

Fertility and Cancer Treatment (Girls)

The radiation therapy and chemotherapy that are used to treat cancer can sometimes cause problems with fertility, making it harder or impossible to have a baby later in life. “Fertility” means the ability to get pregnant.

There are things that you can do before you start treatment to make a pregnancy more likely in the future. This is called “fertility preservation.” Talk with your oncologist about how likely it is for your treatment to affect your fertility, what options you have for “fertility preservation,” or steps to make it more likely for you to have a baby in the future.

How will cancer treatment affect my fertility?

The harm that treatment can do to your fertility may get better over time, or it may be permanent. It is hard to know exactly what will happen with your fertility after treatment. Your ability to have a child later in life depends on lots of things, like:

- Your age at the time of treatment
 - The kind of chemotherapy drugs that you take
 - Where on your body you get radiation
 - How much chemotherapy or radiation you get
 - How long it has been since treatment when you try to have a baby
-

What steps can I take to make it more likely for me to get pregnant in the future?

For teens who have started menstruating and adult women

One option is called oocyte cryopreservation. This means freezing unfertilized eggs and storing them. This involves taking hormones to make you ovulate before you start treatment. Then, a minor procedure is done to remove your eggs. The eggs are frozen without being fertilized and later, when you are ready to have a baby, sperm can be used to fertilize the eggs. This option takes 10 to 14 days to finish before you start treatment for cancer; this is the amount of time it takes for the hormones to make you ovulate. You can talk to your oncologist about whether this is an option for you.

Oocyte cryopreservation can be done at a reproductive center before you come to Seattle Children’s for treatment. Most people have reproductive centers near where they live.

Will my future children have cancer?

Some people worry that cancer or cancer treatment will make it more likely to have a child with cancer, diseases or other problems. Some people also worry that fertility treatments can cause problems. There is no scientific reason to worry about this. Talk to your oncologist if you want to know more.

To Learn More

- Cancer and Blood Disorders
206-987-2106
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

Is fertility preservation covered by insurance?

It depends. You can talk with the staff at the reproductive clinic to find out what may or may not be covered and how much you will have to pay. Ask them about financial assistance programs like LIVESTRONG Fertility.

What if I cannot do anything about my fertility before I start treatment?

You may not be old enough (not started your period yet), nor have the time to take steps to preserve fertility before you start treatment. It is important to remember that we cannot be absolutely certain about who will have problems having children after treatment and who will not. As part of your long-term follow-up, your healthcare team will check your fertility and help you plan for the future. If fertility is a problem, they can help you think of other ways to start a family.