

Fertility Justice & You:

A Guide to Navigating Fertility Care



What is Fertility Justice?

The **Fertility Justice Movement** affirms that fertility care is your reproductive right. The movement calls for equitable access to fertility preservation, education, and family-building resources, and for dismantling the social, cultural, and financial barriers that disproportionately impact Black communities.

In response to this movement, several key initiatives have taken root:

Fertility Justice Now! launched in Georgia in 2024 to secure equitable and non-discriminatory access to fertility care for all, regardless of sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, disability, marital or relationship status, or nationality. In 2025, the campaign went national.

Black (in)Fertility Awareness Week (BIAW) began in 2023 and is held annually from July 28–August 2. BIAW is a dedicated week of events, conversations, and action honoring the experiences of Black individuals and families navigating infertility and family-building. Rooted in the reproductive justice framework and the fertility justice movement, BIAW breaks stigma and builds community.

Healthcare providers, advocates, researchers, community leaders, storytellers, and people with lived experience across the US and globally are coming together to make fertility justice a reality.

We believe you deserve the information, services, treatment, and outcomes you need to build the family you desire.

This guide is one of many resources we are creating to center the needs of Black and gender expansive individuals navigating fertility care.

This space is for you.

**Scan to
learn more!**



Using this Guide

Each section of this booklet walks you through a different stage in the fertility journey. We begin with a journey map that outlines what the process can look like from start to finish. The pages that follow are organized by stage, so you can move through it one part at a time.

Here's what you'll find on each page:

- A short explanation of what happens at this stage of the journey. This gives you a sense of what you might encounter and how to prepare.
- Open space for you to jot down notes, questions, feelings, or anything else you want to remember. This is your space to use however serves you best.
- Suggested questions for your healthcare team. These are drawn from Black individuals who have navigated fertility challenges and shared what helped them advocate for themselves. You can use them as written, adapt them, or add your own.

This guide was created to support you. At the same time, no guide can capture every experience. Fertility journeys are often complex, layered, and deeply personal. You may encounter steps, decisions, or emotions that are not reflected here. That does not make them any less real or valid. Remember: Your voice, experiences, and choices matters at every step of the way.

Glossary of Terms

Anti-Mullerian Hormone (AMH) – Protein measured in the blood that serves as a key indicator for ovarian reserve (egg quantity)

Antral Follicle Count (AFC) – Predictor of the number of mature follicles

Cryobanks – A cryobank is an all-encompassing term for a clinic that collects and stores human tissue for later use. This can include donor sperm, eggs, and embryos.

Cryopreservation – The process of freezing and storing cells, tissues, or organs at very low to preserve them for future use.

Deductible – Fixed amount to be paid by the insured individual before any insurance benefit is paid

Egg Retrieval – Minimally invasive procedure that involves collecting mature eggs from ovaries. Eggs are frozen or fertilized with sperm in a laboratory to create embryos.

Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) – Hormone measured in the blood that stimulates egg development

Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (hCG) – Hormone that supports uterine function and used to predict pregnancy

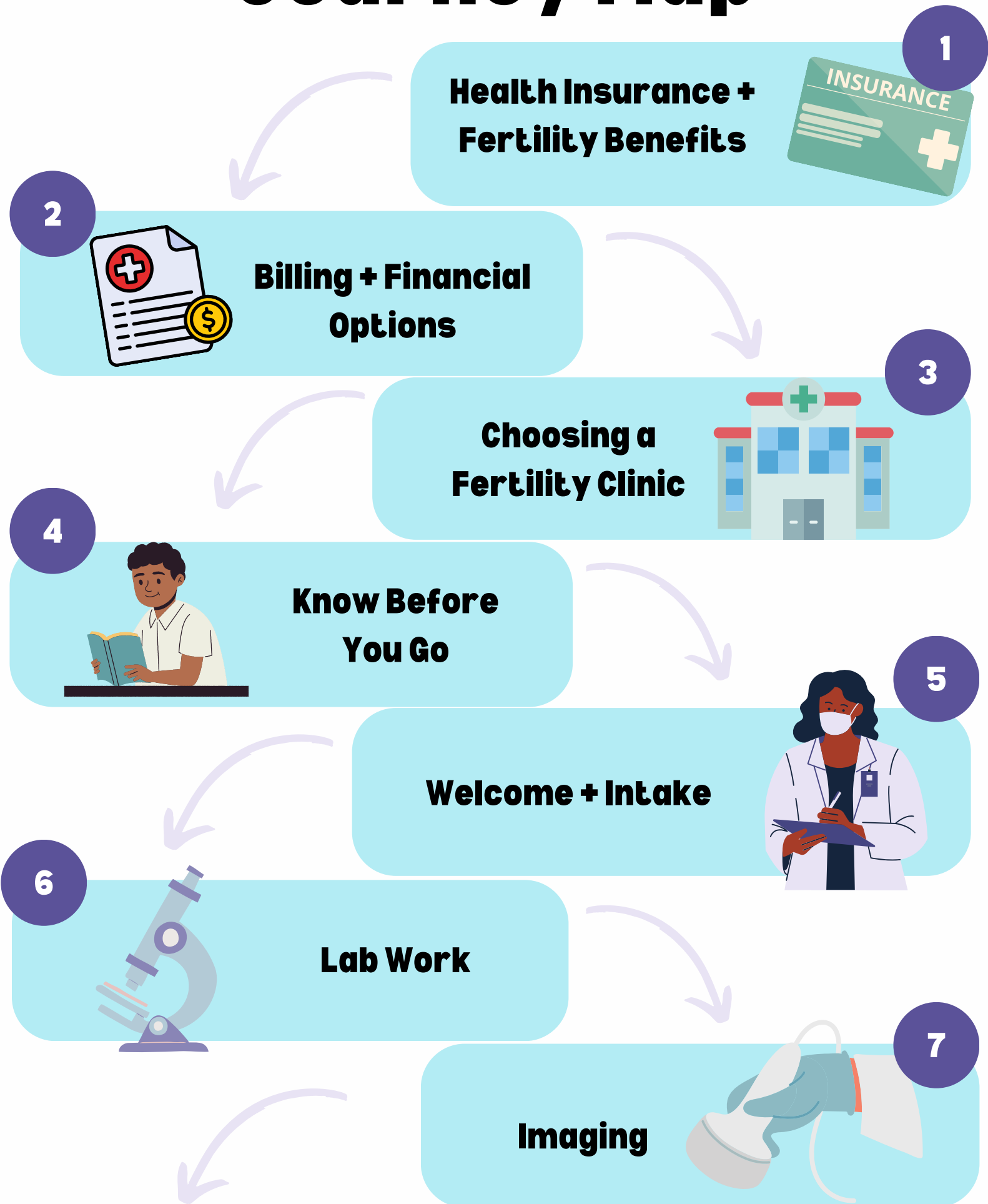
Infertility – The inability to achieve a successful pregnancy based on a patient's medical, sexual, and reproductive history, age, physical findings, diagnostic testing, or any combination of those factors. (Source: Definition of infertility: a committee opinion (2023) | American Society for Reproductive Medicine...)

Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) Physician – Doctor that specializes in high-risk pregnancies

Obstetrician/Gynecologist – Doctor that specializes in women's reproduction health

Reproductive Endocrinologist and Infertility Specialist – Doctor that specializes in issues related to infertility

Journey Map



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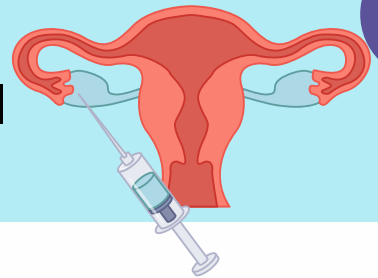
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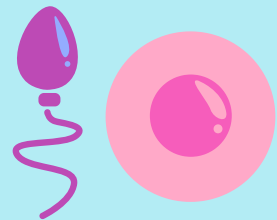
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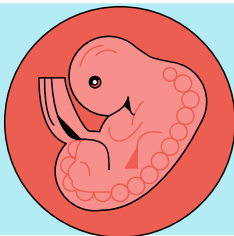
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Health Insurance + Fertility Benefits

Understanding your insurance and benefits helps you plan and navigate your fertility journey



The costs of fertility care and infertility treatment are often a significant barrier for many individuals desiring to build their families. Reviewing health insurance plans is a critical step for understanding the resources available to you as you consider your fertility treatment options. Coverage for fertility services can vary widely by health insurance plans, in part due to state mandates. Fertility benefits can cover diagnostic tests (e.g., Anti-Mullerian Hormone), fertility medications (e.g., Letrozole), and treatments and procedures (e.g., intrauterine insemination). It's important to know which plan is best for you and your family building needs.



As you explore your health insurance options, consider speaking with your human resources department about the fertility testing and treatment coverage included in your employer's plans. You can also communicate directly with a health insurance representative to determine what fertility services are covered and how the insurer defines infertility. You can request the representative to walk you through the fertility benefits. Important terms that you may encounter while reviewing health insurance plans include deductible, covered services, co-insurance, in-network, and lifetime dollar maximum.

Billing + Financial Options

Exploring billing and financial options gives you clarity and flexibility in managing your fertility care



Fertility care can come with many different costs, and it's not always clear what you'll be responsible for paying. At this stage, you'll learn how billing works at your clinic and what financial options may be available to you. This might include understanding clinic fees, payment plans, discounts, grants, or financing programs. It's a good idea to get access to your health insurance policy and to read it as thoroughly as you can on your own. Your policy may not be easy to understand, so don't hesitate to ask your insurer or clinic any questions that come to you. Having these conversations early can help you avoid surprises and make decisions that feel manageable for you and your family.



As you talk with your clinic and billing team, consider asking for a clear, written explanation of the full cost of your care and how those costs are broken down. You might want to ask which parts of your treatment are billed to insurance and which are considered out of pocket, as well as whether payment plans, discounts, or financial assistance options are available. It can also be helpful to ask who to contact if you receive a bill you don't understand, and whether there are grants, shared-risk programs, or other resources that could help make care more affordable.

Choosing a Fertility Clinic

Choosing the right fertility clinic helps you feel confident and supported throughout your journey



Fertility clinics provide individuals and families with hope and resources to achieve their family building goals. The fertility clinic will have providers to help address your questions, review your options and identify the best treatments for your circumstances. Services and protocols vary at each fertility clinic, thus it's important that you are familiar with the types of providers and services that you desire and need. For example, some fertility clinics may be staffed by mental health providers, acupuncturists, and practitioners that address pelvic floor disorders. It's important that you feel comfortable and informed about your journey.



Selecting a fertility clinic is an important step in your fertility journey. Providers may offer tours and consultations to determine if the culture of the clinic or provider are a great fit for you. As you explore clinics, consider asking clinics if they refer patients to mental health practitioners, provide fertility support groups, offer resources for LGBTQ+ families, require staff to complete anti-Black racism trainings, or how they ensure the care they provide is person-centered.

Know Before You Go

Important things to keep in mind to help you feel prepared for your fertility journey



Before starting fertility treatment, it can be helpful to pause and think about what this journey may look and feel like for you. This includes practical preparation like scheduling flexibility and time off, as well as emotional preparation for waiting, uncertainty, and unexpected outcomes. This stage is about setting expectations, identifying your support system, and giving yourself permission to take things one small step at a time. There is no single right way to move through this process. Do what feels right for you.

Embarking on a fertility journey can evoke a range of emotions from excitement and joy to fear and anxiety. It is important to have a strong support system to navigate the journey and strategies to cultivate and maintain an internal sense of peace. The fertility journey often entails a lot of waiting. As you prepare to explore and initiate fertility treatments consider journaling about how you will manage emotions related to waiting for tests results or unexpected outcomes (e.g., multiples, failed embryo implantation, pregnancy loss).

Welcome + Intake

Personalized care starts here with your history and fertility goals



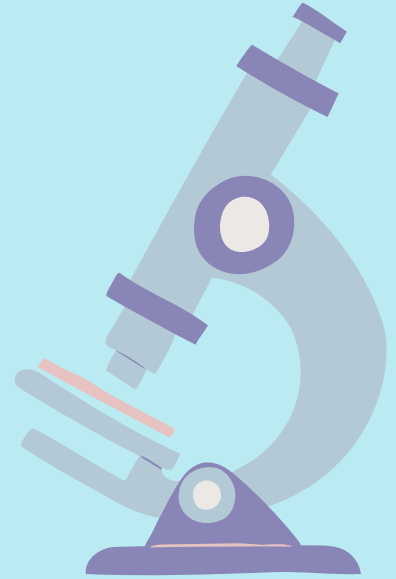
This is where your journey begins. Whether you're meeting in person or online, the initial consultation is a chance to share your story including your health history, your hopes, and what has brought you to the decision to form a family. It's a conversation where you deserve to be listened to closely and start building a plan specific to you. You might be feeling nervous, excited, or unsure, and that is completely okay. When going through the fertility process the medical team you decide to see should be there to guide you, answer your questions, and support you from the very beginning.



Before beginning infertility treatment, it's helpful to ask whether there's anything you should be doing now to prepare for the cycle, so you can start treatment feeling informed and supported. You can also ask what makes you or your family a good candidate for IVF, as well as how many patients at the clinic have gone on to have successful pregnancies or births through IVF. These questions can give you a clearer sense of what to expect and how the clinic will guide you through the process.

Lab Work

Hormone testing,
prenatal panels, semen
analysis, & STI screening



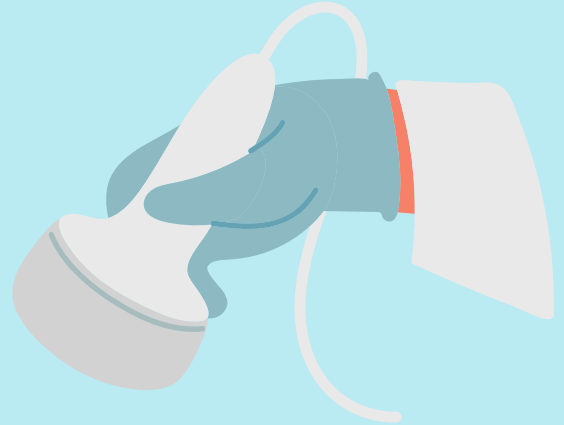
This is where the provider starts gathering some important information about your body. If you produce eggs, you will have a blood draw to check your hormone levels and overall health. If you produce sperm, you will likely do a semen analysis and STI screening. These tests help your provider understand how your body is working and what support you might need. As you move through the infertility treatment process, you might hear new terms like “FSH,” “AMH,” or “sperm motility.” Your provider should be able to answer any questions and explain everything using terminology that you understand.



Talk to your provider if you're taking any medications or supplements to learn how they may affect your lab work. If you're navigating family building with a partner, you can also ask what tests are available to check both your fertility and your partner's, so you have a clear picture of where you both stand.

Imaging

Hysterosalpingogram,
saline infusion, and antral
follicle count



This phase of the fertility journey involves imaging and ovarian assessment. These diagnostic tests help your provider take a closer look at your ovaries and check for things like follicles or cysts. The imaging also allows your provider to gather a baseline assessment of the number of eggs that you or your partner has remaining and determine if there is any scar tissue blocking the fallopian tubes. Blockages to the fallopian tubes can prevent sperm from fertilizing eggs or prevent embryos from transporting to the uterus and disrupting implantation.



Individuals with ovaries are born with all the eggs they'll ever have. Each month, the menstrual cycle releases several follicles, thus the number of eggs decreases with age. The diagnostic tests performed during the fertility evaluation phase can provide valuable information about the function of your or your partner's reproductive system. You may learn information about yourself that is difficult to process or feel reassured about your family building goals. However you feel, remember that knowledge is power. Your provider will use the results to inform your treatment protocol.

Follow-up Consultation

Reviewing your results, discussing next steps, and planning the best approach for your fertility journey



At this stage, you'll meet with your care team to review your test results and start planning the next steps. This is when you will speak with your provider about treatment options like ovulation induction (e.g., Clomid), IUI (intrauterine insemination), or IVF (in vitro fertilization). To help you understand what each procedure involves, your provider might explain the process of each procedure and review the recommended treatment plan for your circumstances. They will describe why they believe you are a great candidate for the recommended treatments, and outline the projected protocol based on your family building goals.



As your provider explains the process of each procedure, feel welcome to ask questions for additional details. It's important that you understand the process, potential risks, and projected outcomes for the recommended procedures included in your treatment plan. Many fertility clinics publish their success rates for various infertility treatments on their clinic website. You can leverage this information to ask your provider questions about the success rate for patients with similar diagnoses (e.g., fibroids) and characteristics as you (e.g., age).

Support Outside of your MD

Support includes community, emotional, and holistic resources that guide you through your fertility journey



Your fertility journey does not end or begin at the doctor's office. While you go through your fertility journey, know that there are resources you can lean on; provided by those who have been in your exact position. This includes services from doulas who will follow your fertility journey from your first visit to the birth of a child; support groups with others going through their own fertility journey and more. This can look very different based on your own needs and background. There is no one one way to seek help during your fertility journey.

This could be:

- Support care outside of clinic (e.g., at home insemination)
 - Connecting to fertility support groups
 - Referrals to mental health practitioners
- Referrals to holistic practitioners (e.g., fertility doula)
 - Spiritual support



It's helpful to ask what community organizations exist that provide care outside the clinic or doctor's office. You can also ask whether the office offers referrals to mental health practitioners experienced with fertility patients, and whether they can help connect you with holistic practitioners, such as fertility doulas.

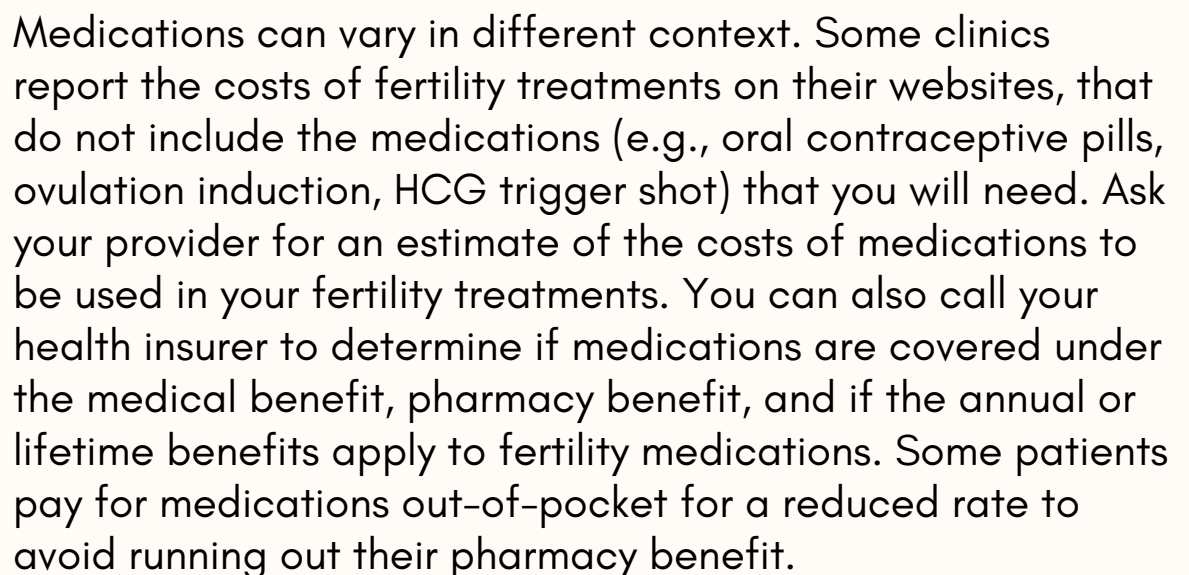
Medications

Fertility medications play a key role in preparing your body and supporting your treatment plan



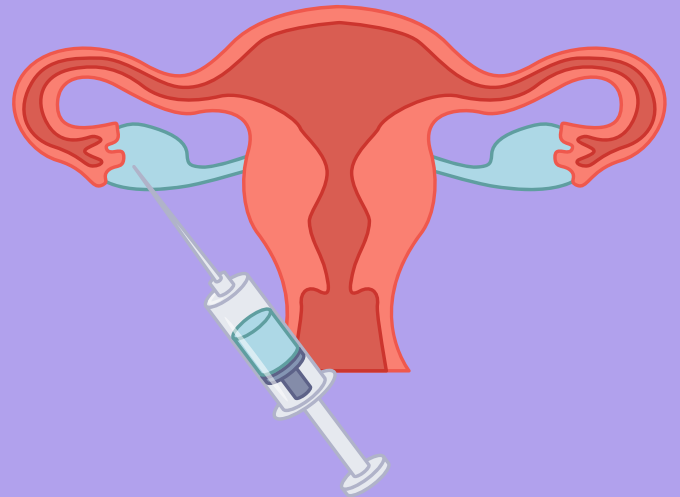
Fertility medications are often used to support ovulation, prepare your body for treatment, or help maintain a pregnancy. Depending on your care plan, medications may be taken by mouth, injected at home, or given in a clinical setting. You may receive detailed instructions about timing, dosage, and storage. It's okay if this feels overwhelming at first, that's totally normal. Your care team should explain each medication clearly and help you feel confident using them. This is also an important time to ask questions about side effects, costs, and alternatives. Remember: don't hesitate to speak up get your questions answered and your needs met.

Medications can vary in different context. Some clinics report the costs of fertility treatments on their websites, that do not include the medications (e.g., oral contraceptive pills, ovulation induction, HCG trigger shot) that you will need. Ask your provider for an estimate of the costs of medications to be used in your fertility treatments. You can also call your health insurer to determine if medications are covered under the medical benefit, pharmacy benefit, and if the annual or lifetime benefits apply to fertility medications. Some patients pay for medications out-of-pocket for a reduced rate to avoid running out their pharmacy benefit.



Egg Retrieval

Collecting mature eggs
from the ovaries



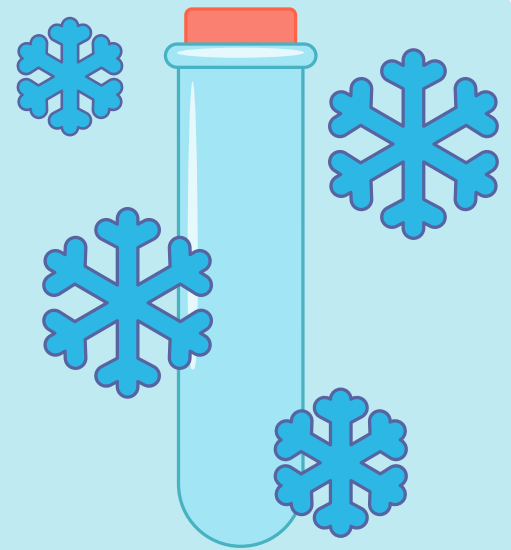
This part of your journey covers the egg retrieval procedure. During this step, mature eggs are carefully collected from your ovaries so they can be fertilized in the lab. The process is done using ultrasound guidance to ensure accuracy and is usually quick and minimally invasive. Egg retrieval is a crucial step in fertility treatment because it provides the eggs needed to move forward with fertilization and embryo development. The egg retrieval will be conducted while you are sedated; thus you (or your partner or donor) will not be able to drive yourself home after the procedure. Talk to your doctor about the potential symptoms post-retrieval, including bloating, abdominal cramping, etc.



Before moving forward with egg retrieval, consider asking your provider to walk you through what to expect before, during, and after the procedure. You may want to ask how much recovery time is typical, whether you'll need support at home, and what side effects or warning signs to watch for. It can also be helpful to ask how many eggs they are hoping to retrieve, what happens to the eggs after retrieval, and who you should contact if you have questions or concerns once you're home.

Cryopreservation

Safely freezing eggs, sperm, or embryos for use in future fertility treatments



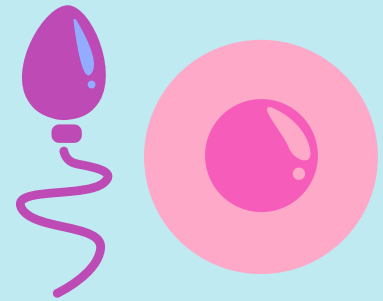
Cryopreservation is increasingly gaining traction as a suitable option to help people manage their family building goals. Eggs, sperm, and embryos can safely be cryopreserved for years. People may pursue cryopreservation techniques to focus on their career, preserve fertility in the context of iatrogenic treatments (e.g., chemotherapy), or in pursuit of a suitable partner, among many other reasons.

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Preserving your fertility is a great option to support your family building goals, including support birth spacing. Frozen genetic material typically incur a storage fee. Ask your provider about the fees associated with storing your cryopreserved materials. Sometimes the first year of storage is included in the service fee, or otherwise heavily discounted. Health insurance plans typically cover cryopreservation services for medical necessity (narrowly defined), however, few cover “elective” or “social” cryopreservation. Some clinics offer egg or embryo sharing programs, to mitigate the cost of the procedure.

Donor Selection

Choosing the right sperm, egg, or embryo donor to support your path to parenthood



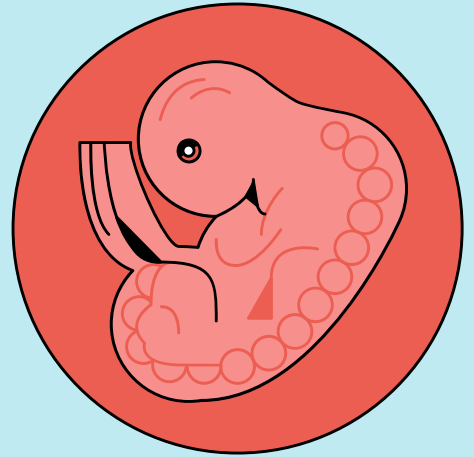
There are many reasons why an individual or couple may need to use donor gametes or donor embryos to build their family. Fertility care, including IVF, can be done using donor eggs, sperm, or embryos and doing so can be an important consideration for many fertility patients' journey. You can use a known or anonymous donor. For example, you may have interest in using the eggs, or sperm of a family member or other loved one. You may prefer to use eggs, sperm, or embryos from an unknown or anonymous donor. Your fertility clinic can help you navigate the process of identifying the donor gametes that you need for your fertility treatments.



You might want to ask your fertility clinic about their affiliations with cryobanks to access donor eggs, sperm, or embryos. You may also seek to ask them how they have supported patients who select donor gametes or navigate the process with a known donor (e.g., sister, cousin). Cryobanks undergo rigorous protocol for processing and preparing donor gametes, and provide varying levels of profiles about the donor (e.g., education, hobbies, hair color). Your provider will be able to help you consider the best donors based on your desired family building goals.

Embryo Transfer

Where the embryo is placed, completing the treatment cycle



The embryo transfer is the final step in an in-vitro fertilization cycle. This is one of the most exciting and nerve-wracking steps within the fertility treatment journey. During the embryo transfer stage, your reproductive endocrinologist will transfer the most viable embryo to your (or your partner or surrogate's) uterus using a thin catheter.

Unlike the egg retrieval process, the embryo transfer procedure does not require general anesthesia, thus you will be able to drive yourself home, if needed. Your doctor will advise you on diet and exercise considerations to support a healthy pregnancy. You will have a follow-up visit with your doctor approximately nine days post transfer to take a clinical pregnancy test.



Everything you've done up until this point has been in preparation for this culminating moment in your fertility treatment cycle. Talk to your doctor about strategies you can use to increase blood flow to your uterus to support implantation and embryo development. You might want to ask how the clinic supports patients after a failed cycle or pregnancy loss. It's also a good idea to find out if you'll continue care with them once you're pregnant and whether they coordinate with your OB-GYN or maternal-fetal medicine doctor.

Transfer to Pregnancy Care

Ensuring a smooth transition to pregnancy care with the specialists who will support you and your baby



Once pregnancy is confirmed, care typically transitions from your fertility clinic to your OBGYN or a maternal-fetal medicine (MFM) specialist, depending on your needs. This step helps ensure continuity of care as you move from fertility treatment into pregnancy care. Your fertility team should help coordinate this handoff, share relevant medical records, and guide you on when and how to establish care with your pregnancy provider. This transition can feel exciting, emotional, or bittersweet. All of those feelings are valid.



As you prepare to transition from fertility care to pregnancy care, consider asking how and when this will happen. You might want to ask whether your fertility clinic will help send records to your OB-GYN or maternal-fetal medicine provider, and if they can offer recommendations based on your medical history. It can also be helpful to ask what to expect during the transition period, who to contact with questions in the meantime, and how ongoing care will be coordinated to ensure you feel supported every step of the way.



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Center for
Maternal Health Equity



PCOS Challenge
THE NATIONAL POLYCYSTIC OVARY SYNDROME ASSOCIATION



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or visit our websites:

sparkrj.org

sistersong.net

reproductiverights.org

blackmamasmatter.org

centerformaternalhealthequity.org

pcos.org

munafertility.com