

# Fertility preserving surgery

## What is fertility and fertility preservation?

- **Fertility:**
- For women, fertility means the ability to get pregnant.
- **Fertility preservation:**
- Fertility preservation (FP) is a term used for interventions and procedures aiming at preserving the chance of having a baby when your fertility may be damaged by medical condition (cancer) or its treatment. Fertility preservation may be appropriate before undergoing [cancer treatments](#) that can affect fertility.

## Which cancer treatments can cause fertility problems?

Cancer treatments that can cause fertility problems include:

- Chemotherapy – Chemotherapy is the medical term for medicines that kill cancer cells or stop them from growing.
- Radiation therapy – Radiation involves getting high doses of X-rays.
- Surgery – If a woman's ovaries (female sex organs) are removed, she can't get pregnant with her own eggs (ovum). If a woman's uterus is removed, she can't carry a pregnancy.

Chemotherapy and radiation can damage eggs (Ovum) in the ovaries. As a result, women might stop having periods or have irregular periods. Also, radiation can damage the uterus, which can make it hard to carry a pregnancy.

Not everyone who gets chemotherapy or radiation will have fertility problems.

## What should I do if I want to get pregnant someday?

You should let your doctor know before you start cancer treatment. In some cases, treatment that has a lower risk of affecting fertility in future might be available.

## Are there other ways to preserve fertility?

Yes. There are options that can be done to help women to preserve their fertility.

- **If you are getting chemotherapy, options include:**
  - Embryo banking – This involves collecting female eggs before starting cancer treatment. A doctor fertilizes the eggs with partner sperm in a laboratory to make embryos. The embryo can be frozen and can be used later to get pregnant in future.
  - Freezing and storing eggs (that are not fertilized) or tissue from your ovaries

- **If you are getting radiation, options include:**

-Shielding the ovaries or uterus during radiation treatment – This involves wearing a special shield during radiation treatment. It covers and protects your reproductive organs from toxic effect of radiation.

-Moving your ovaries – This procedure involves moving the ovary from one place to another place outside the radiation area to keep them from getting damaged.

If you are going through both chemotherapy and radiation, all of the above might be options for you.

### **How do I decide which option is right for me?**

The best way to preserve your fertility depends on your cancer, treatment, age, and individual situation. Talk with your doctor about your different choices. To make your decision, you might want to think about:

- The benefits and downsides of the options
- How well your doctor thinks they will work
- How long they take – because some fertility preserving options could delay the start of your cancer treatment.
- How much they cost

### **What if I still can't get pregnant?**

If you still can't get pregnant after cancer treatment, your doctor can suggest you other options:

- Couple can try to have a baby using a donated egg.
- Couple can decide to have another woman (called a “surrogate mother”) carry a pregnancy for them.
- You might choose to adopt.

Couples can have a tough time making these decisions. You might find it helpful to talk to a counselor or go to a support group for people who are facing the same issues.