

## What to do with your unused embryos?

A guide for sorting through the options.

Many couples who choose in vitro fertilization (IVF) create more embryos than they finally use to build their family. Remaining embryos are in frozen storage. But now your family is happily completed and you are faced with an important decision: What will you do with these embryos?

We know this decision is deeply personal, requiring careful consideration. We invite you to work through this guide to help you sort through your feelings about the choices available to you. Writing things down can help clarify your thoughts and help you reach the best decision for you and your partner. You both may want to print and complete the form separately and then discuss your thoughts together.

We hope you will find this 4-Step guide useful.

### Step 1 Complete the four tables, each focused on one of the disposition choices available to you.

- What are the pros and cons for each option? If you can think of other pros or cons, please add these to your table matrix.
- How important is each pro or con to you? You may like to rate each one, 0 – 5, with 0 being not important and 5 being extremely important.

#### OPTION 1 – Continuing to pay and keep your embryos in frozen storage

Personal Importance (0-5)	Pros	Cons	Personal Importance (0-5)
	I may want to have another child in the future.	I don't have the time/energy/resources to support another child.	
	I need more time to think this through.	I am putting off making a decision.	
	What if something happens to my child(ren)?	I wouldn't want to have another child, even if something happened to my child(ren).	
	My partner needs more time to consider our options.	My partner is putting off making a decision.	
	I will use the extra time productively (i.e.: talk with a counselor)	I already know my decision deep down and am putting off completing the necessary paperwork.	
	Other pro	Other con	
	Other pro	Other con	

**Are you leaning towards continuing to store the embryos or not?** (Mark the box closest to your thoughts at this point in time.)

- I am leaning towards storing the embryos longer.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning towards storing the embryos.

**OPTION 2 – Thaw and discard my embryos**

Personal Importance (0-5)	Pros	Cons	Personal Importance (0-5)
	Embryos are not yet people so disposal doesn't concern me morally or spiritually.	I feel connected to my embryos so it feels like disposing of my child(ren) and siblings to my child(ren).	
	Embryos frequently don't continue to develop from such an early stage of development.	The embryos have potential and could develop and grow into a baby.	
	Disposal of the embryos is similar to having a tubal ligation or vasectomy.	I may feel guilty and responsible about embryos being discarded and may regret this in the future.	
	I wouldn't want to have another child even if something happened to my child(ren).	What if something happens to my child(ren) and I have already discarded the embryos?	
	I might feel more comfortable with this option if I could discard the embryos in a respectful manner.	It makes no difference to me how the embryos are discarded.	
	Other pro	Other con	
	Other pro	Other con	

**Are you leaning towards thawing and discarding your embryos?** (Mark the box closest to your thoughts at this point in time.)

- I am leaning toward discarding my embryos.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning toward discarding my embryos.

**OPTION 3 – Donation of my embryos for research**

Personal Importance (0-5)	Pros	Cons	Personal Importance (0-5)

	I want to help advance medical knowledge.	While I am sympathetic to advancing medical knowledge it is not my responsibility to provide my embryos.	
	I do not want to waste my embryos.	The embryos may not be used in a research study as more are donated than are used.	
	I believe embryonic stem cell research could help cure serious diseases.	It will be many years before embryonic stem cell research will actually provide effective treatments.	
	I feel comfortable having embryos used in scientific research.	My moral views mean that I feel uncomfortable with my embryos being used in this way.	
	This would be a positive way to complete my IVF treatment.	I may wonder what happened to my embryos and feel guilty about this choice.	
	I wouldn't want to have another child even if something happened to my child(ren).	What if something happens to my child(ren) and I have already donated my embryos to research?	
	Other pro	Other con	
	Other pro	Other con	

**Are you leaning toward allowing your embryos to be used for research?** (Mark the box closest to your thoughts at this point in time.)

- I am leaning toward my embryos being used for research.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning toward my embryos being used for research.

**OPTION 4 – Donating my embryos to another person for reproduction.**

Personal Importance (0-5)	Pros	Cons	Personal Importance (0-5)
	I want to give my embryos a chance at life.	I don't feel comfortable with the implications of donating my embryos to another person.	
	I would be able to accept that the child(ren) would not be mine but the recipient's child(ren).	It feels like I am giving away one of my children.	

	My children would support my choice of donation and manage the implications.	The child would be a full genetic sibling to my own child(ren) and this might be too complicated for them.	
	I do not want to waste these embryos I had created.	Embryos often do not continue to develop and result in the birth of a child.	
	I want to help someone else have a child by donating my embryos.	While I feel sorry for other people facing infertility, it is not my responsibility to help them.	
	I would feel comfortable having contact with the recipient parents and their child in the future.	I wouldn't want to be contacted in the future by the parents or any child born as a result of my donation.	
	I may have needed donated embryos if I hadn't been success in my own IVF treatment.	I would not have used donated embryos had my IVF treatment failed.	
	I would feel positive know a child exists because of my donation.	I will worry about the child and wonder what happened in their life.	
	I feel comfortable allowing someone to parent children born as a result of my embryo donation.	I am concerned about the way the recipients by parent the child, differently from my style.	
	Other pro	Other con	
	Other pro	Other con	

**Are you leaning toward donation your embryos to someone for reproduction?** (Mark the box closest to your thoughts at this point in time.)

- I am leaning toward donating my embryos for reproduction.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning toward donating my embryos for reproduction.

**Step 2**      **Now compare how you feel about each disposition option.** (Copy your responses to this summary section to help clarify your overall leaning toward a choice.)

**Are you leaning towards continuing to store the embryos or not?**

- I am leaning towards storing the embryos longer.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning towards storing the embryos.

**Are you leaning towards thawing and discarding your embryos?**

- I am leaning toward discarding my embryos.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning toward discarding my embryos.

**Are you leaning toward allowing your embryos to be used for research?**

- I am leaning toward my embryos being used for research.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning toward my embryos being used for research.

**Are you leaning toward donation your embryos to someone for reproduction?**

- I am leaning toward donating my embryos for reproduction.
- I am not sure yet.
- I am not leaning toward donating my embryos for reproduction.

**Step 3**      **Determine your decision.** (Write down which option(s) you are most interested in and discuss them with your partner.)

**Step 4**      **Plan your next steps.**

If you and your partner are confident about your disposition choice you will need to either contact your clinic or select an organization which can best help you fulfill your desires.

If your choice is donation for reproduction the Embryo Adoption Awareness Center has provided a complete list of clinics who have embryo donation programs and adoption agencies that facilitate embryo adoption. Visit [EmbryoAdoption.org](http://EmbryoAdoption.org) to access these lists.