

CIUSSS DE L'ESTRIE - CHUS

# MAINTAINING YOUR FERTILITY

before starting  
your cancer treatments



Québec 

*Do you have cancer and want to still be able to have children after your treatment?*

# Here's what you need to know.

How does cancer treatment affect my fertility? .....	3
How can I preserve my fertility despite my treatments? .....	3
How is egg retrieval done? .....	4
Where will the eggs and embryos be stored? .....	4
What costs should I expect? .....	5
How long can eggs and embryos remain frozen? .....	6
How do you induce a pregnancy with frozen eggs or embryos? .	6
Can I try to get pregnant naturally without using my frozen eggs or embryos? .....	7
Who legally owns the frozen eggs and embryos? .....	7
Is a child born to a cancer survivor more likely to develop cancer? .....	7
How do I get an appointment with a fertility doctor? .....	8

---

## HOW DOES CANCER TREATMENT AFFECT MY FERTILITY?

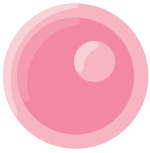
Chemotherapy, some surgeries, and radiation therapy could decrease your fertility (your ability to have a child). The impact on fertility could be temporary or permanent.

The chances of this happening depend on your type of cancer, the treatments you receive, your age, and your potential for fertility before treatment begins.

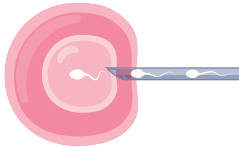
---

## HOW CAN I PRESERVE MY FERTILITY DESPITE MY TREATMENTS?

There are a number of options that could help preserve your fertility:



**Freezing eggs**



**Freezing embryos  
(fertilized eggs)**



**Another solution  
deemed appropriate  
by your doctor**

The fertility and assisted reproduction specialist will be able to explain the options in detail and guide you to the one that is best for you. The solution will depend on your age, your overall health, and the stage of your cancer.



**Egg freezing is the most commonly recommended preservation option.**

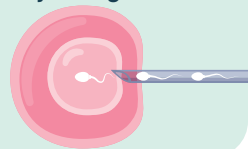
---

## HOW IS EGG RETRIEVAL DONE?

- 1** In particular, the clinic will first conduct an infectious-disease assessment (hepatitis B and C, HIV, and syphilis), which is the normal procedure. It is **free of charge**.
- 2** Hormonal stimulation treatment will then be undertaken. Hormonal stimulation consists of daily injections to stimulate the growth of follicles in the ovaries (each follicle contains one egg). You will need to come to the fertility clinic for a vaginal ultrasound and blood tests **every two to three days** for about ten days.
- 3** Lastly, you will undergo a minor surgical procedure to remove the follicles. The procedure is performed at an assisted reproduction centre in Montréal or Québec under local anaesthesia and sedation. This procedure takes about **15 minutes**. The cost is covered by the Régie d'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ); you do not have to pay for it.

Usually, an attempt is made to retrieve about 10 eggs. Your age, the type and stage of your cancer, and your baseline fertility can affect the number of mature eggs that can be retrieved.

**If the doctor has planned instead to freeze embryos, the eggs collected will be fertilized right away in a laboratory using the sperm of the person of your choice. This will create an embryo or embryos** (a baby in the very early stages of development).



---

## WHERE WILL THE EGGS AND EMBRYOS BE STORED?

Storage is usually done at the assisted reproduction centre where the retrieval takes place. Eggs and embryos can be stored for many years without affecting their quality. Moreover, you can have them transferred to another clinic if you move.

## WHAT COSTS SHOULD I EXPECT?

The cost of egg or embryo freezing for women with cancer is covered by the Régie d'assurance maladie du Québec (RAMQ) under Bill 73, *Act to Amend Various Provisions relating to Assisted Procreation*.

The cost of medications to stimulate the ovaries to produce eggs varies, however, depending on your drug plan.

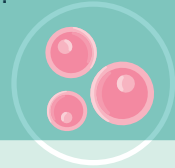
- If you have private insurance, you will have to pay the portion not covered by your insurance.
- If you are registered with the RAMQ for your medications, the costs are covered with a deductible.

**Egg or embryo storage is covered by the RAMQ for the first five years of storage or until the donor reaches age 25 (whichever is later).**

### TO ILLUSTRATE:

If the patient is 17 years old, the freezing will be covered by the RAMQ until the patient is 25 years old. If the patient is 23 years old, the freezing will be assumed until she is 28 (five years).

**Thereafter, the patient will have to pay the annual storage fee herself.**



When you decide to use your frozen eggs or embryos to achieve a pregnancy, there will likely be costs associated with the medically assisted reproduction options. You are responsible for verifying this.



## HOW LONG CAN EGGS AND EMBRYOS REMAIN FROZEN?

They will still be «good» no matter how many years they remain frozen. The length of storage has no impact on the potential or quality of the pregnancy.

Fertility guidelines and experts recommend, however, that women start their families before age 40, as the risk of complications increases after that.



## HOW DO YOU INDUCE A PREGNANCY WITH FROZEN EGGS OR EMBRYOS?

Your eggs can be fertilized **in the future** with the sperm of the person of your choice (or with the sperm of an anonymous donor) thanks to medically assisted reproduction.

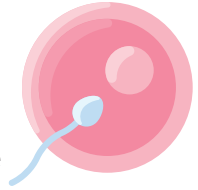
In the case of frozen embryos, medically assisted reproduction is also necessary in order to give life to a child.



---

## CAN I TRY TO GET PREGNANT NATURALLY WITHOUT USING MY FROZEN EGGS OR EMBRYOS?

If your regular menstrual cycle resumes after your treatments have ended, you can try to conceive a child naturally.



If you are still not pregnant after six months of trying, see a fertility specialist for a full assessment of your fertility potential. He or she will be able to discuss with you options to help you get pregnant. This may or may not include the use of your frozen eggs or embryos, if appropriate.

If your periods are irregular or absent after your cancer treatments, consult a fertility specialist right away.

---

## WHO LEGALLY OWNS THE FROZEN EGGS AND EMBRYOS?

Frozen eggs remain the property of the woman.

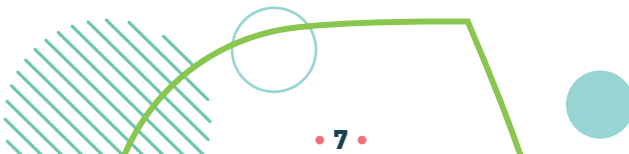
Frozen embryos are the joint property of both partners, so their use requires the consent of both individuals. If the embryos were fertilized with sperm from an anonymous donor, they belong to the woman.

---

## IS A CHILD BORN TO A CANCER SURVIVOR MORE LIKELY TO DEVELOP CANCER?

Currently, there is no scientific evidence that children born to cancer survivors are more likely to develop cancer than other children.

Children who have a parent with hereditary cancer, however, might have a higher risk of developing the same type of cancer.



## HOW DO I GET AN APPOINTMENT WITH A FERTILITY DOCTOR?

Ask your surgeon or oncologist to request a consultation with our fertility specialists. You can also call the Assisted Reproduction Centre and Fertility Clinic of the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS at **819 346-1110, ext. 14723**.

The fertility team gives priority to cancer patients.



### Author

Hélène Marceau, nurse navigator (IPO) for gynecological cancers

### Collaboration

Dr. Belina Carranza-Mamane, specialist in gynecological reproductive endocrinology and infertility, medical director of the Centre for Assisted Human Reproduction and Fertility Clinic of the CIUSSS de l'Estrie – CHUS

Dr. Marie-Hélène Pesant, specialist in endocrinology and metabolism, subspecialty in reproductive endocrinology

Isabelle V. Gagnon and Mathilde Roy-Boisclair, nurses

### Revision and Layout

Service des communications

Direction des ressources humaines, des communications et des affaires juridiques

© Centre intégré universitaire de santé et de services sociaux de l'Estrie – Centre hospitalier universitaire de Sherbrooke, 2021

[santeestrie.qc.ca](http://santeestrie.qc.ca) | January 2022 | 4-6-11156

Site Web suggéré :

[canada.ca/en/public-health/services/fertility/cancer-fertility.html](http://canada.ca/en/public-health/services/fertility/cancer-fertility.html)

Centre intégré  
universitaire de santé  
et de services sociaux  
de l'Estrie – Centre  
hospitalier universitaire  
de Sherbrooke

Québec

