

A microscopic view of numerous sperm cells, showing their characteristic oval heads and long, wavy tails, swimming in a fluid medium. The cells are distributed across the frame, with some appearing more prominent than others.

Older

Freezing your sperm?

Information on the process of providing
and freezing sperm.



This information is aimed at those who are invited to have their sperm frozen, but also to parents and relatives.





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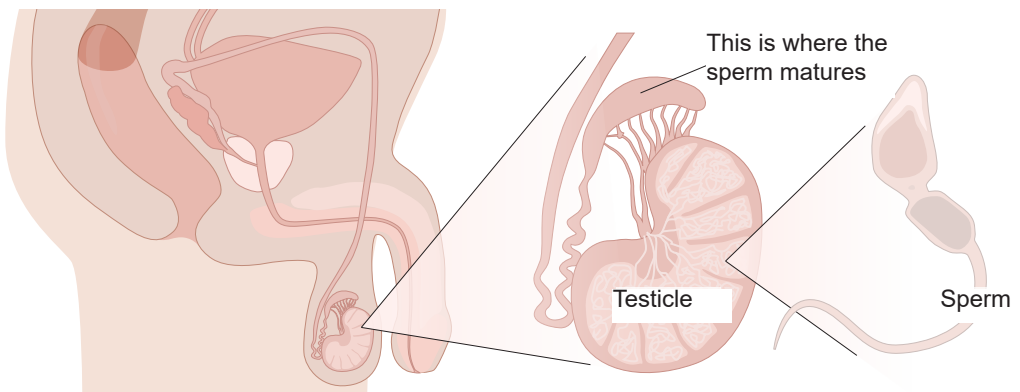


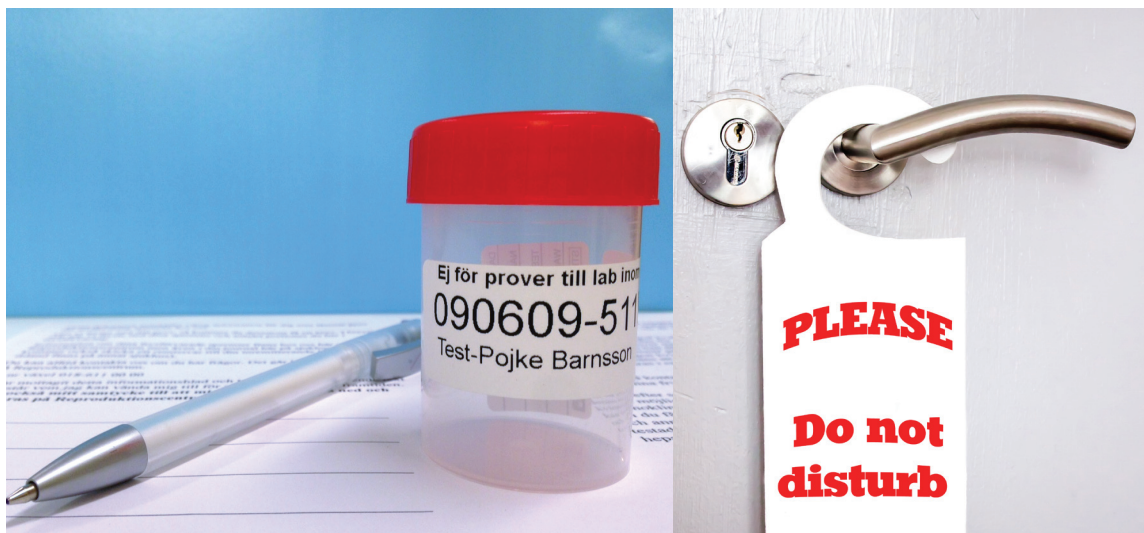


Why would you freeze sperm?

The treatment of cancer and certain other illnesses is aimed at destroying sick cells to make you healthy again. A downside to the treatment is that other cells in the body may also be damaged. Often, the body can replace or repair the damaged cells, but the cells in the testicles that produce sperm do not have this ability. Therefore you have the option of freezing sperm before starting treatment. The sperm can be stored and used later when you want to try to have children. The sperm can only be used by the person who has provided the sample.

Although the treatment can damage the production of sperm in the testicles, this does not affect sexuality or the ability to get an erection.





How does the process work?

In order for the sperm to be stored, you need to sign a form to give authorisation. If you are under 18 years of age, a guardian's signature is also required.

You are given a container labelled with your name and personal identity number. When you are leaving the sample, you are shown to a private room to masturbate and try to collect the ejaculate in the container. If you want you can bring along pictures or a movie to help you get an erection. You then give the container to the staff. If you are unsuccessful, for example if you miss the container or do not ejaculate, tell the staff. You will then have an opportunity to leave another sample later.

Sperm samples are most often provided at the unit where the sperm is stored. There are special rooms used for providing samples and the staff are used to dealing with sperm samples.

Where can you go to leave a sperm sample?

If you need to be at the ward where you are being treated or at home, this is also possible. The sperm then need to be kept at body temperature and delivered for freezing as soon as possible, no later than within one hour.

Sometimes there are very few or no sperm in the sample. You then have the option of providing another sample.

How is the sperm frozen?

After you have provided the sample it is examined. If there are sperm cells in the sample, the freezing process is commenced. The sample is first mixed with a freezing solution and suctioned into thin tubes labelled with your name and personal identity number.

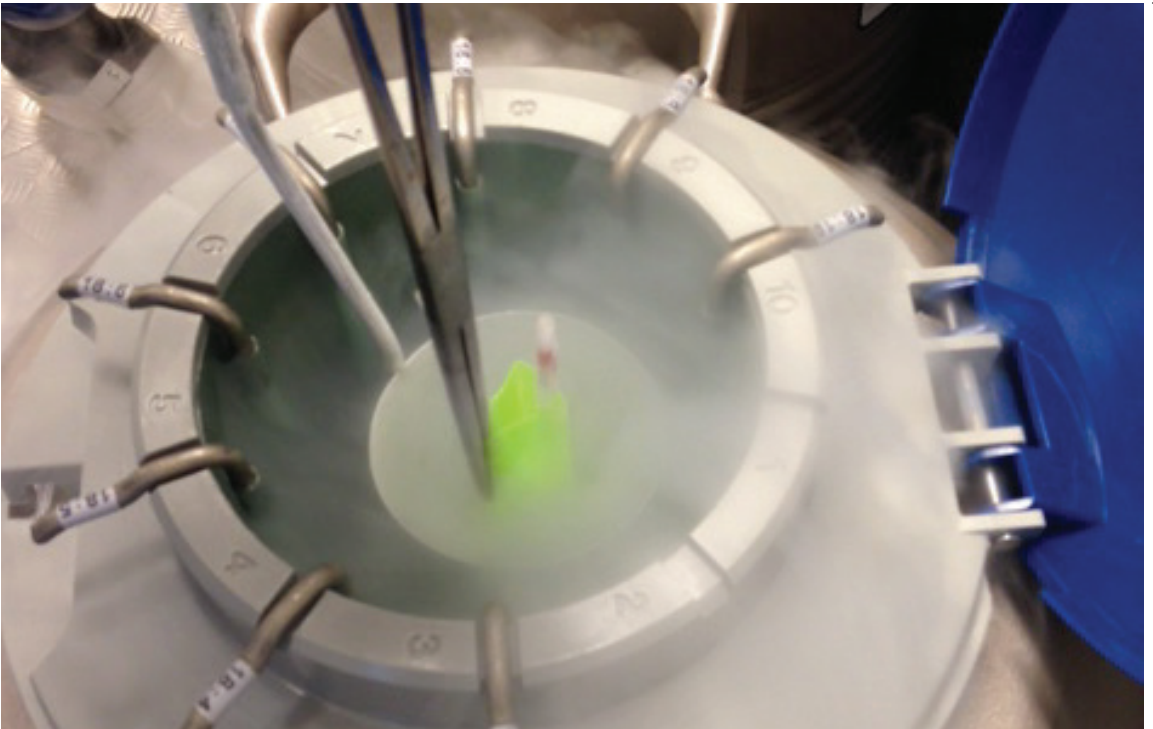
The filled tubes are then frozen, placed in additional packaging and end up in a large freezing tank with liquid nitrogen. You are allocated your own space in the tank, after which the tubes are stored as long as needed.



Sperm cells are very small and are therefore stored in thin straw-like tubes in the freezing tank. Each tube has room to store several million sperm.



Sperm tubes inside another type of container.



The sperm are stored in a freezing tank that contains liquid nitrogen. The temperature is -196°C . The cold means that the sperm can survive for many years, until you may need to use them.

What happens next?

It is not certain that the sperm production has been destroyed by the treatment. When you have regained your health you can consult your doctor to provide a new sperm sample for examination. Enough time must have passed between the end of treatment and the new sperm sample as it may take time for new sperm to be produced, or sometimes it happens quickly.

If the new sample indicates that no sperm is being produced, you can use the frozen sperm if you want to try to have children. The sperm can then be used for in vitro fertilisation, IVF.



Alternative ways to have a child.

If in the future it turns out that you cannot have children using your own sperm, you can for example obtain sperm from a donor. You then contact a reproductive medicine clinic for information on the available treatment alternatives.

Adoption is also an option if you cannot have biological children.



More information

There is a short film aimed at young people who are providing a sperm sample. It can be found at <http://vavnad.se/konsceller/filmer/>

At www.1177.se you can find information on cancer, on fertility during cancer treatment and on treatments in the event of involuntary childlessness. You can always contact the clinic where the sperm is stored if you have any questions.

Notes



The brochure is produced by the Värnadsrådet working group UNGA Värnadsrådet. The Swedish national council for organs, tissues, cells and blood is an advisory forum within the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and works with national coordination and uniform procedures within the area.

