



# Fertility Preservation

at Northwestern Medicine  
Fertility and Reproductive Medicine



# Fertility preservation

## Safeguarding your prospect of a family

Fertility preservation via egg and/or embryo freezing offers an opportunity for women or couples to preserve the possibility of having a biological family in the future. The need for this can arise because patients are undergoing a medical treatment that has the risk of causing infertility (e.g., chemotherapy) or because they are getting older and are not yet ready to become parents. Northwestern Medicine Fertility and Reproductive Medicine is a leader in helping women and couples retain their ability to have biological children at a later time.

Some of the most exciting medical developments of the past decade have been in technologies to help women preserve their fertility.

The advancements in the ability to freeze and thaw eggs have been particularly revolutionary in that we now have the ability to provide real hope for a reproductive future for women who have their eggs frozen.

Women are born with all the eggs they'll ever have and those eggs are vulnerable. As women age, both the quantity and quality of their eggs declines. Certain treatments like chemotherapy and radiation therapy can damage a woman's ovarian reserve, the amount of eggs she has in her ovaries. The depletion of a woman's ovarian reserve either as a result of normal aging or treatments like chemotherapy can reduce a woman's chances of

having a biological child. It is important that women have the opportunity to discuss the impact of any proposed medical treatment or advancing age on their fertility and learn about options available to them for fertility preservation. It is also important for transgender men who plan to begin taking hormones or undergo surgery to remove their ovaries to also have the opportunity to discuss fertility preservation prior to treatment.

Northwestern Medicine has been on the leading edge of the effort to give all young people, including young people with cancer, a chance to build families in the future. In fact, the term "oncofertility," refers to the campaign to expand the reproductive options of patients with cancer, was coined in 2006 by Teresa Woodruff, PhD.

Our team of board-certified reproductive endocrinology and infertility specialists and our caring staff will explain the procedures, order evaluation tests and answer all your questions. Our clinic meets or exceeds the highest professional standards in the field as set by The American Society for Reproductive Medicine (ASRM).

Our fertility preservation services can be completed safely and in a short period of time which allows patients to move forward with cancer or other needed treatments.



We offer the following fertility preservation services:

**Embryo freezing:** Medications are used for approximately two weeks to stimulate the ovaries so that they grow multiple eggs. During a quick outpatient procedure, a physician retrieves those eggs and they are then fertilized and frozen in the laboratory. These embryos are stored for future use in a long term storage facility.

**Egg (oocyte) freezing:** Medications are used for approximately two weeks to stimulate the ovaries so that they grow multiple eggs. During a quick outpatient procedure, a physician retrieves those eggs and they are frozen immediately. These eggs are stored for future use in a long term storage facility.

**Ovarian tissue cryopreservation:** This is an experimental option where a portion or an entire ovary is surgically removed and frozen for future use. There are two ways a patient may be able to use this tissue in the future. This animation helps describe the process: [myoncofertility.org/animations/ovarian-tissue-cryopreservation-basics/](https://myoncofertility.org/animations/ovarian-tissue-cryopreservation-basics/)

**Hormonal therapy:** There are some medications that may help protect the follicles (that house eggs) in a woman's ovary while she is undergoing chemotherapy. Some studies have shown a modest

benefit from such treatment; other studies have shown no benefit at all. These medications are typically monthly injections administered by a healthcare team.

**Sperm banking:** For men and transgender women, the most effective method of preserving fertility is banking sperm before receiving chemotherapy, radiation, hormonal, or surgical treatment. After an appointment with a reproductive urologist and a semen collection, if sperm are present, they are frozen for future use. To use this sample in the future, patients will work with a reproductive endocrinologist and utilize assisted reproductive technology (ART).

**Testicular Sperm Extraction (TESE):** For patients who are unable to provide a semen sample through masturbation, sometimes sperm can be directly removed from the testicle in an outpatient surgical procedure. A reproductive urologist performs this type of procedure.

**Testicular tissue cryopreservation:** In this experimental option, a portion of the testicle is removed and frozen for potential use in the future. Research is ongoing for how best to use this tissue but this option provides a fertility preservation opportunity for young boys who have not gone through puberty.

If you will be undergoing cancer treatment, Northwestern Medicine employs a full-time Patient Navigator to help discuss your fertility preservation options with you, your family and your oncology treatment team. The Patient Navigator can also help expedite appointments in the Reproductive Endocrinology office and serves as a resource as you begin to learn about your treatment plan and how it may impact your future fertility.

More information about strategies for fertility preservation in patients with cancer and stories from other patients can be found at [fertilitypreservation.northwestern.edu](https://fertilitypreservation.northwestern.edu) or call our Patient Navigator for Fertility Preservation at 312.503.3378.

If you are the parent or guardian of a child or teen with a condition or upcoming treatment that threatens his/her fertility, be sure to ask about the proposed treatment plan and its long term impact on fertility. There are many resources available online and the hotline listed above is available at no charge to learn more about fertility options and where to go for help.



# About Northwestern Medicine Fertility and Reproductive Medicine

Northwestern Medicine Fertility and Reproductive Medicine is widely regarded as one of the best infertility units in the country.

Our eight board-certified physicians have over 10 decades of experience and have helped thousands of individuals and couples become parents.

Our faculty also includes two PhD clinical psychologists that can help navigate the emotional experience of the treatment.

Jared C. Robins, MD, division chief and the team at Northwestern Medicine Fertility and Reproductive Medicine are committed to meeting the needs of women and men affected by infertility-related conditions through multidisciplinary approach. We understand the stress caused by difficulties with fertility and reproductive medicine and will, through our personalized care, guide you through your treatment with compassion and understanding.

The internationally acclaimed clinician researchers at Northwestern Medicine Fertility and Reproductive Medicine are striving to develop and improve reproductive technologies. Therefore, you can be assured that, as a patient you will be treated with the most modern and cutting-edge technologies. We also participate in many clinical trials that help us learn more about infertility and how to best treat them.

If you come to Northwestern Medicine to be treated for fertility-related conditions, we will work with you to find a treatment plan that works for you.

**Please call 312.694.6041 or visit [fertility.nm.org](https://www.fertility.nm.org) to talk to us about your fertility preservation needs.**



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[nm.org](http://nm.org)