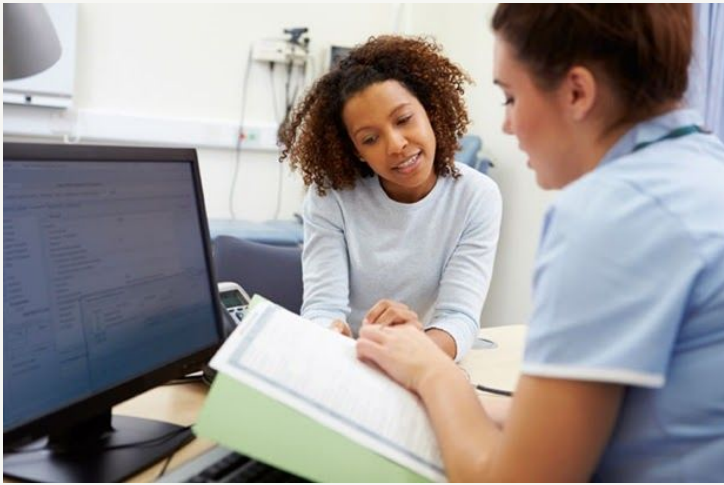


# A Step-By-Step Look at the IVF Process



When you think of common fertility treatments, in vitro fertilization (IVF) probably appears near the top of your

list. There's a reason for that.

IVF has been around for decades and you most likely already know the basic idea behind IVF: uniting egg and sperm outside the body in a culture. But there's so much more to IVF that happens

before and after that. Here's a closer look at the IVF process in five steps.

IVF is commonly used to treat:

- Older women with fertility issues
- Women with damaged or blocked fallopian tubes

- Women with endometriosis
- Male infertility caused by low sperm count or blockage

## **The IVF Process in Five Steps**

**Boost your egg production through superovulation**

You'll be given fertility drugs that will begin a process called stimulation—or superovulation, says the **National Institutes of Health (NIH)**. In other words, the drugs—which contain Follicle Stimulating Hormone—will tell your

body to produce more than just the normal one egg per month. The more eggs you produce, the more chances you'll have of a successful fertilization later on in the treatment. You'll receive transvaginal ultrasounds and blood tests on a regular

basis during this step in the IVF process to check on your ovaries and monitor your hormone levels.

## **Remove the eggs**

A little more than a day before your eggs are scheduled to be retrieved from your body, you'll

receive a hormone injection that will help your eggs mature quickly.

Then, you'll have a minor surgical procedure—called follicular aspiration—to remove the eggs. This is generally done as an outpatient surgery in your



doctor's office, according to the NIH.

During the procedure, your doctor will use an ultrasound to guide a thin needle into each of your ovaries through your vagina. The needle has a device

attached to it that suction  
the eggs out one at a time.

If this part sounds painful,  
don't worry—you'll probably  
be given medication  
beforehand so that you  
won't feel any discomfort.

You may experience some  
cramping afterward, but this

usually disappears within a day, the NIH explains.

## **Collect sperm from your partner or a donor**

While your eggs are being removed, your partner will provide a sperm sample.

You also may choose to use donor sperm. The sperm

are then put through a high-speed wash and spin cycle in order to find the healthiest ones.

## **Unite sperm and eggs**

Now comes the part of IVF that everyone's the most familiar with—combining the best sperm with your best

eggs. This stage is called insemination.

It usually takes a few hours for a sperm to fertilize an egg. Your doctor may also inject the sperm directly into the egg instead, a process known as intracytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI).

## **Transfer the embryo(s) into your uterus**

Once your eggs have been collected you'll receive yet another medication. This one is meant to prep the lining of your uterus to receive the embryos that will be transferred back into you.

About three to five days after fertilization, your doctor will place the embryos in your uterus using a catheter. Like step number three, this part of IVF is performed in your doctor's office while you are awake.

Multiple embryos are transferred back into you in the hopes that at least one will implant itself in the lining of your uterus and begin to develop. Sometimes more than one embryo ends up implanting, which is why



multiples are common in women who use IVF.

The IVF process basically replicates natural reproduction. The next step after the IVF process determines whether the procedure worked—the pregnancy test.

