



VARTA

Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority



## Talking to your children about being a donor

Interview with Stewart, a sperm donor, and his  
children Olivia 15 yrs and Tom 12 yrs

....There is no "right" time (to tell) but the "right" time might be now.

Stewart:

"My advice would be to tell. Certainly it's never as bad as it seems to give this information to other members of your family. You know, I think, you couch it in as simple terms as possible, give as much information as you feel comfortable with and let them absorb it and let them if they want to come to you with anything else they will

Olivia 15 yrs:

"I didn't have a very big reaction and it doesn't affect me or my daily life. I just know about it and that's all people deserve to know and have the truth."

Tom: 12 yrs

"Well it's probably a fact about their life that they should know about.... I think they should talk to them in an easy to understand way."

**23 June 2008**

*Stewart:*

My advice would be to tell. Certainly it's never as bad as it seems to give this information to other members of your family. You know, I think, you couch it in as simple terms as possible, give as much information as you feel comfortable with and let them absorb it and let them if they want to come to you with anything else they will.

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My name's Stewart and I'm 40 years old and I donated sperm in the late 90's. From the latest information I've learned that I've had 14 children born from my sperm donations through eight different families. And I also have two children of my own - a daughter who is 15 and a son who is nearly 13.

My plan had always been to tell them. I wasn't quite sure when the right age, if there was a right age to tell them. Certainly I thought it was probably going to be easier once they had, they understood how children are conceived and tell them that there were other ways of conceiving children in this day and age. So that made it easier. They understood a lot of the basic concepts and they knew what the terms were. And they knew what things were. So their initial understanding was good.

*Olivia:*

Hi I'm Olivia and I'm 15 years old and my Dad's been a sperm donor for a while. I think I asked him about it because he got a letter about it and I asked him what it was and he explained it to me what it was about. I sort of asked him. He just said that he was a sperm donor obviously and that he had helped some families. And he explained that some families he had helped obviously. And stuff like that, not going into too much detail about it. Just the basics.

*Tom:*

My name's Tom and I'm 12 years old, turning 13 in about 14 days. Well I wasn't really shocked to find out because it doesn't really concern me. I was a little surprised that I had all these brothers and sisters.

*Stewart:*

I certainly couched it very simply to start off with. But at the time I think I used a storyline that was going on with one of the soap operas which they were both sort of watching which they both understood the basics of what was going on in the soap operas. So I used that as an example and talked to them about the fact that not everybody has children as easily as some people. And that some people need medical assistance to have children and depending on your problem there are certain ways you can have help to fall pregnant and have children. And you know I sort of introduced the idea that one of the ways if the male in the couple has problems with sperm was to use a donor. I'd been a donor and people had used my sperm to create other families.

They weren't surprised or shocked. As children often do they took it in their stride really, absorbed the information and asked a few questions then move on really. It just seemed another story from their day really, and a story that involved their father to a degree you know. My older child was more interested than my son. Whether that was because of her age at the time or because it's just part of her personality because she's a bit more inquisitive about life and about people in general, I'm not sure. But just basic questions and they absorbed the information and... It's come up occasionally in the years hence. Often when there's been something on the TV or in the newspapers they sort of brought it up. But that's about all really. It's not a topic of conversation we have on a regular basis at home, no not at all. Then again I've known people who told children from the very start about their conception and it's just been part of their story and so I would think there's no right time but the right time might be now. No time like the present probably. Yeah, but my plan had always been to tell them. Certainly as a pre-teenage and a slightly older child they

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were certainly at an adequate age.

*Olivia:*

I don't see that kids would have a problem with it. Children my age or older or younger wouldn't care. Honestly I doubt it, they'd care. I didn't have a very big reaction and it doesn't affect me or my daily life. I just know about it and that's all people deserve to know and have the truth.

Tom:

Well it's probably a fact about their life that they should know about because their parents have done this. Or one of their parents have done this and it's probably something they should know about. Because to have all these brothers and sisters would be an important part of life.

Well I think they should talk to them in an easy to understand way. So that they sort of understand what they are saying. If they don't understand what a sperm donor is they should talk about that before they bring up the main points so they understand what you're talking about.

*Stewart:*

But honestly, children are fairly resilient and they tend to take in what they need and get on with their everyday lives and I'm sure in the years ahead there'll be questions asked. And you know, they both being quite interested one day perhaps they be able to meet one of these donor-conceived children. I think they are quite interested to see if they look like them. Of if any of these children look like Dad. I think perhaps that's what interests them the most, whether they have other siblings out there that look a bit like them. Or there's a brother or sister out there... they could meet... But honestly, children are fairly resilient and they tend to take in what they need and get on with their everyday lives and I'm sure in the years ahead there'll be questions asked.

Well I told the reason why I donated. I had worked for a number of years with somebody who had struggled to have children and I 'd seen her go through various different stages trying to fall pregnant and for the first time actually known someone who was struggling with infertility. I may have known people in the past, but it wasn't something I discussed. And this was somebody I worked closely with and I certainly knew what she was going through. And it sort of made me think about other people who were trying to have children. I had no problems having two children of my own. And I sort of.... read an ad in the paper one day and made think about trying to help other people. And that's what I did. It was certainly altruistic. I was wanting to help somebody out there trying to create a family. No...no regrets at all telling them. In fact I would encourage people to tell.