

Considering Intra-Uterine Insemination (IUI)?– Information for Patients

This information sheet is designed to give you some background information concerning Superovulation with Intra-uterine Insemination (SO/IUI). You will have plenty of opportunity to discuss this in more detail with Cambridge IVF staff before you start treatment.

Frequently asked questions

What is SO/IUI used for?

As many as one in ten couples have difficulties in conceiving. In many, there is no obvious cause detected for the lack of conception, also known as 'unexplained Infertility'. SO/IUI may be helpful in such couples and in couples where the only reason for infertility appears to be a minor degree of endometriosis or a mild sperm problem.

What does my treatment involve?

Normally a woman produces one mature egg every month. This egg is released into the fallopian tube where it may be fertilised following intercourse. The fertilised egg then travels to the uterus (womb) where it may implant and result in a pregnancy.

In SO/IUI, hormone injections are used to gently stimulate the ovaries to develop one or two eggs. When these eggs are judged to have reached the right stage of maturity, a hormone injection is administered that causes the egg(s) to be released from the ovaries. Thirty-six hours later, the partner's sperm is injected into the woman's womb. The reason why SO/IUI helps some couples is not known for sure – it may be that with careful monitoring and timing of insemination, the chance of the egg and sperm meeting are better than they would be with simple intercourse. It may be that preparing and injecting the sperm directly into the womb overcomes a minor degree of sperm problem.

Drugs used in a SO/IUI cycle are as follows:

- Daily injections to stimulate the ovaries to produce one or two eggs
- A single injection which is carefully timed to begin the process of ovulation

Pregnancy test

We will give you a date to carry out a pregnancy test. We advise that the test be performed on the first morning sample of urine. Please let us know the result straightaway. If the pregnancy test is positive we will arrange a scan in 3 weeks at the Early Pregnancy Unit at the Rosie Hospital to check that the pregnancy is continuing. Further pregnancy care is organised by your doctor. However, the consultants at Cambridge IVF will be happy to co-ordinate with their colleagues at the Rosie in case of any special medical issues that need attention. It is vital that you inform us of the ultimate outcome of the pregnancy, as this information is required to be submitted to the HFEA.

If the pregnancy test is negative we will contact you to review the cycle and discuss your options for the future. You are also welcome to contact the specialist fertility counsellors at any stage, or ask us to make an appointment for you to see them.

What screening tests are required prior to treatment?

BMI (Body Mass Index)

Ideally, your BMI (the ratio of your weight in kilograms to the square of your height in metres) should be in the normal range (between 19 and 25). We do not encourage anyone whose BMI is greater than 35 to progress to treatment. In this case weight loss is advised before commencing. Having a normal BMI enhances the chances of successful outcome of treatment and decreases risks of complications in pregnancy (for example, miscarriage and diabetes).

Exclusion of tubal damage

This involves either a Hysterosalpingogram (HSG) or a laparoscopy. The appropriate procedure for you will be discussed by the medical team.

Screen for Rubella

Rubella (German measles) is an infection which if contracted during pregnancy can cause damage to the unborn child. If you are not immune to Rubella then it is essential that you are immunized and immunity is confirmed before treatment.

Chlamydia Infection

All patients embarking on fertility treatment are routinely screened for chlamydia infection. Your GP will have been asked to perform this screening prior to referral. If this has not been the case, swabs will be taken prior to commencing treatment.

Cervical Smear

You need to be up to date with cervical smears. If you are unsure when you were last tested, please contact your GP and arrange a repeat smear if necessary.

Exclusion of blood-borne viral infections

Screening for Hepatitis B and C and HIV is a pre-requisite for all patients entering the SO/IUI programme. Pre-test counselling will be offered if you wish to discuss the implications of these tests. All three tests must be negative for treatment and counselling will be available if any result is positive.

What are the requirements for the 'Welfare of the Child' assessment?

Fertility treatment in the UK is governed by the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act of 2008, which places a duty on clinics providing treatment to consider the welfare of any child who may be born as a result of treatment. According to guidance issued by the regulator, clinics have to take into account the need for supportive parenting and factors which are likely to cause serious physical, psychological or medical harm to the child to be born or to any existing child of the family. Each patient requesting treatment must complete a form which includes questions dealing with such issues. We will then consider your responses and, in some cases, may need to seek further information, for instance from your doctor, social services or other professionals. If, after deliberation we decide that we are not able to offer you treatment, we will give you our grounds for making the decision. We will also outline what steps, if any, you could take for us to reconsider our decision.

Should I be taking Folic Acid?

Research shows that Folic Acid supplements can significantly reduce the chance of a baby being born with a neural tube defect such as Spina Bifida. Some women may not be receiving enough Folic Acid in their diet and so the simplest way to get enough is to take a supplement. Folic Acid should be taken before conception and taken until the end of the twelfth week of pregnancy. It is recommended that 400 mcg be taken daily and this can be obtained from chemists.

What is the waiting time to start treatment?

In most cases, we aim to start treatment within 2 months of receiving a complete referral for this. In some cases, where extra tests or counselling is needed, more time may elapse before treatment can start. Staff at Cambridge IVF will be able to give you our current waiting times when you contact them.

How long will treatment take and what happens if pregnancy does not occur?

From starting a SO/IUI cycle to knowing the outcome usually takes between 4 and 6 weeks. If the planned number of SO/IUI cycles are not successful, a review appointment will be made to discuss the treatment and a plan will be made for the future. At this stage you may be advised to consider IVF.

How is confidentiality maintained?

All our notes are filed separately from your general hospital notes and are kept in a locked room. There are a limited number of personnel who have access to your file all of whom are bound by the Human Fertilisation Act and the HFEA's Code of Conduct. We are unable to correspond with your GP or any other third party concerning your treatment unless you give your written permission. We will never disclose your personal details to companies that are not providing you with a direct service.

We will also provide you with a leaflet entitled 'What happens to information held about you?' at your initial visit to the unit.

Contact us:

If you wish to give us some feedback or make a complaint or raise a concern, or if you have any queries regarding funding and other operational queries, please contact our Operations Manager in writing:

Operations Manager
Cambridge IVF
Box 123
Cambridge University Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust
Hills Road
Cambridge CB2 0QQ

E: enquiries@cambridgeivf.org.uk

If your treatment has been commissioned by the Oxford Fertility Unit, please direct your feedback, complaint or concern in writing to:

The Admin Manager
Oxford Fertility Unit
Institute of Reproductive Sciences
Oxford Business Park North
Oxford
Oxfordshire OX4 2HW
E: info@oxfordfertilityunit.com

If you choose, you may direct your complaint through the PALS Service (Details of how to make a complaint through PALS can be found on the CUH website: http://www.cuh.org.uk/addenbrookes/patients/pals/making_complaint.html)

However, you should be aware that the standard of patient confidentiality applicable there will be the same as applies to any other medical treatment and is lower than that applicable to licensed treatment at Cambridge IVF. This may result in a situation where your identifying data are available to persons who are not covered by our HFEA license and not subject to the strict Cambridge IVF confidentiality requirements. For this reason, Cambridge IVF recommends that all complaints are directed to our Operations Manager, allowing us to ensure that proper confidentiality is maintained.

We hope you have found this booklet informative and interesting. We realise we may not have covered all of your questions so if you do have any other queries we are here to help so please contact us via any of the means below:

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