The Royal Children’s Hospital Fertility Preservation Service

Having Children after Cancer

**Fertility preservation options for young men having cancer treatment**

**Why do I need to think about this now?**
Coming to terms with a diagnosis of cancer can be a very difficult and emotional time. There are lots of important things to think about before your treatment starts.

One important question is whether the cancer treatments you receive now might affect your ability to have children in the future. This is called your **fertility**.

Having children may not be something you have thought a lot about up until now. You may not feel like thinking about it now. But it is important to try and keep your options open for the future.

Before your treatment for cancer starts it is important to know two things.

1. Is it likely that your cancer treatment might affect your ability to have children in the future?
2. Is there anything medically that can be done now to help look after your ability to have children in the future?

**Who can help me decide the best thing to do at this point?**

Not all cancer treatments affect fertility. It will be different for different people. It is important to talk to your cancer doctors about how your individual cancer treatment might affect your fertility.

Doctors will draw on a range of information to work out the likelihood that the treatment you have now will affect your chances of having children in the future. The full effects can only be known for sure after treatment has been completed, possibly not for several years.

Decisions about trying to preserve fertility usually need to be made as soon as possible because cancer treatment usually needs to start quickly. This can be stressful. Where possible your parents should be involved in these discussions and help with any decisions that are made.

Your health care team can refer you to other specialist fertility doctors outside the cancer clinic so you and your parents can have more detailed conversations about this topic.

Your health care team can also offer specialist counseling to help the decision-making process.

**Good questions to ask**

*Now what: A young person’s guide to dealing with cancer* is a booklet produced by CanTeen. It suggests young people can find the following questions helpful when talking to doctors about this topic:

1. Is there a chance I will not be able to have children after this treatment?
2. Is there anything I can do to preserve my fertility?
3. How much time do I have before I start treatment?
4. Who can tell me more about my fertility options?
5. How do I know if I am fertile after treatment?

**What options might be available to me?**

A reliable option to preserve fertility is collection of sperm before treatment. This is then frozen for future use.

It might feel embarrassing to talk about this, but the most straightforward way of doing this in a private place via masturbation. Many young men have done this before they start treatment. You will be given information about how and where to get this done if it is the right option for you.

There may be reasons why this is not possible for you. If so, it may be worthwhile to talk with a male fertility specialist and explore other ways to collect sperm that might be available to you. Options may include having a procedure under anaesthetic to collect sperm directly from the testis.

Some fertility preservation options are considered standard and have already been shown to work in many people. Others are new and experimental. Whether or not they work may not be known until you are older and ready to have children. These are important things to consider during discussions and decision-making about what is the best option for you in this situation.

**What are the next steps?**

Ask your doctor to make a referral for sperm preservation and /or to discuss options with a male fertility specialist using the contacts listed on the next page. (you can be seen the same day or within 48 hours if the situation is urgent)

You (and your parents) can also find more information in these resources:

a. Male Fertility Preservation information and instructions for sperm banking (Produced by RWH Andrology, available from the health care team)

b. Maybe later baby: A guide to fertility for young people with cancer (Booklet produced by CanTeen, available from the health care team or the CanTeen website). Not all the detailed information in this booklet will apply to you. It would be good to discuss this booklet and which sections you should read with a cancer doctor or a fertility preservation doctor.

c. Can I Still Have Children? Information for men having chemotherapy and radiotherapy (Booklet produced by Reproductive Services Unit, The Women’s/Melbourne IVF. Available from your health care team or by contacting Reproductive Services Unit RWH)
Fertility preservation Audit and Registry

The Royal Children’s Hospital is conducting an audit on fertility preservation measures being undertaken so that we can obtain more information about the long term outcome of these procedures and the experiences that young people and families have during and after these discussions. Your doctor will discuss this further and provide you with an information sheet. It is hoped that this will help health staff guide these discussions in a better way and help families in the future.

Contacts for referrals for a Fertility Preservation Consultation:

Oncofertility Coordinator
email: fertility@rch.org.au
Pager: 7047
Tel: (03) 9345 5896

Sperm Storage
Andrology Unit
321 Cardigan Street
Carlton, Victoria 3053
Tel: (03) 8345 3992

Male Fertility Preservation Consultation:
Prof. Margaret Zacharin
Paediatric Endocrinology
Royal Children’s Hospital
50 Flemington Rd
Parkville, Vic 3053
Tel: (03) 93455951

Reproductive Services Unit
The Royal Women’s Hospital,
2nd floor, cnr Grattan St & Flemington Rd
Parkville, Victoria 3052
Tel: (03) 8345 3200
Fax: (03) 8345 3260

Melbourne IVF
www.mivf.com.au
East Melbourne (03) 9473 4444
Box Hill (03) 9006 5500
Mt Waverley (03) 8805 7888

Monash IVF
www.monashivf.edu.au
Clayton (03) 9543 2833
Hawthorn (03) 9429 9188

For a full list of all fertility clinics www.varta.org.au