



Position Statement - Storage and Disposal of Gametes (Sperm and Eggs)

INTRODUCTION

This position statement has been developed to reflect the guidelines as set out by the *National Health and Medical Research Council, Ethical Guidelines on the use of assisted reproductive technology in clinical practice and research (2007)* ("NHMRC Ethical Guidelines").

Fertility Solutions **provides gamete storage for 10 years with the option to renew consent for a further 5 years equating to a maximum of 15 years storage.**

ETHICAL ISSUES OF GAMETE STORAGE AND DISPOSAL

There are many complex ethical, religious and emotive issues associated with gamete storage, gamete donation and allowing gametes to succumb. The existence of diverse views on when life begins and the experience and outcomes of an individual/couples fertility treatment will impact on how participants approach end of storage decision-making.¹

COMPLIANCE WITH NHMRC ETHICAL GUIDELINES

Separate to the ethical issues expressed above, bodies offering assisted reproductive procedures in Australia must be accredited by the Fertility Society of Australia, which requires compliance with the *National Health and Medical Research Council, Ethical Guidelines on the use of assisted reproductive technology in clinical practice and research (2007)* ("NHMRC Ethical Guidelines") as part of their accreditation process. Fertility Solutions complies with the NHMRC Ethical Guidelines.

The NHMRC Ethical Guidelines deal with the issue of gamete storage and disposal.

NHMRC ETHICAL GUIDELINES

Paragraph 8.3 of the NHMRC Ethical Guidelines states:

8.3 *Limit Storage*

It is not desirable to leave gametes in storage indefinitely. Clinics must have clear policies that limit the duration of storage of gametes.

8.3.1 *Gametes should be kept in safe storage for a maximum time specified in the consent (see paragraph 8.8), after which, if the gamete provider has not consented to further storage arrangements, clinics may dispose of the gametes.*

8.3.2 *In accepting gametes (including gonadal tissue) for storage, clinicians should*

clearly outline to each gamete provider his or her responsibilities and any circumstances under which the clinic may dispose of the gametes before the end of the consent period.

REASONS FOR 10+5 STORAGE

There are a number of reasons why Fertility Solutions only store gametes for a maximum of 15 years. They are:

1. To prevent the endless, expensive storage of abandoned gametes.²
2. To prevent gametes from being held in storage after contact is lost with the patient.³
The view is that it is exceedingly difficult to locate most of the individuals concerned and obtain up to date instructions about what to do with their gametes.
3. To avoid the creation of a growing bank of frozen gametes.⁴
4. To avoid the possibility of "gamete banking" which may occur, where gametes remain in storage for extended periods of time and ultimately are not required for use in treatment.

OPTIONS FOR WHEN THE LIMIT FOR STORAGE IS NEAR

1. In the case of the initial 10 year period, you can request a further 5 years of storage.
2. You can use the gametes for your own treatment.
3. You may consent to have the gametes removed from storage and disposed.
4. You may consent for them to be donated for the use of infertility treatment of others.

Indefinite storage is not an option

OUR PROCEDURES

If you still have unused gametes in storage 9 years after they were stored we will write to you and remind you that you still have gametes in storage, advise you of your options and ask you to take action in accordance with the option chosen by you.

If we do not receive a written response from you within 6 months we will send a reminder letter.

If you have not advised us in writing of your choice on or before the 10th anniversary of the storage of your gametes, we will comply with paragraph 8.3.1 of the NHMRC Ethical Guidelines and arrange for the disposal of your gametes without any further notice to you.

If you have requested a further 5 year period of storage to the maximum period of 15 years we will apply the above procedure adjusted to take into account the additional period of storage.

It is important that you keep Fertility Solutions updated with any changes to your contact details and it is important that you respond promptly to the clinic notification in the event that you wish to use or donate any stored gametes.

¹ Reproductive Technology Council of Western Australia, Policy on Embryos Storage and Applications to Extend Storage Beyond Ten Years, Reproductive Technology Council, February 2010, 3.

² Notebookfalk of the Streets, London: Embryo Ethics, TIME INT'L, August 5, 1996, at 6.

³ The storage of human embryos, Karin J Dawson, IVF Unit, Institute of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Royal, Postgraduate Medical School, Hammersmith Hospital, Du Cane Road, London W12 ONN, UK, Human Reproduction vol 12 no.1 pp.3-11, 1997

⁴ Saunders DM, Bowman MC, Greierson A, Garner F. Frozen embryos: too cold to touch? The dilemma ten years on. Hum Reprod 1995, 10:3081-3085