



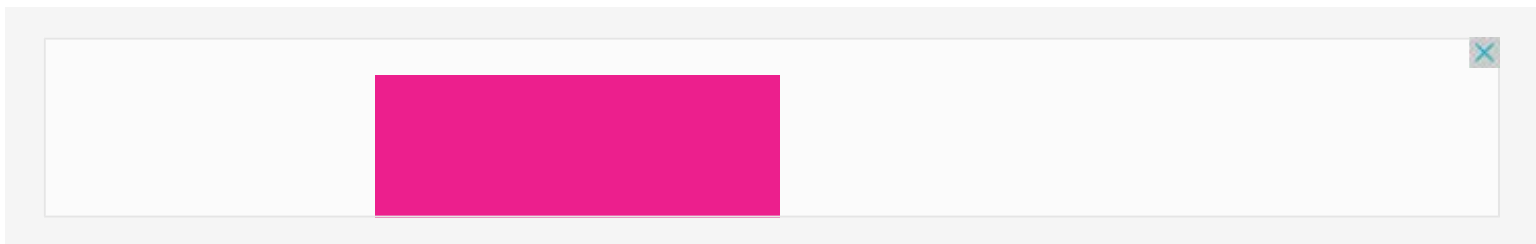
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By
Dr Victoria Walker

11 August 2017



Egg freezing is a relatively new fertility technique, which can be used to pause a woman's biological clock by preserving her younger and healthier eggs. For many women looking to extend their childbearing years, it has become an increasingly attractive option.

Despite the increasing number of women opting to **freeze their eggs**, many people are unsure what the process actually entails. So here are the answers the questions people most commonly ask me about egg freezing:

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1. What is egg freezing?

Egg vitrification, more commonly referred to as 'egg-freezing', is a technique used to preserve a woman's fertility.

More specifically, egg freezing is a new assisted reproduction technique which enables a woman's eggs (oocytes) to be extracted and frozen. In many cases this is done so that she can delay motherhood.

When the woman is ready to become a mother, the eggs can be defrosted, fertilised, and transferred back into the uterus as embryos, through a process called **In-Vitro Fertilisation (IVF)**.

2. Who should consider egg freezing?

As time goes by, a woman's fertility decreases due to the ageing of her ovaries. Not only does it become increasingly difficult for a woman to conceive, but her chances of having a healthy baby are also reduced.



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Due to a new generation of career-driven women, more people are making the decision to try for a baby later in life. Women who choose to delay pregnancy in order to pursue a career or other personal goals should therefore consider egg freezing, as it should provide a greater chance of

having a successful pregnancy and healthy baby than if they wait to use their own eggs over the age of 40.

Egg freezing can also be beneficial for women who have developed conditions or **illnesses which have stopped them from having a child**, such as cancer. The treatment allows women to postpone pregnancy until they have fully recovered from their illness, or until they are healthy enough to have a baby.

Patients should always be made aware that egg freezing does not guarantee a pregnancy, and the success rate varies enormously according to the patient's age when the eggs are frozen.



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3. When is the best time to freeze your eggs?

I always recommend that women should ideally freeze their eggs before they reach the age of 35. This is the end of a woman's prime reproductive years, and so her eggs are usually of good quality and quantity.

The younger the patient is, the better the survival rate and quality of the eggs – and usually, the higher the pregnancy rates.

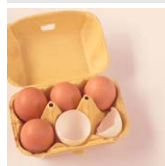
4. How does the egg freezing treatment work?

There are three key stages to the egg freezing process:

First there is the **ovarian stimulation** phase. In this, patients will need to undergo stimulation of their ovaries by taking a course of subcutaneous injections, beginning on the second or third day of their menstruation. This medication ensures that multiple eggs are produced in the ovulatory cycle rather than just the one that would occur naturally. During this time, patients are monitored to see how the follicles are growing, so it is clear when the eggs have successfully matured and are ready for retrieval. The check-ups are administered through regular ultrasounds and blood tests.

Next is the egg retrieval process, which takes place at a fertility clinic. Using ultrasound

technology, a doctor will identify the patient's ovaries and then gently guide a catheter through the vaginal wall. Suction is used to draw out the eggs, one by one, which are then placed in test tubes. The entire procedure will take approximately 15 minutes.



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Immediately after retrieval, the eggs are rinsed, incubated, and prepared for freezing by an expert. 'Vitrification' is performed by hardening the eggs quickly, at low temperature. To achieve this, a large quantity of cellular cryoprotectors are used to treat the eggs to avoid breakages in the cellular membranes. Following this, the eggs are frozen by being submerged in cold liquid nitrogen, and then stored in a secure environment.

Later, when a pregnancy is desired, the eggs are defrosted and fertilised. The transfer of the embryos then takes place 2 or 3 days later.

5. How long does the egg freezing treatment take?

Before the process begins, patients are asked to do blood tests and undergo an ultrasound scan to confirm that they are a good candidate to have their eggs frozen. If you appear to have a good ovarian reserve, then the treatment process will take approximately 13-15 days, from the first day of ovarian stimulation to the retrieval and freezing of the eggs.

Dr Victoria Walker is a Fertility specialist at [Institut Marquès](#).

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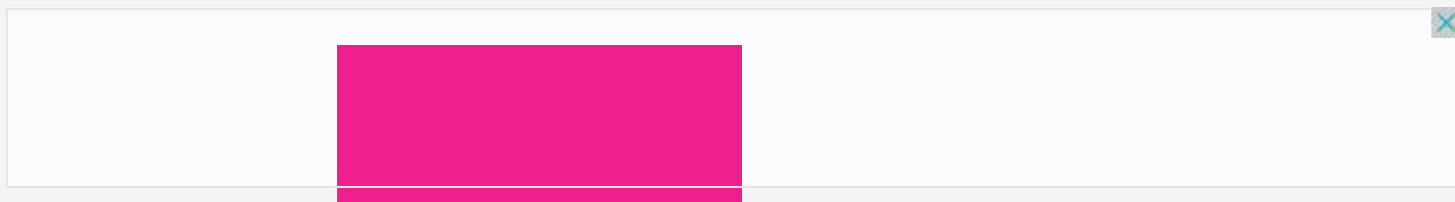
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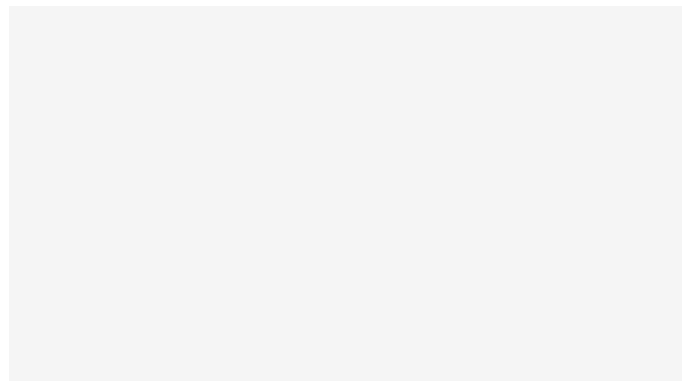
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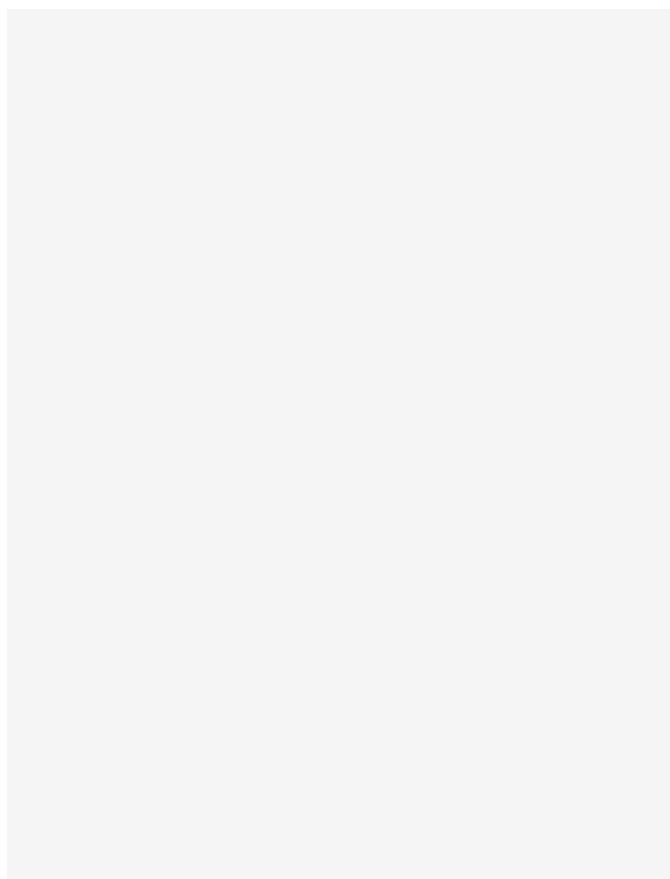
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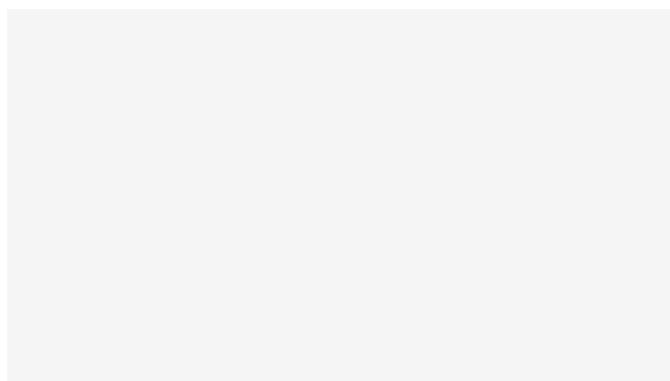
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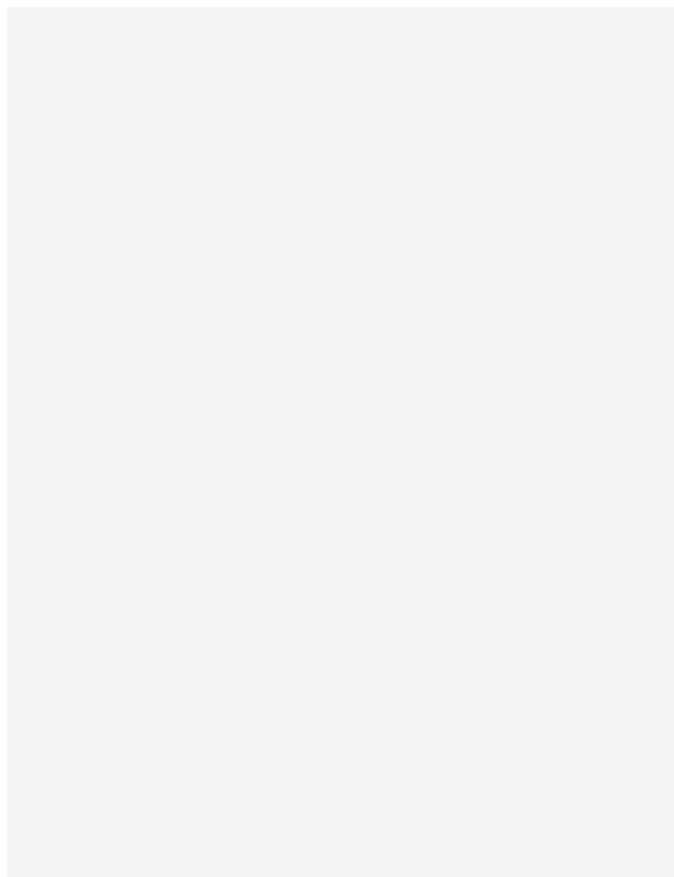
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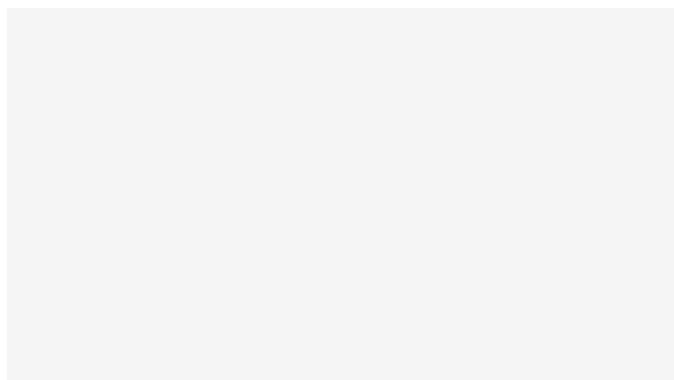
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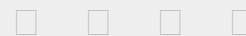
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