

# Don't Let Cancer Steal Your Dream

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As cancer treatments are increasingly more successful, having the life you dreamed of after cancer treatment may be linked to the decisions you make before you start.

If having a biological child of your own someday is important to you, it is essential that you have an honest conversation with your oncologist about your desire to have a child and how the cancer treatment might affect your ability to do so. When dealing with the overwhelming uncertainty and anxiety of a cancer diagnosis, some patients and their loved ones may not realize that certain cancer treatments (including chemotherapy and radiation), while effective in treating many cancers, may result in permanent sterility.

Not to mention, when a woman receives a cancer diagnosis, she may not yet have even begun to think about having a family. But suddenly she must decide if she wants to attempt to preserve the option to have a biological child later in life. And of course, time is of the essence, as her oncologist may recommend starting treatment right away.

Thankfully, we live in an age where there are options, hope and great successes. Here's what you need to know about preserving female fertility before cancer treatment so you can protect the possibility of a family post cancer treatment.

Women are born with all the eggs they will ever have. However, eggs must go through a maturation process prior to fertilization. In a normal menstrual cycle, the ovaries mature and ovulate, or release one egg that can be fertilized by sperm. Once fertilized, an embryo forms and travels

through the fallopian tube into the uterus, where it may implant and develop into a pregnancy. Of course, a wide variety of factors may impact the process of fertilization and implantation and as such, a pregnancy is not a guarantee. The same is true when fertilization happens via in vitro

fertilization (IVF). Every egg may not be capable of producing a pregnancy. As a result, egg freezing entails preserving a sufficient number of eggs to best maximize a woman's chance of reaching her reproductive goals.

Once you have made the decision to freeze your eggs, the process can typically be completed in less than a month.

Your fertility specialist will meet with you to discuss your goals, perform diagnostic testing and formulate treatment recommendations. Some patients choose to freeze unfertilized eggs, others have them fertilized with their spouse, partner or donor sperm prior to freezing. Your fertility specialist will help you determine the treatment plan that best suits your needs.

The first step in the egg freezing process is to stimulate your body into maturing as many eggs as possible. This is done through a series of simple injections that your doctor will show you how to do at home. Over the course of two weeks, while you do the injections, you'll also visit your doctor's office for intermittent ultrasounds and blood tests to monitor the growth of the eggs. When the time is right, the fertility specialist will retrieve the eggs during an in-office procedure.

On the day of the egg retrieval, your fertility doctor will perform a minimally invasive, office-based procedure. Given that conscious sedation is used, there is typically minimal pain or discomfort during the process. Upon completion, your fertility specialist will be able to tell you how many eggs were retrieved. Those eggs are then assessed by a team of embryologists who will examine each egg using a high-powered microscope to determine how many are healthy and can be frozen via vitrification.

Egg freezing opens a world of opportunities and options for women. Frozen eggs can remain viable for more than 20 years. It allows you to stop the biological clock and retain the ability to have the baby of your dreams.

*Dr. Satin Patel is a partner and double board-certified fertility specialist at Fertility Specialists of Texas. He has more than 10 years of experience helping patients successfully freeze their eggs and achieve pregnancy. A California native, Patel has graduated with honors from some of the most prestigious universities and medical programs in the country. He is known by patients for honestly and sensitively communicating the complexities of treatment. To learn more or to connect with Dr. Patel, visit [FertilityTexas.com](http://FertilityTexas.com) or call 214-618-2044.*

