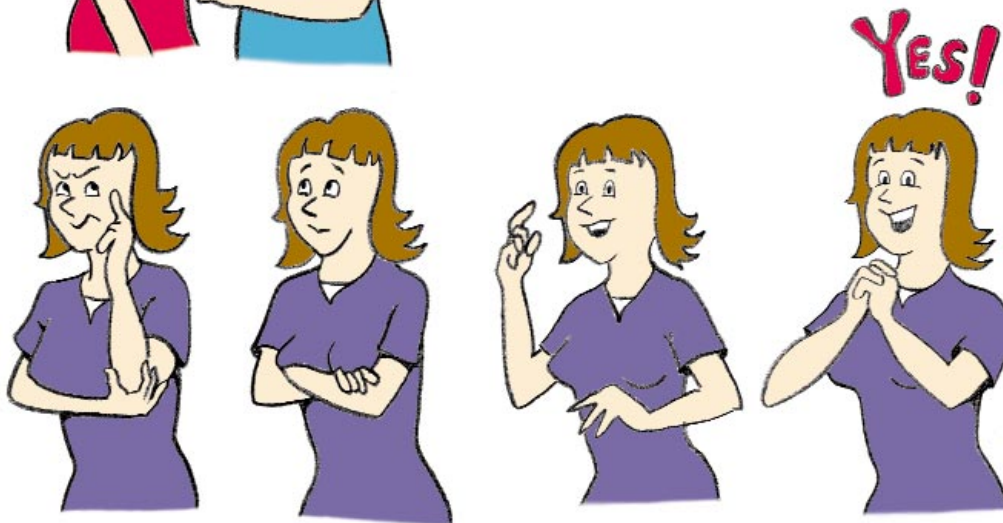
The doctor told them that another woman might be able to give them some of her eggs to help them start a baby. (This is called donating eggs.)





The Mum and the Dad thought and thought....

Who might be able to help them?

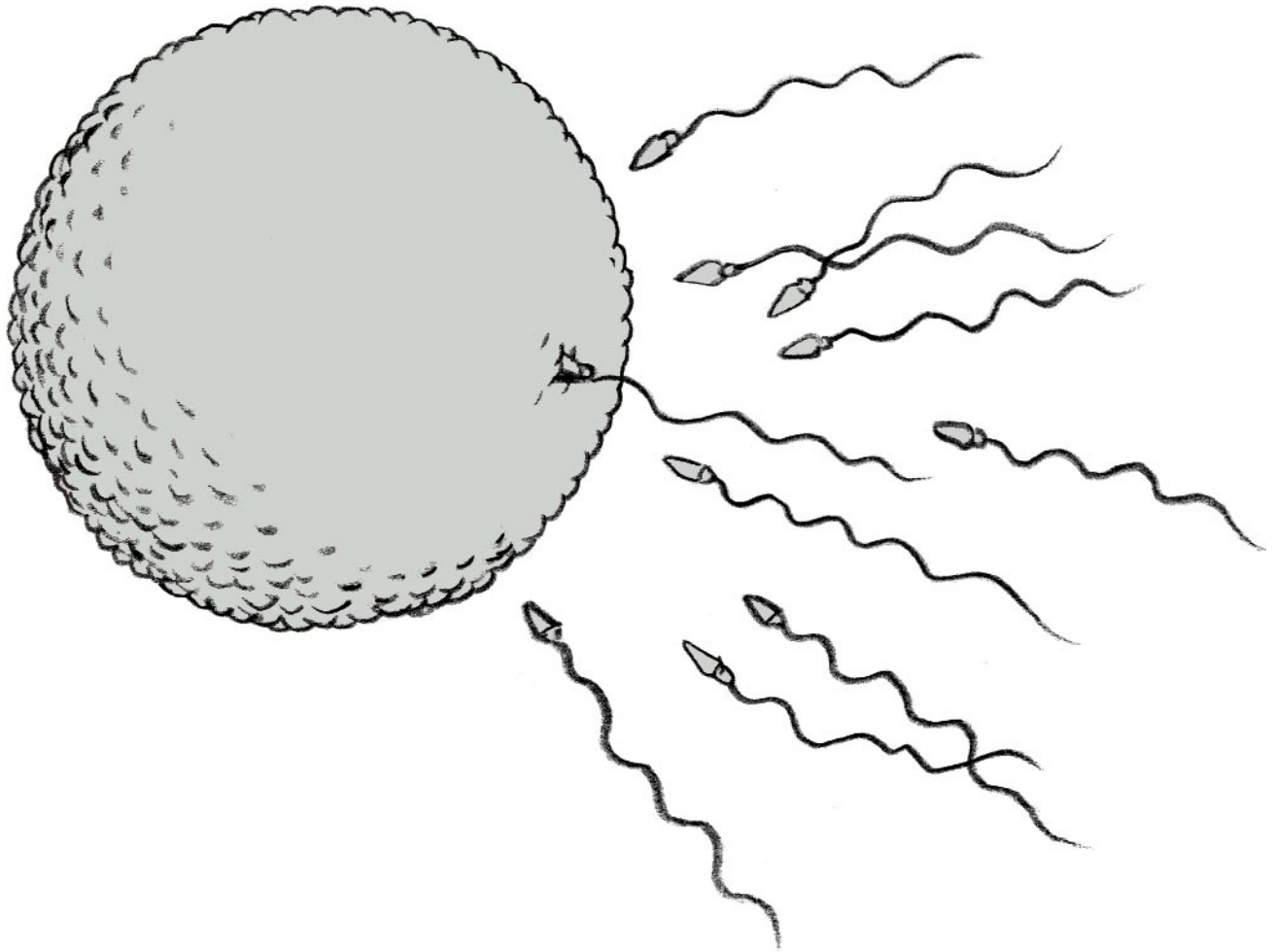


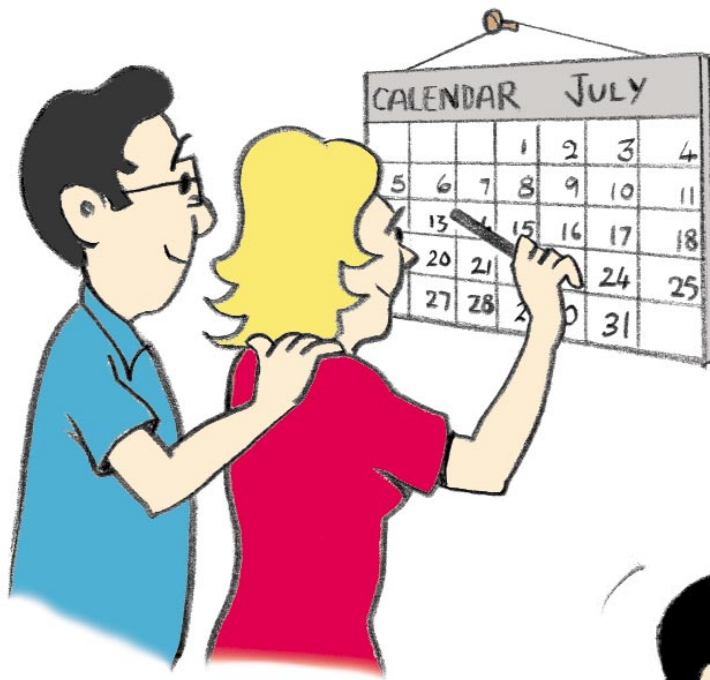
A kind lady was asked if she would like to give some of her eggs to the Mum and the Dad to help them start a baby. (This is called being an egg donor.)

Guess what?!!! She said, "Yes."

When the donor's eggs were ready to make a baby, she went to the hospital and the doctor collected them and put them with the Dad's sperm. This time the egg and sperm joined together and started to grow.

They turned into an embryo which is the beginning of a baby! The doctor put the embryo inside the Mum's uterus.





he Mum and the Dad waited
nd waited..... Would a baby
tart to grow?

AND IT DID!!!!!!!

The Mum was pregnant!

The Mum and the Dad were
so excited. They were going
to have a baby to love!



The Mum's tummy grew bigger and bigger and the Mum and Dad talked to the baby inside every day.

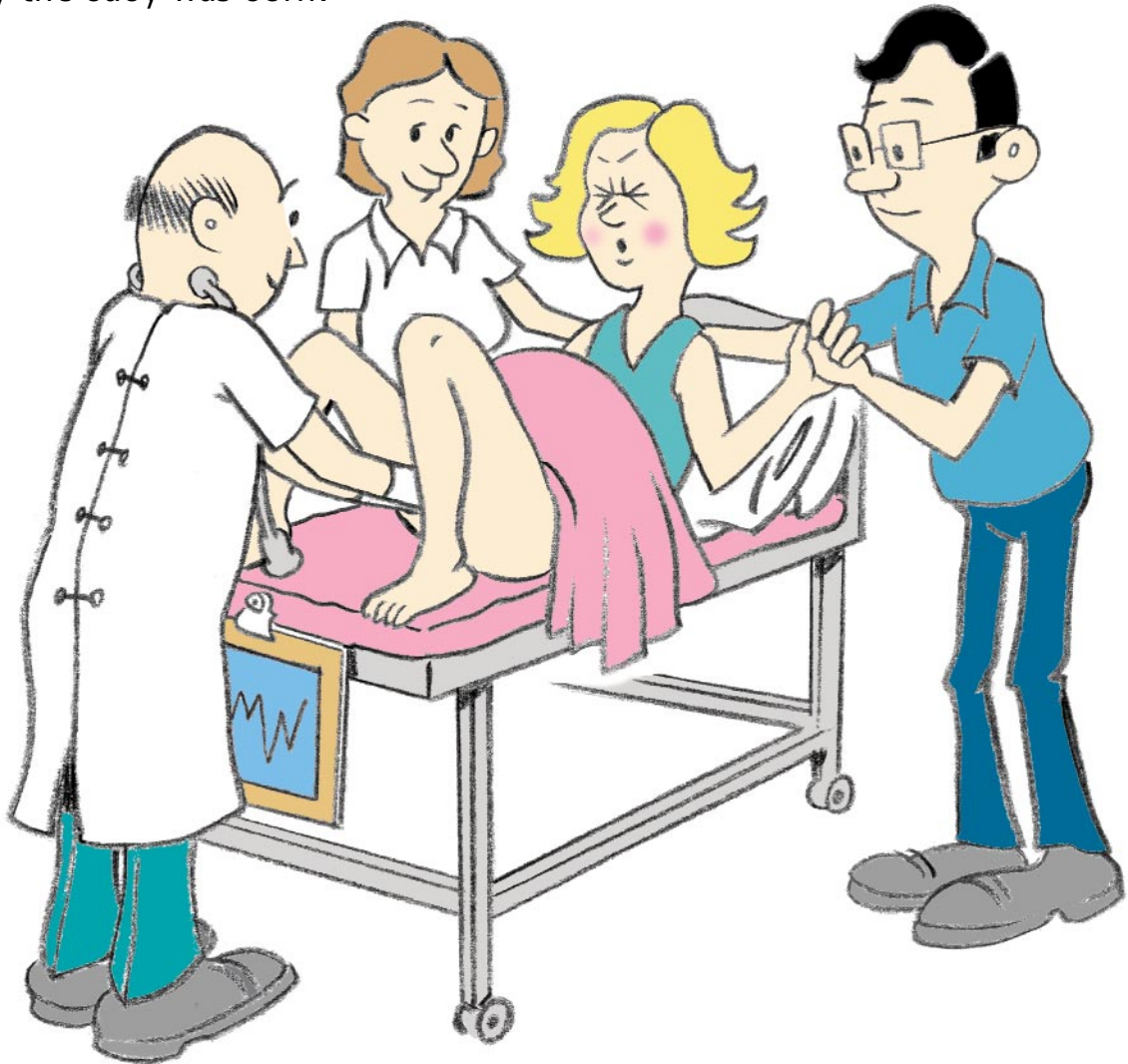
The baby inside wriggled and jiggled to show them it was there.



After a long time, when the baby was big enough, (this usually takes 9 months or about 280 sleeps!) the baby was ready to be born. The mum pushed and pushed. It was very hard work.

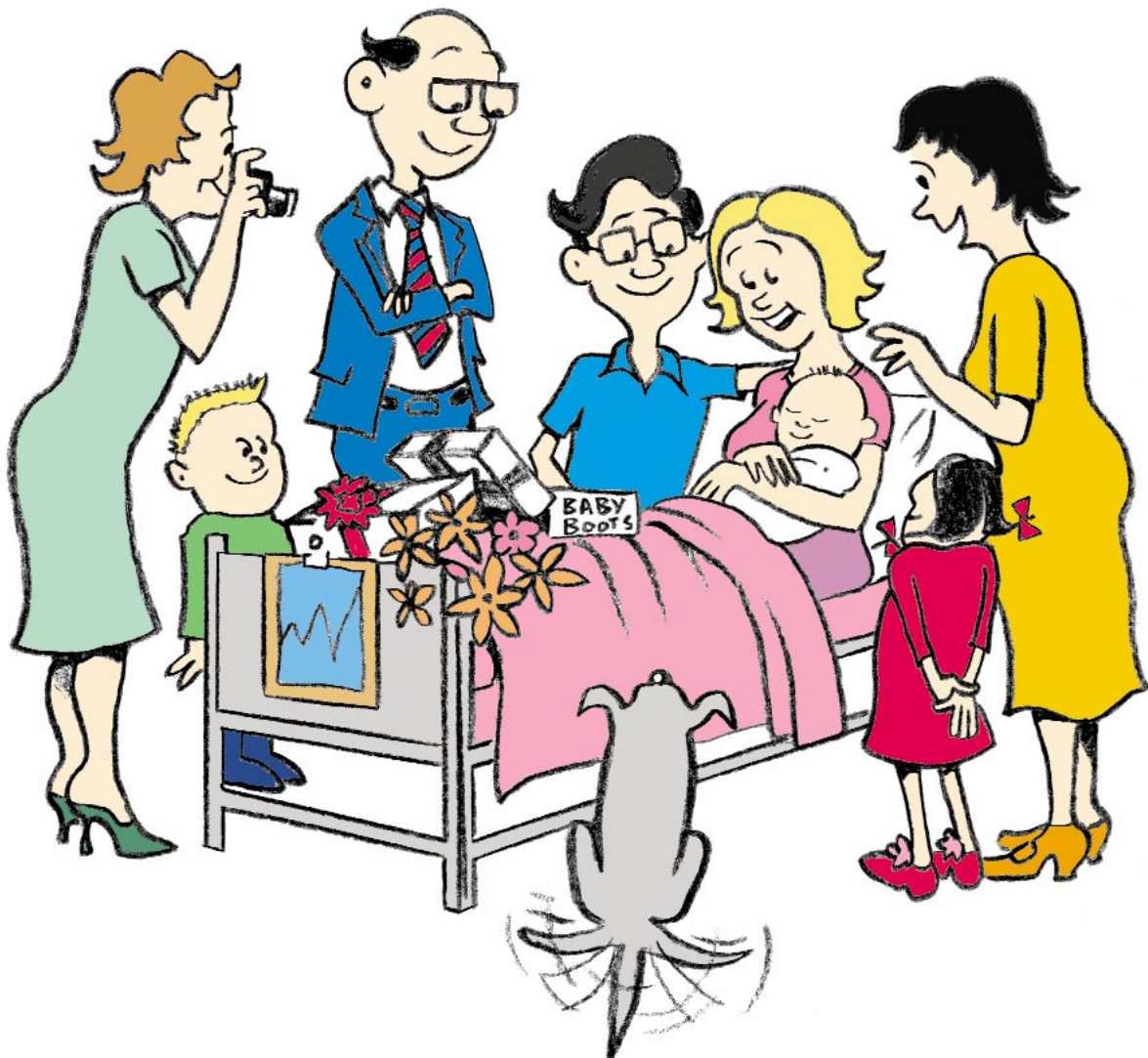
The Dad and the doctor and the nurse helped her.

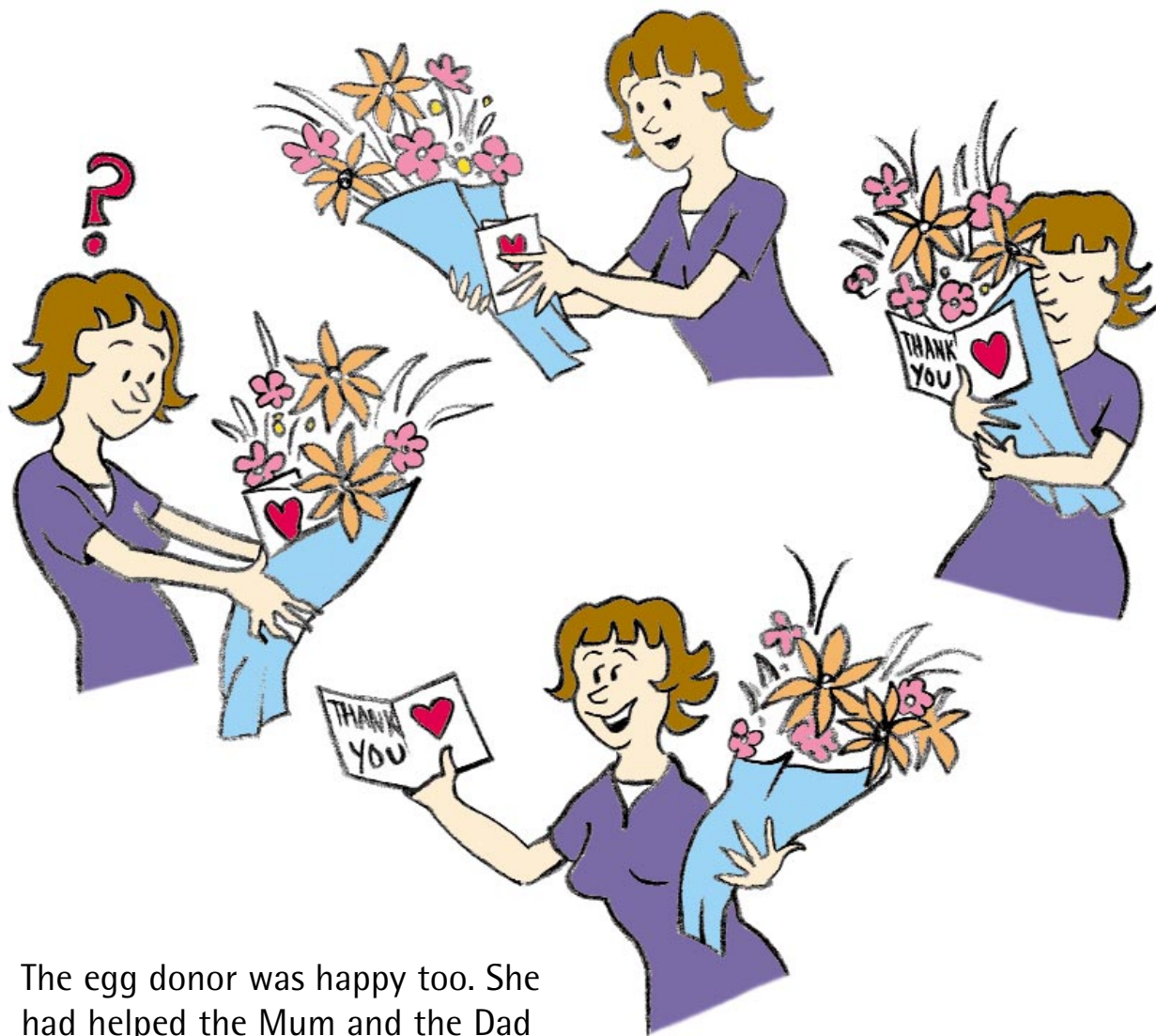
Finally the baby was born!



The Mum and the Dad were overjoyed. This was one of the happiest days of their lives. The baby they had been waiting for, for so long, was here at last!

The Mum and Dad's family and friends were very excited too! They brought lots of flowers and presents to welcome the baby into the world.





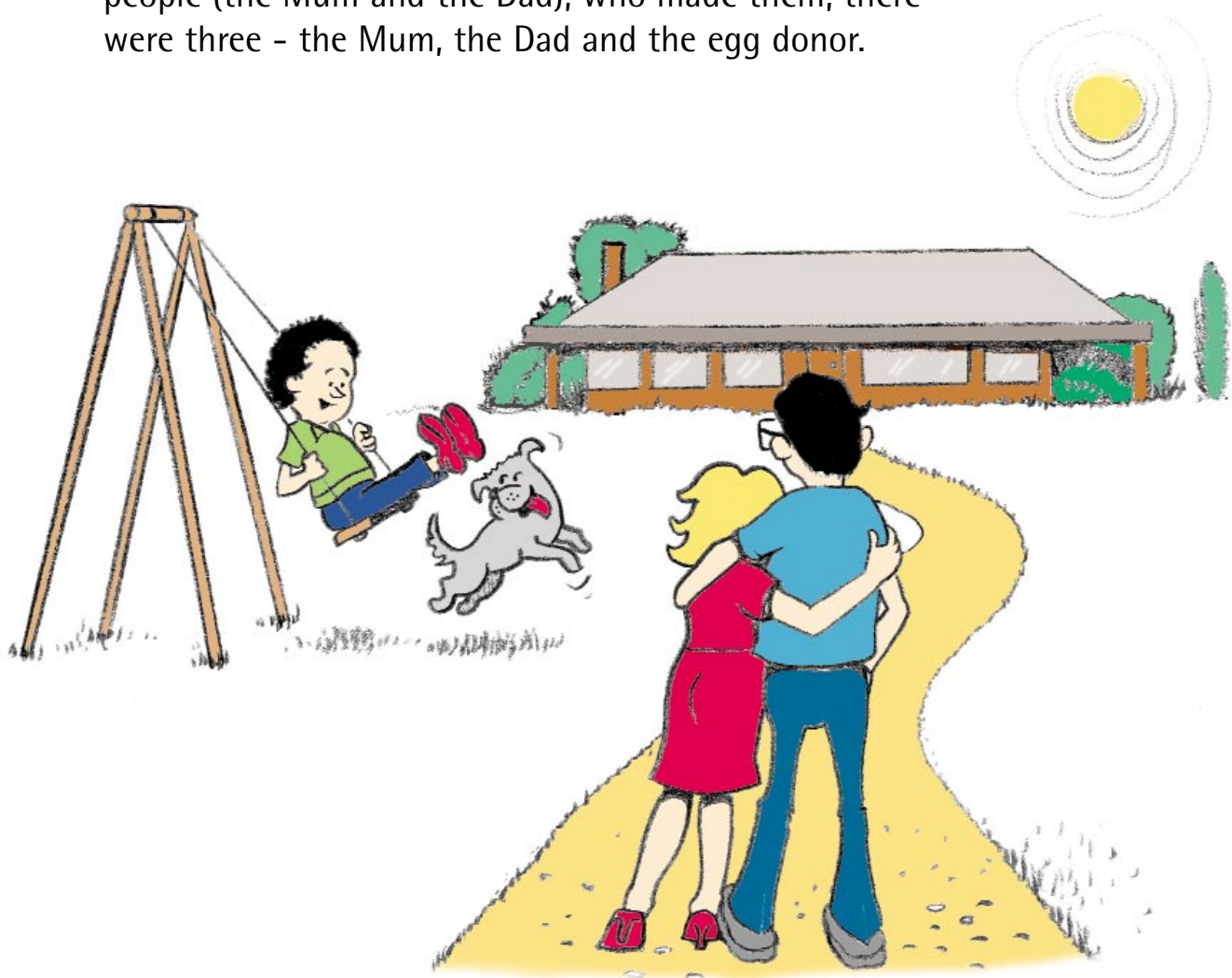
The egg donor was happy too. She had helped the Mum and the Dad start their baby, by giving them her eggs. This gave her a good feeling.

The Mum and the Dad thanked her VERY, VERY much.

The Mum and the Dad took their baby home and lived happily ever after.

.....But this is not just a fairytale!

Lots and lots of kids begin like this. Instead of just two people (the Mum and the Dad), who made them, there were three - the Mum, the Dad and the egg donor.





When three people help to make a baby, the baby will probably turn out to be a little bit like each of them. He or she might have their Mum's sense of humour, their Dad's black hair and their donor's brown eyes.

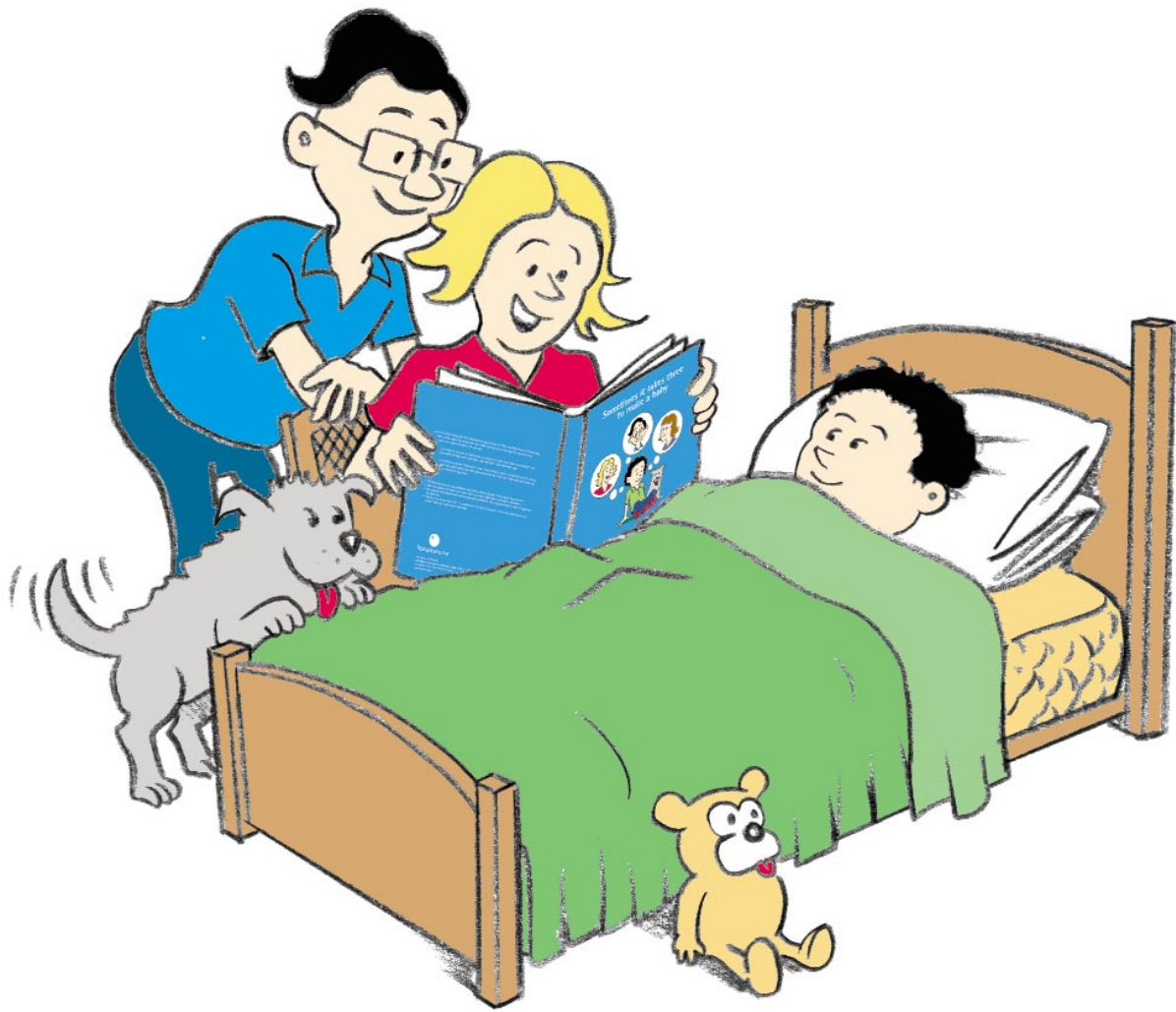
What bits did you get from each person who helped to make you?

Because these things are so complicated, you will probably never know exactly why you are like you are.....

But, then no one ever really does.....

You might even know someone who began with three people, or it might even be YOU!!!!!!





Ask your Mum and Dad to tell you how you began. It is such a special story, you will probably want to hear it over and over again just like your favourite fairytale!

The main thing to remember is that you were made with.....

SO MUCH LOVE.

My very own book about me

Please put a photo
of yourself here.

My name is:

I live with my family. Their names are:



This is the story of how we became a family.....

_____ (Mum) and _____ (Dad)
were very unhappy. They wanted to have a baby but they
couldn't. All babies grow from an egg and a sperm and
so did I. Dad had sperm to make a baby but Mum's eggs
couldn't start a baby.

Please put a photo of your Mum and Dad Here.



A generous woman agreed to share some of her eggs with Mum and Dad. They were very excited. At last they might be able to have a baby of their own.



Please draw a picture of the woman who donated her eggs to Mum and Dad.
(You can use your imagination if you haven't met her before.)
You might like to write down all that you know about your egg donor here.

The doctor put some of Dad's sperm with the donor's eggs. Some of the eggs and sperm joined together and started to grow into embryos. The doctor put the embryos inside Mum. Everyone hoped the embryos would keep on growing. One embryo did. That was ME! Mum and Dad were so happy!

Please draw a picture of you growing inside your Mum's tummy or you might like to put a photo here of your Mum and Dad while your Mum was pregnant.



When I was born, Mum and Dad were so delighted!
They loved me so very, very much. They called me:



Please put a photo of you, and your Mum and Dad just after you were born here.

A Note for Parents and Friends: How to Use this Book.

The principles of explaining known donor conception to children are very similar to how you teach any child about "natural" conception.

- Start early when children are very young with simple information. This book can be read to children as young as 3yrs – 9yrs.
- As children grow older they will need to be retold again and again. Information given and questions asked will become more complex with greater maturity.
- Encourage this discussion and questioning as much as possible e.g. T.V. shows, newspaper articles and magazines. You might consider making a scrap book or baby book with your child, all about their life and beginning. You could include photos and mementos from your treatment, photos during your pregnancy and of course baby photos. An example for your child to use is included here but you may prefer to make your own.
- The most important thing of all is not so much the words you use, but that the child senses you feel very relaxed in discussing these issues. Imagine what it is like for kids whose parents are uncomfortable talking about sex. Sex then can seem "dirty", "embarrassing" or something to be ashamed of. It is similar with this. If kids sense you feel uncomfortable talking about egg donor conception, they may feel that there is something wrong about being conceived this way. It is important that they sense your complete love and pride in them and the way they were conceived.
- It can be very useful to talk to other parents of donor conceived children and hear about their experiences. You might consider joining a support group. It can also be very beneficial for your child to meet other children conceived in a similar way. This makes their beginning seem much less "different".
- It can also be useful to talk to a counsellor. Sometimes issues tied in with your infertility that you may have thought you "solved" with your child's birth, can re-emerge later at times.

- Warning signs of this occurring may be that you are delaying telling your child, or you feel quite awkward talking about the issue. Some parents fear rejection from the child if the child is told about their donor. The opposite is generally true. Children usually suspect that there is something being kept from them and are more likely to react negatively if they feel that they have been denied the truth for many years. If children are told early it becomes "normal" for them. They love their parents irrespective of where the egg came from. They are quite clear that their mother is their mother, not the egg donor.
- Following on from this point, it is important for others to be clear about the role of the egg donor. It is very confusing for the child if anyone ever refers to the donor as "your real mother". Educate those around you so they use the correct terminology.
- Some parents fear their child will be teased by other children. If children are raised to feel proud of their origins they are generally protected from any comments made by others. Children quickly tire of teasing if it fails to have an effect. Remember that there are many, many sorts of different families these days; and a much greater level of acceptance of difference than in our generation.
- Teach your child to be confident and comfortable with this issue and anything else they may be teased about. You might practise how they might react if they were teased in order to give them some ideas about how to handle the situation e.g. to ignore the behaviour or if it continues the child could say, "Well at least I know I'm not an accident!"

I hope you enjoy this book and read it together with your child many times.

Kate Bourne

ONE COUPLE'S EXPERIENCE.

"You asked me to write something about how we've talked to our daughter about her conception.....

We didn't want our daughter to remember a time when she didn't know her origins, and we didn't want her to remember being sat down and "TOLD". We wanted her to build up this knowledge about herself in the same way she learned about other parts of her history. We wanted the story about her conception to be one of the many oral histories that she learned about her family over time; a story that developed as her ability to comprehend and her need for information changed.

We actually told her the first time, the day she came home from hospital when she was just a week old. It wasn't that she needed to know; it was that we needed to practise telling her at a time when she wouldn't pick up any awkwardness on our part. We wanted to become really confident in talking to her about her conception and we needed to find the right words to tell her. It took us quite a few goes before we felt we were doing a good job.

In her second year, we used to spend quite a bit of time looking at the photos in her album. She loved to hear about when she was born and when she was a little baby. She was building up oral histories and we felt that this was when she needed to know about the time before she was born. She was about twenty months old when we wrote her story for her and started to share it with her in book form.

Generally, we try to utilise any relevant time to talk to her about her conception and maybe draw in a bit of new information. We've had lots of new pregnancies around us lately, so there have been lots of questions and lots of opportunities for discussion.

Another time we felt we needed to tell her a little more came with the constant comments about her hair. We said that sometimes she looks a bit like Daddy because she grew from his sperm and sometimes she looks a bit like the woman who shared her eggs with us, because she came from her egg. My daughter looked as if something had just fallen into place for her! It was almost relief on her face.

We know that she is absorbing information all the time so we try to be fairly open when talking to others. We never want her to feel that this information is a shameful secret so we try to be honest. Consequently there are often discussions in her presence.

Obviously at just three, my daughter has a long way to go in understanding donor conception or its implications for her as a person but we know that she does have an understanding of conception, pregnancy and birth and that she thinks about these at some level. At nearly three years she spontaneously drew "an egg and sperm growing into a baby." A few months ago she told me, "I'm going to share my eggs you know." It took me a few minutes to realise what she meant. This comment came completely out of the blue.

Some other things we've done to help her build up understanding of her conception, have been taking her with us when we visit our IVF doctor. She knows that he is our doctor who helped her grow inside me and to be born. We also take her to the Donor Conception Support Group socials. We've actively sought out contact with other donor egg families.

My daughter hasn't actually asked us any questions about her conception so we have to make an effort to stop it fading from her memory. Her book is always in her bedside book cupboard. As time goes by, it has become easy to talk to her about her conception. Our hope is that she will always know that it's just one part of the special person she is and that she can talk to us at any time and always hear the honesty she deserves...I know there will be many challenges ahead."

Resources:

ACCESS Australia's National Infertility Network Ltd,
PO Box 959 Parramatta, NSW 2124 Australia 61 (0) 2 9670 2380

Counselling Department, Melbourne IVF, Suite 10/320 Victoria Pde,
East Melbourne, Vic 3002 Australia. Tel: 61 3 9473 4444;
www.mivf.com.au

Donor Conception Support Group PO Box 53, Georges Hall NSW 2198
Tel: 61 (0) 2 97241366; members.optushome.com.au/dcsg

Family Life Victoria Inc, 314 Camberwell Rd, Camberwell Vic 3124
Tel: 61 3 9813 2377

The very first child resulting from IVF using donated eggs was born in 1983. Since then the use of donor eggs has become a viable option for women who are unable to produce their own eggs. The egg donor may be anonymous or may be a relative or friend of the woman.

Whilst there is a wealth of resources to assist parents in telling their child about "natural conception," little information is available to help parents who have conceived their child using donor eggs.

Written by an infertility counsellor, "Sometimes It Takes Three To Make a Baby" is primarily written for young children to help them understand the way they began. It will also be of interest to their parents, friends and family and to egg donors and their children.

It includes:

- An illustrated story for young children explaining in simple language the process of egg donation.
- "My Very Own Book About Me" – a workbook for the child to complete including their own personal photos, mementos and drawings.
- Advice for parents on how to talk to young children about their special conception.
- One couple's story about how they have approached talking to their daughter about her donor origins and her reactions.



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