

# Donor Insemination



**Southern Ontario  
Fertility Technologies**

## Introduction

Having a baby through donor insemination usually does not involve complex medical technology but does require you to make some very important decisions that aren't involved in many of the other technologies except for our donor egg program. The important decisions you make about this technology will affect not only you, but also generations to come. Using donor insemination creates a unique set of social circumstances which not only can affect the inseminated woman, the couple, the relatives and friends and the unborn child.

**Intrauterine insemination (IUI)** is the deposition of sperm into the cavity of the uterus using a fine plastic catheter. With donor insemination, the semen used has been obtained from a donor. Donor sperm can be obtained from a known donor or from an anonymous donor. Anonymous donor sperm is purchased from a commercial sperm bank, shipped to S.O.F.T., and then available when insemination is required. It is one of the most commonly used reproductive technologies but receives very little publicity.

## Who Can Benefit From Donor Insemination (DI)

Most commonly DI is used for severe male-factor infertility. Although there are other infertility treatments such as in vitro fertilization (IVF) or intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) for severe male-factor infertility, donor insemination is often used because it is more affordable. It is also used for females without a male partner and for some genetic diseases.

As long as one fallopian tube is open, and eggs are being produced and released, DI can be used. A test of tubal function (either a hysterosalpingograms or laparoscopy) is always done before beginning DI. Day 3 blood testing is also usually suggested to make sure an adequate ovarian reserve remains (still eggs left).

## Choosing Your Donor

**Known donor insemination** refers to a situation where the donor is a friend or relative. The advantage of known donor is, in the case of donor being a relative, inclusion of close genetic material in the new baby. However, use of a known donor introduces a new set of social complications. When the child is born, the donor relative or friend will be aware the baby is genetically linked to them. The social circumstances which will develop once the baby is born should be thought through carefully. Sometimes people using this circumstance are more comfortable consulting a lawyer specialized in family law and considering a contract prior to starting. This is not required but should be considered prior to starting.

If you choose a known donor the semen must still conform to all the guidelines put forth by Health Canada for Donor Sperm. The potential donor will be required to attend a clinic appointment at which a medical history and appropriate directed physical examination is done. They will be required also to produce a semen sample and have blood work. Extra testing is required for genetic and infectious disease risk. For genetic reasons, the potential donor cannot be related to the woman who will receive the inseminations.

**Anonymous donor semen** is purchased from a commercial sperm bank. At S.O.F.T. we encourage you to use one of two banks, which we find, have excellent samples and customer service.

### **#1) Xytex Corporation**

Heather Brooks is the Canadian Services Coordinator and can be reached at (905) 478-1546. She will answer questions and discuss issues with you. Orders can be placed directly through their toll-free number at 1 800 277 3210. A good place to start is their web page at [www.xytex.com](http://www.xytex.com) and check under their Canadian compliant section.

### **#2) Can-Am Cryo Services Corporation**

The contact number is 905-524-3342 or toll free at 888-245-3471. They are located at 1057 Main Street West, Suite 102, Hamilton, Ontario, L8S 1B7. Their Fax number is 905-524-3936 and the E-mail is [info@canamcryo.com](mailto:info@canamcryo.com) and their web site is at [www.canamcryo.com](http://www.canamcryo.com) and contains the **most recent donor list**.

### **#3) ReproMed**

The contact number is 416-233-8111 or toll free at 1-877-249-4282. They are located at 56 Aberfoyle Crescent, Suite 300, Toronto, Ontario, M8X2W4. The e-mail address is [info@repromed.ca](mailto:info@repromed.ca) and their web site is [www.repromed.ca](http://www.repromed.ca).

The selection of a donor is the most important decision you will make. The donor list presents the basic information on the available donors such as race and ethnic origin, hair colour, eye colour, skin tone, blood type, height, occupation, interests, and religion.

The basic information is usually sufficient to narrow the choice down to a few candidates. Once your choice is narrowed down there are other avenues available for you to receive more information.

The **“basic profile”** includes the information found on the donor list as well as a brief medical history on the donor’s family.

**“Supplemental profiles”** provide social information on the donor and their family. These include very detailed information such as how many people in the donor’s family have blue eyes, whether the donor is artistic or whether he has dimples. Supplemental profiles are \$15.00. Photos are included in this fee if requested and available.

**Essays**, written by the donors, can be as short as a paragraph or as long as 5 pages. They include very personal information about the donor and often a personal message to you or your future children. Each donor is a unique and special person. They come from a variety of backgrounds and have different interests and talents. Some of these attributes are determined by their genes and are important for you to evaluate.

Most current donors have a **personality assessment** performed. This is derived from their responses to the California Psychological Inventory (CPI). The CPI takes about 2 hours to complete and provides a good portrait of each donor’s personality.

Other options are available for many donors include:

- 1) **Audiofiles**, taped interviews with the donors answering 15 probing questions
- 2) **Photofiles**, photo folios including a 4” X 6” photograph
- 3) **Babyfiles**, include an 8” X 10” reproduction of a childhood photograph

- 4) **Videofiles**, most comprehensive donor information packages available
- 5) **Photomatching**, allows the sperm bank to find a donor who resembles your spouse

## **Donor Evaluation**

All donors must go through a rigorous qualification procedure. This includes a thorough initial evaluation with updates. Initial evaluation includes a detailed health, social and family history. This provides information on personality as well as susceptibility to genetic diseases. A comprehensive physical examination and laboratory testing is also done.

**Medical, genetic and sperm quality issues screen out about 90% of potential donors.**

Donors are re-evaluated with a medical history update and laboratory screening twice per year and a physical examination annually. They are retired at age 40 or when they reach twenty reported family units.

## **Genetic Screening**

There are only a few hundred genetic tests for more than 5,000 known genetic diseases. It would be impossible to screen each donor for these. However each donor undergoes a detailed family history to uncover any indication of inherited diseases. In addition, each donor undergoes a chromosome analysis and screening for Tay-Sachs, Thalassemia and Sickle Cell Trait if indicated by ethnic background. Although this screening cannot eliminate the chance of an

inherited disease, it is generally believed that because of this screening the chance of an inherited disease in a donor child is actually less than in a spontaneous pregnancy.

If you have specific genetic concerns, you can request additional testing of a donor (available for a fee) to add to your safety.

**No amount of screening can eliminate the chance of having a baby with a congenital defect. However, it is generally accepted that the baseline risk of a defect of about 3% is lowered to 2% by the selection processed and screening used for anonymous donors.**

## **Infectious Disease Screening**

One of the objectives of the extensive and repeated evaluation of donors is to reduce the possibility of transmitting infectious diseases. Each sample collected is “quarantined” for a minimum of 180 days before it can be used. Infectious testing is performed at the time of the original testing and again before it is used.

History and physical examination is important in screening for infectious diseases. High-risk behaviors such as use of non-therapeutic drugs, sex with multiple partners, a male or someone with HIV or hepatitis disqualifies a potential donor. Physical examination is done to find any evidence of

sexually transmitted diseases. Initial lab screening includes testing for cytomegalovirus antibody, HTLV-I/II antibody, hepatitis B surface antigen, hepatitis B core antibody, hepatitis

**Since the institution of the current guidelines for infectious disease screening and quarantining of anonymous donor samples, there has not been a documented transmission of an infectious disease.**

C antibody, HIV 1 and 2 antibodies, syphilis serology, gonorrhea culture, and a urine test for Chlamydia antigen and Trichomonas, Mycoplasma and Ureaplasma.

Both the commercial sperm banks we encourage you to use at S.O.F.T. follow voluntary guidelines set by the American Society of Reproductive Medicine, the Canadian Fertility and Andrology Society as well as the mandatory regulations of Health Canada and the states of Georgia, Maryland and New York.

## **Costs**

The costs for both known donor and anonymous donor from the S.O.F.T. clinic are only washing or thawing the specimen to prepare it **for intrauterine insemination (\$200.00)**. It is possible to purchase washed specimens from the commercial labs. These are available for physicians' offices which do not have a fully equipped lab. We would prefer that you purchase unwashed specimens so that our lab can wash it for you – it is our clinical impression that the sperm recovery is higher. Other costs are covered by OHIP.

Purchase of donor semen and other services are arranged between the commercial sperm banks and yourself. Exact pricing for these things are available from the sperm banks but in general **samples cost about \$450.00 - \$500.00**. Additional costs can include shipping and additional donor information.

## **How Many Samples To Purchase?**

How many samples to buy is a difficult question. With the average pregnancy rate per cycle being about 15%, it is likely to take more than one try to become pregnant. However, each sample is very expensive and once it is shipped to S.O.F.T., it cannot be returned for a refund.

The whole issue is compounded if you would like more than one child. Usually you will want the same donor for all your children. Donors are retired once they reach a certain number of pregnancies in total or a certain number in any given geographical area.

These issues can be discussed with the managers of the sperm banks. They can usually tell you how close a donor is to “retirement”. Different arrangements can be made such as purchasing samples but not having them shipped to S.O.F.T. until needed or reserving samples.

The two sperm banks are located in Toronto and Hamilton. Samples are shipped to S.O.F.T. in a small liquid nitrogen tank by courier. The transport fees can be made less per sample by shipping more than one sample at a time.

## **Telling Your Child**

One of the most difficult questions to resolve is whether to tell your child about his/her method of conception. Most authorities in the field do feel that the child should know this information. This is not such a difficult decision for single women or lesbian couples. However, it becomes more difficult for heterosexual couples. The fear that this will diminish the adoptive father's importance to the child has seldom been realized. **However, the decision to reveal or not to reveal this information should remain with the parents.** If secrecy is chosen this should be absolute as accidental disclosure of this information to the

child later in their life can be very harmful. If disclosure of this information is chosen, most authorities feel that this is best done gradually beginning even before the child can fully grasp the concepts. For instance, a five year old can be told that they had a very special way of being born. More information can be added as the child becomes more able to understand it.

### **Contacting Anonymous Donors**

If the offspring of a donor contacts Xytex after turning 18 years of age, and inquires about the identity of his or her biological father, an attempt will be made to contact the donor and determine his interest in arranging a meeting. However, information, which would enable contact with the donor, cannot be released.

The medical information on the donor, which comes with the samples, should be retained in case any questions should arise in the future about the child's family history or genetic susceptibilities.

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**Check out our web page at [www.soft-infertility.com](http://www.soft-infertility.com)**