



Reciprocal IVF

Reception: +353 1 556 7900

Reciprocal IVF

What is Reciprocal IVF?

Reciprocal IVF goes by many titles, shared motherhood, co maternity, ROPA (Reception of Oocytes from a Partner) to name a few. Essentially it is when embryos are created from the eggs of one partner using donor sperm, and the second partner carries the pregnancy. It allows both partners to contribute physically to the creation of their family, one as the genetic parent, the other, as the birth mother.

How does it work?

The process begins with the selection of a sperm donor. Merrion Fertility Clinic imports sperm from Cryos International and European Sperm Bank. You can find more information about this step on the [Donor Services](#) page on our website. Once you have chosen your donor and the sperm is safely in storage at Merrion Fertility Clinic, ovarian stimulation can begin. This is where the partner using their eggs takes medication to stimulate their ovaries to mature a number of eggs. These eggs are then collected and fertilised in the lab using the selected sperm donor. The fertilised eggs will be grown for 5 to 6 days, at which point good quality embryos can be frozen. Once this step is complete, attention can move to the partner who plans to carry the pregnancy. Their uterus will be prepared to receive the embryo, which will be thawed and transferred when it is optimal to do so. Any additional embryos can remain in storage for future use by either partner, subject to some legal and medical issues.

Is it for us?

If reciprocal IVF is something you have been considering you may have an idea of who would like to take each role on your journey. This is a very personal decision for you as a couple. Medical factors may influence your choice, and possibly your chance of success, such as your individual health, ovarian reserve and uterine factors. Generally, these can be assessed by blood tests and an ultrasound scan.

It is important to note that there is a small increased risk of pregnancy complications including high blood pressure, diabetes and clotting disorders when carrying a pregnancy where the egg is not your own genetic egg.

In some cases, one of you may have frozen eggs in storage or have previously created embryos with donor sperm. Please be mindful that there may be legal or medical issues to be considered in these circumstances before you can move forward with reciprocal IVF. Your doctor can talk to you if this is your situation.

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Legal Parenthood

The legal basis for parenthood in reciprocal IVF is established by the Children and Family Relationship Act 2015. Before you can use donor sperm in Ireland you must sign the specified consent to say you agree to be the legal parent of any child born as a result of treatment. Each parent must sign their own consent, making them joint legal parents, and their names will both be recorded on the child's birth certificate. This also means that any additional embryos in storage belong to both of you equally. You must both consent before each embryo transfer or the transfer cannot happen.

A word on language

We understand that you are creating a family together and will both be parents to your children. To comply with legal requirements, we must clearly identify where the eggs come from and who will carry the pregnancy. This means we need to define your role in treatment in ways that may not reflect your real lives. We are sorry for any upset this may cause. We will use the following terms for each role in reciprocal IVF throughout of documentation

- The partner who uses their eggs will be the intending second parent (egg provider)
- The partner who carries the pregnancy will be the intending mother (embryo recipient)

If you require further information and would like to speak to a member of our team, please contact the clinic via the Patient Portal or by phoning 01-556-7900.

Clinic hours are 08.00 to 16.00 Monday to Friday, 9.00 to 12.00 Weekends & Public Holidays. During these hours, if you are directed to our voicemail, please leave a message indicating your query and your name and telephone number. We will get back to you if required that day.

Outside of Clinic Hours: for routine non-urgent matters please leave a message on our voicemail.

In an Emergency: contact the National Maternity Hospital on 01 6373100.

Indicate you are a patient of Merrion Fertility Clinic and the doctor on call will speak with you.

