

What happens in the lab?

Stephen Harbottle says "I realise that the laboratory where I work is often a place of great mystery and intrigue to you. For me, it's all very straightforward. I spend most of my working time here, after all. But you don't get the opportunity to see what happens between the collection of your sperm and eggs and your embryo transfer and I know you wonder about it."

"People have often asked me what's going on in those stressful times when nothing seems to be happening in their treatment. Why do they have to wait? And what exactly are we doing to their precious eggs, [sperm](#) and developing embryos?"

"So here's a chance for you to see your treatment cycle through the eyes of your embryologists! I hope you find it interesting. I probably can't answer every question everyone will think of so if you still have any questions, please feel free to ask one of us when we meet. That's what we're here for."



What happens - behind the scenes in the lab

While you are still in the theatre during your [egg collection](#), the Embryology team receives tubes of follicular fluid that one of our experienced medical practitioners is collecting during the procedure. They search for your eggs in that fluid, collect them, wash them, and incubate them in a special culture media to keep them healthy.

Now that we have your eggs, we need a [semen](#) sample to perform the treatment with, which can be from your partner or from a [semen](#) donor. Once we have both gametes, the magical science in the lab begins!

The [sperm](#) that is going to be used for either IVF or ICSI is processed and refined to ensure that only the best quality [sperm](#) are used.

The morning after the insemination process, fertilisation is checked to see how many eggs have been fertilised and continue developing. The resulting embryos are cultured, and their quality assessed, either using a microscope or the Embryoscope time-lapse system, to select the best [embryo](#) or embryos for transfer.

In some cases, we recommend that we do not transfer any embryos at all and you consider our elective Freeza All – Replace Later strategy which is proven in our centre to result in improvements in pregnancy and live birth rates.

Any embryos, which have not been transferred but are of good quality and have high chances of resulting in pregnancy once transferred, are cryopreserved for later use on a [frozen embryo transfer](#).

Do not worry, we take good care of your frozen embryos. They are safely stored in our liquid nitrogen tanks by expert hands and will remain in our state-of-the-art facilities for when you need them for up to a maximum usual period of 10 years in most cases.

You will receive updates from our Embryology team to inform you of the progress of your treatment on days 1, 3, 5 and 6 of your [cycle](#). Your eggs, [sperm](#) and embryos are safe in our Embryology lab which is monitored 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Check what happens on each day in more detail here:

[Day 0](#) | [Day 1](#) | [Day 2](#) | [Day 3](#) | [Day 4](#) | [Day 5](#)

Meet the lab team.