

Transfeminine / Non-Binary Fertility Options

Contents

Hormones and Fertility

Banking gametes (sperm)

Banking Process

Pregnancy and Banking

Cost Considerations

Bank FAQ

Sperm Bank Locations –
Northern California

Information is provided for general education purposes and is not intended to take the place of a discussion with your physician. If you have questions about any aspect of your health, you are advised to speak with your physician.



- There are many options and ways to build family. This resource is designed to help you think through fertility preservation options and decide what is right for you.
- It may be helpful to get support from other transfeminine and non-binary individuals pursuing fertility preservation and/or pregnancy.

Hormones and Fertility

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Hormones and Hormones Blockers

Anti-Androgens (Spironolactone, Lupron, Vantas, etc.) and Estrogen

- Anti-androgens and estrogen impact the amount and quality of sperm and may result in permanent infertility.
- If you are interested in the possibility of having genetically related children in the future, it is recommended that you begin the process of sperm banking *before* beginning anti-androgens and/or estrogen.
- If you have already started anti-androgens and/or estrogen you will be advised to stop them before banking to increase the amount and quality of sperm produced.
- If it's possible for the body to produce sperm after cessation of estrogen and hormone blockers, sperm production usually returns between 4-12 months.
- If there is minimal viable sperm production after 12 months, it is not likely that sperm production will resume.
- Some people experience discomfort or dysphoria when anti-androgens or blockers are temporarily discontinued.

Blockers: Is banking an option for people who have been on hormone blockers since childhood?

- It depends. Testosterone is typically required for sperm production. If you started hormone blockers before puberty, you will need to discontinue them and experience natal puberty in order to produce sperm. This will also cause other physical changes that occur with testosterone driven puberty.
- No studies of fertility preservation through in vitro maturation (e.g., allowing sperm cells or ovaries to mature in a lab setting) have been done in prepubescent children. However, experimental work in this area is being done with cisgender (non-trans) youth who are undergoing cancer treatment

Banking Gametes (Sperm)

1 of 2

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What is sperm banking?

- Sperm banking is a process of freezing sperm and storing it for future use.

Why do people consider sperm banking?

- People choose to bank sperm for a variety of reasons. People may consider banking sperm before they start hormones or before they have gender affirming genital surgery if they pursue medical transition. Banking may help create more options for fertility in the future.

How do I know that the sperm is viable?

- A sperm bank will do a complete semen analysis before banking sperm. A semen analysis will provide information about the quantity and quality of sperm.
- Some sperm banks accept semen analysis results from outside labs, including Kaiser Permanente. If the bank you select accepts outside labs, you may consider requesting a semen analysis and STI testing from your KP Primary Care Doctor and bringing those results with you to the bank for your appointment.
- Counselors at the bank will help interpret the results of the analysis for informed decision-making about banking.

Is there a minimum quantity that makes it worthwhile to freeze sperm?

- With the advanced reproductive technologies available today, in many cases a thawed specimen with even a few motile (mobile/active) sperm can successfully initiate a pregnancy. If the specimen contains a low sperm count or sperm with limited motility there may be added costs for procedures needed to fertilize eggs.

How can I increase the sperm count?

- Sperm count can be affected by length of time without orgasm, nutrition, stress, amount of sleep, drug and alcohol use and illness.
- The most important step you can take to maximize sperm count is to abstain from ejaculating for at least 2-5 days before each storage visit. Forty-eight hours is the minimum amount of time it takes to replenish sperm. Between two to five days of refraining from ejaculating is optimal. Refraining from ejaculating for more than five days is likely to cause an accumulation of aging and dead sperm in the ejaculate.

Banking Gametes (Sperm)

2 of 2

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How many samples will I need to produce for banking?

- In general, the more samples banked, the more sperm is available for insemination attempts, which can increase the chances of conception.
- After the first sample is collected, the volume and post-thaw sperm count is determined, and at that point the sperm bank will be able to make recommendations for banking.

Can I provide samples at home?

- It depends on the bank. Some banks will accept specimens collected at home.

How does freezing affect sperm?

- Between 50% to 80% of sperm die in the freezing process. Sperm survival varies a great deal from individual to individual and from ejaculate to ejaculate. A test thaw vial containing a small amount of semen from each stored ejaculate should be performed. A week after freezing, the bank thaws this vial and takes a sperm count to determine the sperm survival rate for that ejaculate.

How long can sperm be frozen?

- Banks freeze sperm using cryopreservation which keeps sperm frozen at a much lower temperature than a home freezer. As long as freezing conditions remain at a constant, very low, temperature, sperm can survive the freezing process indefinitely. Those sperm that die do so within the first 48 hours of freezing, and the attrition rate thereafter is minimal.
- Frozen semen can be stored for as long as 50 years without additional sperm deterioration beyond that caused by the original freezing process.

I am considering gender affirming genital surgery in the future. When should I think about banking?

- Sperm banking will need to be completed in advance of any surgery that involves the removal of the testes (orchiectomy or vaginoplasty).
- Because it can take up to 12 months for sperm production to resume after discontinuing anti-androgens and/or estrogen people considering banking will need to start the process by stopping anti-androgens and/or estrogen *at least* 12-18 months before any surgery date to ensure that there is enough material for banking.

Banking Process

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The process differs slightly between cryobanks, but the basic procedure is:

- 1) Call and interview banks. Ask whether the bank accepts outside labs and sperm analysis. Obtain list of labs required.
- 2) If bank accepts KP labs, ask your KP primary care doctor to order sperm analysis and other required STI testing prior to your visit at the bank.
- 3) Set appointment with the bank to meet with a lab representative, review history and medical background, and fill out necessary paperwork. If you've completed labs bring in a copy of the lab results.
- 4) You may be given a choice of producing a specimen at home or at the lab site.
- 5) Many labs require an initial test freeze of the sperm before actually conducting the banking and they may require that you return for a second appointment.
- 6) You may choose to bank sperm from one ejaculation. In most cases, it is recommended to bank more ejaculates. On average, patients bank three, as the quality of the sperm often necessitates using more than one vial of sperm for each attempt to achieve a pregnancy. If you choose to bank more ejaculates you can do so by setting up further appointments for future collections. Ideally, you should leave a minimum of 2 days between appointments to build up the sperm count.
- 7) The sperm is frozen for as long as you choose to maintain it.
- 8) When you are ready to use the sperm you notify the bank in writing. The bank then releases the specimen. Confirm with the bank their process for releasing specimen including shipping a specimen to the physician you request. When and if you want the specimens destroyed, most facilities will do so only with notarized instructions from you.

Pregnancy and Banking

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How many attempts at egg fertilization might be needed for conception using frozen sperm?

- Achieving fertilization depends on many factors including age and health of the egg donor and the carrying partner.

What are the options for pregnancy using stored sperm?

- There are a few different mechanisms for egg fertilization. An egg and a uterus are required to complete fertilization and pregnancy.

Three common methods are:

- 1) Intracervical insemination (ICI)
- 2) Intrauterine implantation (IUI)
- 3) In vitro fertilization (IVF)

Am I guaranteed a baby from the stored semen?

- No. Conception depends on a variety of factors such as sperm survival, the sperm count of each sample, and the fertility of the person inseminating. Once thawed, frozen sperm only lives up to twenty-four hours inside the prospective carrier's body as opposed to fresh sperm, which lives for three to five days. That said, many people are able to achieve pregnancy with frozen samples.

Does insemination with thawed sperm increase the likelihood of having a child with disabilities?

- No.

Cost Considerations

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Costs and Coverage Costs and Coverage



- Health plans differ in their coverage. Please contact Kaiser Permanente Member Services at 1-800-464-4000 to discuss your coverage.
- We can help you find appropriate resources.
- Costs can vary from one bank to another. Generally, there is an initial fee for counseling, collection and testing. There are also ongoing annual fees for storage. Storage fees will be determined by the number of specimens you choose to bank and the length of time you will be banking. Most sperm banks can provide you with an up-front list of pricing.

Fertility Clinic FAQ

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Questions to ask before choosing a bank

Is the sperm bank experienced in working with transgender/Non-binary clients?

- It's important that you feel comfortable accessing care and services. You may want to ask if the bank has worked with transgender people in the past and what they have done to make their bank gender-inclusive.

Is the sperm bank accredited by the American Association of Tissue Banks (AATB)?

- Only a few [sperm banks](#) in the U.S. have voluntarily submitted to the stringent accreditation process of the American Association of Tissue Banks. While many sperm banks state that they "meet or exceed" the AATB guidelines, this does not mean that they have been through the accreditation process and undergo routine inspections. Make sure that the sperm bank you select has been accredited and inspected by the AATB.

How long has the sperm bank been in business?

- There is no substitute for experience! Be sure that the sperm bank you choose has a solid track record. Sperm banking is a specialized service. Your chances for a successful pregnancy are completely tied to the quality of the sperm and freezing technique. Experience is not an area where you should compromise.

Is the sperm bank physician owned and operated?

- Physician involvement and high ethical standards are of critical importance in the operation of a sperm bank.

Does the sperm bank employ full-time genetic counselors?

- Genetic counselors play an important role in screening donor applicants as well as assisting clients with questions regarding their donor's family medical history and following up outcome of [insemination](#) and pregnancy reports. Ask your sperm bank if they have full-time genetic counselors on staff (not just as consultants).

Can my vials be shipped directly to my doctor?

- Most sperm banks can ship to either the client home or the physician's office.

Banks – California Resources

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The Sperm Bank of California

Berkeley, CA

<http://www.thespermbankofca.org>

510-841-1858

Fertility Center of California

San Diego or Tustin, CA

<http://www.spermbankcalifornia.com/> -this website also has a “Video Library” with helpful explanations find it under the “Resources” tab

888-951-2796

(\$805 one sample, one year of storage and labs. \$270 for additional samples, \$375 per year for ongoing storage. Outside blood work and labs accepted)

California Cryobank

All Locations - <http://www.cryobank.com>

866-477-3762- private storage

866-927-9622

Los Angeles: 310-443-5244

Los Altos: 650-324-1900

Community Resources:

- Sprouts: <http://www.sproutfamily.org/>
- Our Family Coalition: <http://www.ourfamily.org/>