Information for the storage of gametes and embryos

The statutory storage period for gametes and embryos is 55 years but renewal of consent must occur every 10 years. This will mean the centre will be required to contact you every 10 years to follow the renewal process. However, if embryos are created with donated gametes please be aware that the storage cannot exceed the period to which the donor provider consented to. The centre will provide you with the storage period that the donor has consented to if different to 55 years.

You may wish to consent to storage of your gametes or embryos for a shorter period than 10 years, in this case we will be required to contact you again at the end of this storage period to see if you wish to consent for additional storage up to the 10 year block.

Withdrawing your consent

At any time you may withdraw your consent to the storage of your gametes and embryos by contacting the centre and we will issue the appropriate consent form to allow you to do this. If consent is withdrawn for gametes these will be removed from storage after the consent is received by the centre. For embryos, both gamete providers must complete the appropriate HFEA consent form to withdraw consent, once both the consent forms are received by the centre the embryos will be removed from storage. If only one gamete provider withdraws consent for removing embryos from storage it is a legal requirement that we keep these embryos in storage for 12 months from the date the HFEA withdrawal consent form is signed.

Updating the centre

If there are any changes in your circumstances or you have changed addresses please ensure that you keep in contact with us to ensure we have your latest contact details. This will ensure we can contact you regarding renewing your consent to storage. If we cannot contact you to renew your consent then in law this is considered as a withdrawal of consent to storage. In this case the centre will be required to remove the gametes or embryos from storage.

Use of gametes or embryos posthumously

As part of the process for giving consent to storage of your gametes and embryos you will be asked to consider what your wishes would be if you died or became mentally incapacitated. You may consent to the use and storage of your gametes and embryos for a period up to 10 years which will be 10 years from the date you die or become mentally incapacitated. However, please be aware that the maximum storage period for the gametes and embryos cannot exceed the maximum period of 55 years. If you decide to consent to a shorter period this will be the total time the gametes or embryos can remain in storage. Please remember in order for your partner to use your gametes they must be named on the HFEA consent form. Therefore please get in touch with your centre if your circumstances have changed since you consented to storage as you will be required to update your consent form to allow this to happen.

Process to extend storage consent.

You will be contacted by the laboratory team 12-14 months prior to the storage expiry date of your gametes or embryos to obtain your consent for a further storage period, they will provide you with further information and paperwork to complete which will include the appropriate HFEA consent form. This will also detail the options available to you if you do not wish to keep your gametes or embryos in storage.

Storage consent is usually renewed in 10 year blocks, however you can consent to a shorter period. If you are at a 10 year consent period this is called the renewal period. The renewal period is calculated from 12 months prior to your storage expiry and until 6 months after the consent expiry. During this period you can renew your consent to storage of your gametes and embryos if your storage expiry is after the 1st July 2024. If you do not renew consent during this period then it will be deemed that the consent is withdrawn and your gametes will be removed from storage just after this date. For embryos this can be up to a further six months after the end of the renewal period. By law, the laboratory team will be required to contact you at different time points if you do not reply with the final contact for gametes being at the end of the consent period (storage expiry) and for embryos at the end of the renewal period (consent expiry plus 6 months). There are other options available to you if you do not wish to keep your gametes or embryos in storage for your own treatment which are discussed below.

In the case of embryos please remember that in order for the centre to continue to store your embryos, both gamete providers must renew consent to storage in order for the embryos to continue to remain in storage. If only one gamete provider renews consent then the embryos will be removed from storage six months after the end of the renewal period. If it is the same situation but it is not within the renewal period as the storage consent was for a shorter period than 10 years then the embryos will be removed six months after the storage consent expiry. If a gamete provider withdraws consent within the renewal period then the embryos will be required to be removed from storage six months after the end of the renewal consent period.

Introduction of Storage Fees in NHS Scotland on 1st Sept 2023​

On the 1st September 2023, the way Scottish NHS fertility centres manage the storage of gametes and embryos changed. These changes have been agreed nationally for NHS fertility centres and mean that some patients will have to pay a storage fee to store their embryos or gametes. This will not impact any patients who are self-funding/funded IVF treatment and are paying storage fees already for any gametes or embryos in storage.

The change will affect all new and current patients who are eligible for NHS funded gamete and embryo storage, but not those freezing gametes or embryos for Fertility Preservation treatment.

On the 1st September 2023, all patients undergoing the 1st, 2nd or 3rd egg collection for IVF treatment, and who are NHS funded, will be required to sign a nationally agreed patient contract and financial declaration. NHS funded patients storing sperm after this date will also be required to sign this patient contract. The patient contract will be issued to you on the Fertility Consent platform along with your other consents.

For any NHS funded patients who already have material in storage on the 1st September 2023, you maybe required to pay a fee if you no longer fulfil the NHS criteria when your current storage period expires if you wish to extend your storage period.

HFEA consents will also be required to do this, and you will be asked to sign the patient contract at the same time. Please note the NHS patient contract and financial declaration is separate to HFEA consent form. The patient contract and financial declaration will state the Centres responsibilities as well as your own. The contract will also allow you to specify how you would like pay for your storage, up to the HFEA expiry date.

Please read the following information sheet to see if the change applies to any material you may have in storage at Aberdeen Fertility Centre. Further details can be found [here](https://www.aberdeenfertility.org.uk/application/files/5616/9227/5514/NSD611-002.18_Fertility_-_Storage_Fee_Patient_Information.pdf).

Storage fees and options for Self-funded patients

All patients that have gametes/embryos in storage will have completed an appropriate HFEA consent form prior to storing any gametes or starting treatment. This HFEA consent form gives Aberdeen Fertility Centre permission to store your gametes/embryos for the duration of time that you have specified.

To help spread the cost for storage, Self-funded patients can pay their storage fee in one, two or five year instalments up until they have reached their 10 year HFEA expiry date.

Self-funded patients that have gametes/embryos in storage must pay for storage from the freeze date. You should expect to receive a storage invoice 2-3 weeks after your procedure.

When gametes/embryos are initially frozen, a freezing charge is also applied.

1 year storage - £275

2 years storage - £525

5 years storage - £1275

All charges can be found on our [costed treatment plan.](https://www.nhsgrampian.org/service-hub/aberdeen-fertility-centre/funding-your-treatment/self-funded/)

When the duration period you have paid for is coming to an end, a renewal invoice will automatically be sent to you 1-2 months prior to the end date. Note that storage charges will be honoured with every renewal.

Options available to you if you no longer wish to keep your gametes/embryos in storage for your own use.

If you no longer wish to store your gametes/embryos and would prefer not to allow them to perish there are various options available to you.

For gametes you can choose to donate to training which will help trainee embryologists develop the basic embryological skills required e.g sperm cryopreservation.

For embryos the options available are:

* Donate your embryos to another couple if you were between 18-35 years when the embryos were created and your partner was between 18-45 years old. You have at least 2 embryos available.
* Donate your embryos for training. The embryos will be used to develop new protocols for embryological techniques and to help trainee’s develop the skills required for embryo handling.
* Donate to research to be used in projects to help develop our understanding in embryo development with the aim to improve fertility treatments.

This link provides detailed information on the options available to yourselves for any embryos that you no longer require for your own treatment. - [Donating your embryos | HFEA](https://www.hfea.gov.uk/donation/donors/donating-your-embryos/)

If you are considering removing your gametes/embryo’s from storage, donating for training purposes or donating your embryos to another couple or for research, please contact our lab team at gram.labsfert@nhs.scot. Please note that HFEA consent forms will need to be completed if you decide on any of the options above. Further information can be found on the HFEA website [www.hfea.gov.uk](http://www.hfea.gov.uk).

You can consent to the storage of your gametes for use in training or research for upto 55 years and this consent does not need to be renewed periodically. For embryos this can be upto a period of 10 years from the date you give consent. Please be aware you can withdraw your consent if you change your mind up until the gametes or embryos are used in training or research

Counselling

The Centre provides counselling service for all patients that have had treatment in our department. If you find it difficult to come to a decision and think you may benefit from a counselling session, please contact gram.aberdeenfertility@nhs.scot to make an appointment.