



Cambridge IVF is to become the first NHS centre in the UK to routinely freeze embryos after proving the technique very significantly increases the chance of patients becoming pregnant.

The clinic, which is part of Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, achieved a 61.8 per cent success rate for a group of 167 women between the age of 24 and 45 compared with 40.6 per cent for fresh embryos transferred. This is an increase of 52.2% and is statistically significant.

Embryologists at the clinic, which works closely with Addenbrooke's teaching hospital and the Rosie Maternity Hospital, found freezing gives them the opportunity to transfer selected embryos at a time most suitable for the patient.

They also use a sophisticated incubator called an EmbryoScope that maintains the physiological conditions required by living embryos and includes a time-lapse camera system to monitor their development in real time every hour of every day.

Freeze all of embryos gives an additional advantage of almost eliminating the risk of [ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome](#) or OHSS as it is known. OHSS is a common side effect of IVF drugs. It can cause weight gain, abdominal pain, vomiting and shortness of breath and serious cases of OHSS result in hospital admission.

Lead consultant Alka Prakash, said: "Our clinic is already achieving exceptionally low rates of ovarian hyper stimulation syndrome but freeze all technique will take us one step closer to achieving an OHSS free clinic.

Cambridge IVF, which is known for championing high quality IVF at low cost to deter couples from using unregulated and unsafe overseas clinics, is to offer the technique at an additional fee of £245 per [cycle](#) to cover costs.

The developments come only a week after the clinic unveiled a new Multi-[cycle](#) IVF package, which competes favourably with the best on-line prices, while fully meeting National Institute of Clinical Guidelines (NICE).

At between £6,740 and £8,990 depending on drugs needed, Multi-[cycle](#) IVF consists of three rounds of IVF treatment under the supervision of highly qualified clinicians. This treatment follows development of another Cambridge IVF service, PURE IVF, which is nurse-led and aimed at women

aged 38 or under with a BMI of 18 to 30, with no significant medical issues. It costs £2,500 including fertility drugs and – as with all Cambridge IVF treatments – all fees charged go straight back into the NHS.

Service lead and consultant [embryologist](#) Stephen Harbottle said: “Although we have been exploring the freeze technique for some years we were, frankly, taken aback by the consistent success we have achieved over the last 18 months, and we think our results will get even better. This is a significant step forward for IVF, the NHS and of course our patients.

“The public deserve access to value for money, high quality healthcare for fertility issues, particularly when you consider fertility is classified by the World Healthcare Organisation as a disease – in this case a disease of the reproductive system. It is an illness just like any other.”

“It seems appropriate that we are able to offer additional services in the year that Britain’s first test tube baby Louise brown celebrates her 40th birthday and the NHS celebrates its 70th anniversary. As an NHS clinic our focus is on patient care and research rather than profit – just as it was when Louise Brown was born and the NHS was conceived.”

The initiatives come almost 12 months after many clinical commissioning groups withdrew funding for IVF treatment on the NHS, prompting concerns about where couples would go for treatment.

For more information call 01223 349010.