



Protecting Fertility While Facing Cancer

Women in America are diagnosed with cancer every day, with the most prevalent type being breast cancer. Hearing such a diagnosis is most certainly devastating under any circumstances, but for a woman still within her childbearing years, additional concerns may likely – and understandably – arise:

- *Will I be able to have biological children after I fight off this cancer?*
- *Will I be infertile as a result of the treatments I'll undergo and have to give up my dreams of children unless I adopt?*

Truthfully, the answers to these questions are dependent upon what types of treatment you undergo based on your type of cancer and how advanced it is. It's wise to plan ahead for after you have finished all of your treatments and the doctor declares you cancer-free. Doing so will take away any anxiety over the possibility of parenthood in your future, giving you the peace of mind to focus your energy on fighting the cancer and getting well.

For instance, if you are going to receive radiation or chemotherapy and expect to want children in the future, you should consider one of the options available for protecting your eggs and preserving your fertility. You may even want to do the same regardless of the treatments you'll undergo, if only to safeguard yourself from any possible adverse affects to your fertility.

The most popular options for fertility preservation include:

- Freezing embryos (cryopreservation) for the purpose of in vitro fertilization, which can happen any time after successful cancer treatments.
- Freezing mature eggs for later fertilization. Likewise, men facing cancer treatments should consider having some of their sperm frozen.
- Processes that protect the ovaries from radiation or chemotherapy. There are ways of doing this through medications or through surgery.
- Woman who have already undergone radiation or chemotherapy may even consider the possibility of egg donation.

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However, “while the technology exists for protecting a woman’s ovaries from various treatments for cancer, cryopreservation is a much more certain route to take,” according to the advice of Dr. Abraham K. Munabi, Medical Director at the Reproductive Science Institute (RSI) of Suburban Philadelphia, P.C. As Munabi explains, “Even when looking at freezing embryos versus freezing eggs, embryos are stronger than fragile eggs, making cryopreservation again more reliable.”

A breast cancer diagnosis does not have to be cause for feelings of desperation, especially if cancer is detected early on. Look optimistically toward the future and the possibility of a family if that’s something you desire but have yet to accomplish. The health professionals at RSI welcome anyone with breast cancer or any another cancer to come and receive counsel on what the options are that will best fit your unique situation.

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