

Information for Trans and Non-binary Fertility Preservation

Sperm Freezing

Introduction

If you are considering hormone therapy or gender-related surgery, you may have concerns about how these treatments could affect your ability to have biological children. Even if parenthood is not a priority now, preserving your fertility can provide future options. This information outlines how gender-related treatments impact fertility and the available preservation methods.

Dealing with gender dysphoria can be overwhelming, and many trans and non-binary people seek to begin treatment as soon as possible. However, taking time to explore fertility preservation can help prevent potential regrets later on. If your fertility is not preserved before starting hormone treatment, having biological children later may become challenging, or even not be possible.

Speaking with a healthcare professional before starting medical or surgical transition can provide you with a clearer understanding of your fertility options. While beginning treatment quickly is important for many, considering all aspects of your future, including fertility, ensures you make an informed decision.

Understanding your choices now allows you to make decisions that align with both your gender journey and potential future family plans.

What is fertility?

Fertility is the ability to have children. This requires the production of healthy sperm in the testes and sperm freezing preserves the option to try for biological children in the future.

How does gender-related treatment affect fertility?

Hormone therapy and surgeries can impact your fertility, sometimes permanently. The extent depends on the type and duration of treatment.

- Hormone therapy (oestrogen and puberty/hormone blockers) suppresses fertility. While stopping treatment may restore fertility, this is not guaranteed.
- Surgeries such as orchidectomy (removal of testes) result in permanent infertility. If you are considering surgery, it's crucial to discuss fertility preservation options beforehand.

Because the effects of hormone treatment on fertility are often reversible, there are many cases where trans people have stopped hormone treatment and been able to conceive a child naturally.

Sperm freezing before starting hormone therapy is strongly recommended for those who may want biological children in the future. While fertility preservation may still be possible after beginning treatment, it may be necessary to stop hormone therapy for a few months, and sometimes your sperm production might not recover.

Prolonged tucking of the testes can reduce sperm count significantly by increasing testicular temperature and affecting sperm viability. If you are considering sperm storage, avoiding tucking can help maintain viable sperm production.

Planning fertility preservation before transitioning ensures you have options should you wish to try for biological children later.

What is fertility preservation?

Fertility preservation involves collecting and storing your sperm so that you have the option to try for children in the future using that sperm. Some medical treatments, including gender-related hormone therapy and surgeries, can impact fertility by reducing or preventing sperm production. Because of this, your healthcare team may suggest meeting with a specialist fertility nurse or doctor. They will explain the process, discuss your options, and answer any questions you may have.

If you decide to proceed, you will be referred to the nearest Fertility Centre closest to you, but this may not be your local hospital. Your gender service and fertility specialists will work together to coordinate your fertility preservation alongside your treatment, ensuring a well-managed and supportive process.

What is involved in freezing sperm?

Providing a sample for freezing usually involves collecting a sample through masturbation or vibratory stimulation into a sterile container. If you have any problems with this, please ask your fertility team, who may be able to discuss alternative approaches.

Once you have produced your sperm sample, the laboratory team will contact you to inform you about its quality and whether it is suitable for freezing. They may recommend providing a second sample to improve the chances of successful fertility preservation.

There is no guarantee that any given semen sample will be suitable for storage. Illness, previous treatments, or other factors can affect sperm production. If this occurs, it may not be possible to freeze the sperm successfully. The only way to confirm this is by laboratory examination of the sperm sample.

I've already started hormone therapy or puberty suppressing medication – what are my options?

If you've already started hormone therapy, including puberty blockers or hormone blockers and wish to preserve your fertility, that may still be possible, but you will be advised to have a sperm test to assess whether there are sperm present and suitable for freezing or if you need to come off the medication before sperm freezing can be offered.

I've been undergoing hormone therapy and I am about to go for genital reconstructive surgery, what are my options for preserving my fertility?

If you're undergoing genital reconstructive surgery, your only option for trying for biological children in the future is to store sperm **before** the procedure. Once surgery is completed, sperm production is no longer possible.

Who is eligible for NHS-funded sperm storage?

To qualify for NHS-funded sperm storage, it does not matter whether you are single or in a relationship, but you must meet specific criteria for fertility preservation. In Scotland, the current eligibility requirements are:

- You must be under 53 years of age.
- You must not have any biological children.
- You must not have undergone sterilisation.

Gender reassignment surgery after fertility preservation does not impact eligibility for NHS fertility treatment. However, separate criteria apply to access NHS-funded fertility treatment to use your stored sperm in the future. These criteria may change over time, and it is not possible to predict what the requirements will be in the years to come.

What will happen when I see the fertility specialist?

During your appointment, a doctor or specialist nurse will explain the available options for sperm freezing and answer any questions you may have.

If you decide to proceed, the specialist will guide you through the process, including the required paperwork (including recent travel history) and consent forms for treatment and storage. You will also undergo blood tests to check for any infections.

These steps are necessary to ensure your sperm can be safely stored, meeting regulatory requirements for potential future use.

What are the legal implications of storing sperm?

In the UK, the use and storage of sperm are regulated by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA). Under the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act (1990), you must provide written consent for the following:

- The storage of your sperm
- The duration for which your sperm can be stored
- The purposes for which your sperm can be used
- Your wishes regarding the stored sperm
- What should happen to your sperm in the event of your death or if you become unable to change or withdraw your consent (these are standard questions for all patients considering fertility preservation)

The maximum storage period for your sperm is 55 years, but consent has to be renewed every 10 years.

Once your sperm is stored, it is crucial to maintain communication with the storage centre. Notify them immediately of any changes to your contact details, such as a new address, to ensure they can stay in touch with you. If the storage centre cannot contact you they may no longer be legally permitted to store your sperm and will be required to discard the sample/s.

It is important to let the clinic know about any changes in partnership status or name changes, as new consent forms may need to be completed to continue with storage.

If you wish to allow your partner to use your sperm in the event of your death, you must complete specific consent forms with the storage centre to authorise this.

If you decide to stop storing your sperm, you will need to contact the storage centre to arrange for its disposal.

Will my gender-related treatment have to be delayed if I choose fertility preservation?

There will be a short period of delay to be seen in the fertility clinic, complete forms, and undergo blood tests. These are essential steps before sperm can be stored.

What if I don't want to proceed at this stage?

If you decide not to proceed with sperm freezing at this stage, that is completely okay. The decision is entirely yours. It's natural to feel uncertain, and taking more time to think things over is perfectly acceptable. If you're unsure, speaking with your healthcare team, fertility specialist, or a counsellor may help you better understand your options.

Opting out of sperm freezing will not affect your gender-related care, and you can explore fertility preservation or other options to build a family in the future if you change your mind.

Are there any alternatives if I cannot have fertility preservation before my treatment starts?

If you decide not to store sperm before treatment or it is not possible before starting hormone therapy or undergoing gender-related treatment, fertility options may be limited in the future. Stopping hormone treatment may allow your fertility to recover and for you to try for a natural conception, but do discuss this with your gender clinic team first. If sperm is not available for use later or if sperm freezing is not an option for you, there are still alternative ways to build a family:

- **Use of Donor Sperm:** If you are unable to produce sperm after treatment, using donor sperm for fertility treatments may be an option when you're ready to start a family.
- **Adoption:** Adoption is another way to build a family. This option can be explored at any time and may be a suitable alternative if biological conception is not possible.

It's essential to discuss these alternatives with your fertility specialist and gender care team to ensure you choose the best option based on your medical situation, treatment plan, and personal goals. Each option has different implications, and your healthcare team can provide tailored guidance.

Who can help me decide what to do?

Your doctors and nurses can provide guidance as you make this decision. Visiting the fertility centre does not mean you have to proceed with fertility preservation, but it will give you the opportunity to fully explore your options.

It's also important to lean on your usual support network, such as family, friends, or community support groups, to help you decide what's best for you. Counsellors, while not directly involved in your medical care, can offer valuable support in helping you decide whether to proceed with fertility preservation and provide additional emotional support throughout the process.

How can I access fertility counselling?

You will have the opportunity to meet with a fertility counsellor who specializes in supporting trans and non-binary individuals before proceeding with fertility preservation. All of our counsellors are members of the British Infertility Counselling Association (BICA). During your session, the counsellor will discuss your options and help you explore your thoughts and feelings about freezing your sperm. It is also a chance for you to ask any questions you may have.

Please note that counselling is not part of the assessment process and will not affect your treatment. If you would like additional support, further counselling appointments are available before, during, or after your treatment.

Can I change my mind?

Yes, you can change your mind at any time. It's normal to feel uncertain or anxious about the process, and speaking with a counsellor or fertility doctor can help you work through your feelings. However, having these discussions does not obligate you to proceed with fertility preservation.

What do I do when I wish to use the stored sperm?

You need to contact your GP to ask for a referral to your local fertility centre, preferably the one where your sperm are stored. It's also important to note that additional criteria must be met to access NHS fertility treatment using your stored sperm in the future. These criteria may change over time, and it is not possible to predict what the requirements will be in the years to come. Current criteria can be found here – [Access Criteria NHS IVF Treatment Scotland – Fertility Network](#).

Where to find support and further information?

Fertility treatment can be an emotional journey, and having the right support before, during, and after treatment is crucial. We encourage individuals to seek support from family, friends, peer networks, professional organizations, and counselling services. Below are some key resources:

- **HFEA Website: Sperm Freezing**
[Sperm freezing | HFEA](#)
- **HFEA Website: Fertility Preservation**
[Fertility preservation | HFEA](#)
- **HFEA: Information for Trans and Non-Binary People**
[Information for trans and non-binary people seeking fertility treatment | HFEA](#)
- **Gendered Intelligence**
[Gendered Intelligence](#) – Supports trans individuals, particularly young people, in navigating gender identity and related challenges.
- **British Infertility Counselling Association (BICA)**
[BICA: Professional Infertility Counselling Association in the UK](#) – Provides specialised counselling for individuals undergoing fertility treatment and preservation.
- **GIRES (Gender Identity Research & Education Society)**
[Gender Identity Research & Education Society](#) – Offers guidance and advocacy for trans and gender-diverse individuals and their families.
- **Scots Trans and Equality Network**
[Scottish Trans](#) – Works to improve gender identity and gender reassignment equality, rights and inclusion in Scotland. Scottish Trans is part of the [Equality Network](#) which works to improve LGBTQI+ equality, rights and inclusion in Scotland.
- **LGBT Health and Wellbeing**
[LGBT Health and Wellbeing](#) – Works to improve the physical, social, and mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ adults (16+) in Scotland.
- **LGBT Youth Scotland**
[LGBT Youth Scotland](#) – Scotland's national charity for LGBTQ+ young people, aged 13 to 25.

Additional information and resources

- **The Fertility Alliance**

[The Fertility Alliance](#) – A national fertility charity offering support and accurate information for anyone who wants to know more about their fertility.

- **Fertility Network UK**

[Fertility Network UK](#) – A charity providing support and information on all aspects of fertility, including preservation options.

- **NHS Fertility Services**

[Infertility | NHS inform](#) – Guidance on NHS fertility services and infertility information.

- **British Fertility Society**

[For the public » British Fertility Society](#) – Information on fertility and fertility preservation.



© Crown copyright 2026

OGL

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-80643-722-1

Published by The Scottish Government, March 2026

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1701526 (03/26)

W W W . g o v . s c o t