

What to do with your unused embryos?

DECISION TOOL



Deciding what to do with unused embryos can be very difficult. You may not feel completely sure and comfortable about **any** of the options outlined within but writing things down can help clarify your thoughts and help you to reach the best decision for you. This tool can also be helpful as a basis for discussion with your partner or a friend. If you feel no closer to a decision after using the tool, contact your clinic counsellor – it may help to talk to a neutral third party.

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Step 1. Complete the tables – this will help you to consider:

- What are the pros and cons for each option?
If you can think of any other pros and cons please add these too.
- How important is each pro and con to you? You might like to rate each one between 0 – 5, with 0 being not important and 5 being extremely important.
- How sure do you feel about your decision?
- What are your reasons for making this decision?

1. The pros and cons of continuing to store the embryos

Personal importance (0-5)	Pros	Cons	Personal importance (0-5)
	I may want to have another child in the future.	I don't have the time/energy/resources to cope with another child.	
	I need more time to think this through.	I am putting off making a decision.	
	What if something happens to my child?	I wouldn't want to have another child even if something happened to my child.	
	My partner needs more time to think.	My partner is putting off making a decision.	
	I will use the extra time productively e.g. talk to a counsellor.	I already know my decision deep down and am putting off signing the forms.	
	Other pros	Other cons	
	Other pros	Other cons	

At this point, are you leaning towards continuing to store the embryos or not?

Please tick the box closest to your thoughts right now.

- I am leaning towards storing the embryos for longer.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning towards storing the embryos.

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2. The pros and cons of disposal of the embryos

Personal importance (0-5)	Pros	Cons	Personal importance (0-5)
	Embryos are not yet people so disposal doesn't concern me morally or spiritually.	I feel connected to my embryos so it feels like disposing of my child and sibling to my child/ren.	
	Embryos frequently don't continue to develop from such an early stage of development.	The embryos have potential and could develop and grow into a baby.	
	Disposal of the embryos is similar to having a tubal ligation or vasectomy.	I may feel guilty and responsible about embryos being disposed of and may regret this in the future.	
	I wouldn't want to have another child even if something happened to my child.	What if something happens to my child and I have already disposed of the embryos?	
	I might feel more comfortable with this option if I could take the embryos home.	It makes no difference for me whether I take the embryos home or not.	
	Other pros	Other cons	
	Other pros	Other cons	

At this point, are you leaning towards disposing of the embryos?

Please tick the box closest to your thoughts right now.

- I am leaning towards disposing the embryos.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning towards disposing of the embryos.

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3. The pros and cons of allowing the embryos to be used for research

Personal importance (0-5)	Pros	Cons	Personal importance (0-5)
	I want to help advance medical knowledge.	While I am sympathetic to advancing medical knowledge it is not my responsibility to provide my embryos.	
	I do not want to waste the embryos.	The embryos may not be used in a research study as more are given than can be used.	
	I believe stem cell research could help cure serious diseases.	It will be many years before stem cell research translates into actual health benefits for patients.	
	Research may improve IVF success rates.	While I am sympathetic, it is not my responsibility to provide my embryos.	
	I feel comfortable for embryos to be used to help research.	My moral views mean that I feel uncomfortable with embryos being used in this way.	
	I wouldn't want to have another child even if something happened to my child.	What if something happens to my child and I have already given my embryos to research?	
	This would be a positive way to complete my IVF treatment.	I may wonder what happened to my embryos and may feel guilty about this.	
	Other pros	Other cons	
	Other pros	Other cons	

At this point, are you leaning towards allowing the embryos to be used for research?

Please tick the box closest to your thoughts right now.

- I am leaning towards the embryos to be used for research.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning towards the embryos to be used for research.

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4. The pros and cons of donating the embryos to someone

Personal importance (0-5)	Pros	Cons	Personal importance (0-5)
	I want to give the embryos a chance at life.	I don't feel comfortable with the implications of doing this.	
	I would be able to accept that the child would not be mine but the recipient's child.	It feels like giving away one of my children.	
	My children would support my choice of donation and manage the implications.	The child would be a full genetic sibling to my own child/ren and this might be complicated for them.	
	I do not want to waste the embryo.	Embryos often do not continue to develop and result in the birth of a child.	
	I want to help someone else have a child.	While I feel very sorry for other people unable to have children, it is not my responsibility to help them.	
	I would feel comfortable to have contact with the recipient parents and their child in the future.	I wouldn't want to be contacted in the future by a child born as a result of the donation or the child's parents.	
	I may have needed donated embryos if I wasn't successful in my treatment.	I would not have used donated embryos had my IVF treatment failed.	
	I feel comfortable for someone else to parent a child created by my embryos.	I am not comfortable to allow someone else to parent a child created by my embryos.	
	I will feel positive knowing a child exists because of my donation.	I will worry about the child and wonder about him or her.	
	People who have children from embryo donation are motivated parents.	I am concerned about the way that the recipient parents may look after the child. They may have different values and a different parenting style.	
	Other pros	Other cons	
	Other pros	Other cons	

At this point, are you leaning towards donating your embryos to someone?

Please tick the box closest to your thoughts right now.

- I am leaning towards donating the embryos.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning towards donating the embryos.

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Step 2. Now compare how you feel about each option.

Copy your responses to this 'balance sheet' to help clarify your overall leaning towards a choice – tick the appropriate box(es).

Continue to store the embryos

- Leaning towards
- Not sure yet
- Not leaning towards

Disposal of the embryos

- Leaning towards
- Not sure yet
- Not leaning towards

Allowing the embryos to be used for research

- Leaning towards
- Not sure yet
- Not leaning towards

Donating the embryos to someone

- Leaning towards
- Not sure yet
- Not leaning towards

Step 3. Determine your decision.

Write down which option(s) you are leaning towards and discuss this with your partner if you have one.

Step 4. Plan the next steps.

If you and your partner are now confident you know what you would like to do, you will need to complete consent forms and inform the clinic. If you decide to donate your embryos you will also need to have counselling.

If you and your partner are still unsure about what to do, you may just need a little time to process the ideas presented in this tool. Return to the tool again after a while. Complete the tables again and you may find that you have more clarity and can make a decision. If you are still unsure, you may need to speak to a counsellor or doctor.

Did you find the decision tool useful?

We would like your feedback. Please complete the online survey [here](#)