



Home insemination using donor sperm

If you are thinking about using donor sperm at home, there is a lot to consider. Whilst it may be quicker and easier to find a semen donor online, this choice carries significant medical and legal risks. Having donor treatment at an IVF clinic may feel like a more complicated and longer process, but all clinics follow strict guidelines to protect you from these risks.

Here are some key issues to consider when going down the pathway of home insemination, and how to protect you and your family from potential complications or harm:

1) Health risks: The quality and safety of sperm

It is important to be aware that a sample provided by an on-line, or known donor is a *semen sample* not a *sperm sample*, and therefore it is impossible to know if you are receiving the necessary healthy sperm to create a pregnancy. Old or outdated laboratory results provided by online donors may not apply to current semen samples. For this reason, it's critical to only use sperm that has been tested at the time of insemination to ensure that it is of high quality and free of disease. Clinics in Australia are required by law to carry out rigorous health testing of sperm donors and the samples they produce. This protects everyone involved from possible infections such as herpes, hepatitis and HIV. It also minimises the risk of transmitting genetic diseases.

2) Legal Risks: Legal rights and responsibilities of the donor

If you organise a sperm donation by private agreement, and not through a clinic, your donor may be legally recognised as the father of your child. This may include rights to parenting access, as well as the responsibility for financial child support. These legal dangers are *avoided* if you organise the donation through a fertility clinic: clinics require all parties involved to sign documents ensuring that the donor has no legal parenting status of a donor – i.e. without the parenting rights and responsibilities of a legal father. Legal precedence has shown that this protection cannot be guaranteed when the donation takes place outside of the setting of a licenced fertility provider.

See Masson vs Parsons 2019 (<http://eresources.hcourt.gov.au/showCase/2019/HCA/21>).



Benefits of using a licenced clinic include:

- Clinic documentation that will ensure that the donor is not a legal parent to your child. If you have a partner s/he will also be legally recognised on the birth certificate as the second parent.
- Counselling will be provided for those involved in the donation agreement. Your sperm donor (and their partner, if applicable), you and your partner (if applicable), will be guided through the short and long-term implications of donor conception, and the legal issues for you and your family.
- Clinic and Government records will be kept and maintained to ensure identifying information on all parties to a donor conception birth are retained. This ensures that accurate information is available for your child(ren) regarding their genetic and birth heritage;
- Limiting the number of families created from one donor. Using a licenced clinic will ensure strict limits are enforced on the number of families created using the same donor. This minimises the risk of consanguinity (having a relationship with someone you are genetically related to) and the potential psychological distress for your child(ren) later discovering they have large numbers of donor siblings.

Where can I get support?

Working with a qualified counsellor who is experienced and trained in the field of fertility and donor conception, can ensure you are properly supported and guided through the short-term and long-term implications for you and your potential family **before** you undertake any process.

If you are thinking of trying to conceive using home insemination and the use of donor semen obtained outside of a clinic, here is a list of qualified ANZICA (Australian and New Zealand Infertility Counsellors Association) counsellors who work in private practice and can provide non-judgemental advice and support:



https://www.fertilitysociety.com.au/wp-content/uploads/ANZICA-PRIVATE-PRACTICE-LIST_FINAL.pdf

Below is a list of additional resources that might also help you in your decision-making:

VARTA: www.varta.org.au

Donor Conception Network: www.dcnetwork.org

Access Australia: www.access.org.au

If you find a semen donor online, consider having your treatment through a licenced clinic. This will protect your health, safety, and legal rights, and provide thorough consideration of the needs of everyone involved. Importantly this includes the long-term outcomes for children born through donation.