

IVF IN QUESTIONS

How is it going ?

Does it hurt ?

Why us ?

What is IVF ?

How long will it take ?

Dear Sir and Madam,

You want to have a child and your infertility problems brought you toward an Assisted Reproductive Technology (ART) course.

We thank you for choosing our establishments, the IMR and Bouchard Clinic, to accompany you with this project.

Most of you consider the IVF treatment as an “assault course”, as much for medical follow-up, than for administrative reasons.

That’s why we decided to simplify matters to you by giving you this booklet.

Its purpose is to answer most of the usual questions you may have, in plain English. Of course, it can never replace oral information given by your physician.

Likewise, in order to perfect your knowledge, we advise you to take part in the collective information meeting taking place every month, conducted by a physician and a biologist.

If you still have unanswered questions, don’t hesitate to contact us, we’re here to help !

The ART team

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USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS

You may contact the IVF secretariat at the IMR :
From 8:30am to 7pm on week days,
And from 9am to 12am on week-ends and public holidays
00 33 4 91 16 79 10

The ART unit secretariat (clinique Bouchard) is opened from Monday to Saturday, from 9am to 1pm

00 33 491 159 021

You may also check the IMR internet site at <http://www.imr-marseille.com/>

THE MEDICAL PROCESS

What is infertility ?

Here is the definition straight from the dictionary:

Infertility has a wide range of meanings, including several “mechanical” causes, from fallopian tubes problems to spermatic insufficiency, but also unexplained sterility.

You will need a fertility check-up, performed by physicians, to know the cause.

One of the consequences can be an IVF procedure.

When should you consider IVF ?

The check-up pointed out the cause of your infertility, the very reasons why you can't have a child.

The correct procedure according to your file and your check-up exams results will be decided by a multidisciplinary team of medical specialists, after careful study during a staff reunion.

It can be insemination for a start, or directly an IVF.

What is IVF ?

The In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) is meant to allow male gametes to fertilise female gametes outside the organism, i.e. in vitro (test tubes babies).

Yes, but we heard about other techniques...

In fact, there are several solutions to treat infertility problems: different medical answers combined with biology techniques (AIH, IVF, ICSI,IMSI).

The medical team and your physician will choose the most adequate to your case.

How many steps do we have to go through ?

- 1/ You agree to consult in order to know if you actually have an infertility problem;
- 2/ You go through the basic check-up that will determine the cause of infertility (spermogram, hystero-graphy, temperature chart, ovulation assessment...);
- 3/ You took the decision with your companion, and according to your doctor, to carry out an IVF, the solution to proceed with your parental project;
- 4/ You begin the IVF process.
 - consultation with a specialist
 - check-up
 - decision to start an IVF process
 - beginning of the process
 - PARENTAL PROJECT

What is IVF treatment ?

Because you're all different, the prescribed treatment can be different as well. It's about four weeks long, i.e. one cycle.

1/ The doctor prescribes you, under medical supervision, a hormonal treatment. You must strictly respect the dosage and the associated time of intake. You also have to stay available to run control blood tests and sonogram.

The monitoring period lasts about a week. Rest assured that we will do our best to accommodate your appointments with your private life (employer...).

2/ When the physician feels your ovarian response to the treatment is appropriate, he triggers ovulation with a hormonal injection.

3/ Hospitalization in the clinic is short (a morning) and requires your presence and your companion's. Dates and time for appointments are always communicated to you by your physician.

4/ On the afternoon following your hospitalization, YOU REST !

5/ On the day after, you can go to work, get back to your usual activities, unless contraindication from your doctor, in case of hyperstimulation.

6/ On the day after, you may call the IMR in the morning, to get the results and the scheduled time for your embryo transfer.

7/ Two weeks after the embryo transfer, a blood test is prescribed by the doctor, to know if you are pregnant or not.

Example : if the injection to trigger ovulation took place on a Monday evening, your hospitalization for the oocyte retrieval will take place on Wednesday morning and the embryo transfer on Friday morning.

Why do I have to take ultrasonography and blood tests ?

Your physician prescribes you an ovarian stimulation through a hormonal treatment. The ultrasonography allows to see what's going on in the ovaries. The blood test checks on your hormone rate. You need to have an empty bladder for the sonography to be in contact with the ovaries.

What are the risks bound to these treatments ?

The hormonal treatment may cause some fatigue, nervousness and hot flushes which all cease at the beginning of the stimulation.

During stimulation, if the ovarian response is important, abdominal bloating and slight digestive problems may appear.

General anaesthesia is required for oocyte retrieval. Therefore a pre-anaesthesia consultation is mandatory before each attempt to eliminate as much risk as possible. Risks like bleeding or infection exist, but are very rare.

Most frequent risk during an IVF attempt is the ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome. It can be mild, with some abdominal pain, but also more severe, with symptoms of bloating, nausea and trouble breathing.

If you have these symptoms, don't hesitate to contact the IMR or Clinique Bouchard (outside IMR work hours). In some rare cases, hospitalization may be required, associated to strict bed rest and medical treatment.

What is required before hospitalization ?

To get to the hospital, there are 3 conditions:

- you saw the anaesthetist, before each retrieval, a mandatory appointment since 1995 law;
- you filed a pre-admission demand at Clinique Bouchard secretariat (see Orange booklet)
- you have to respect the day and hour given by your doctor.

How does the hospitalization go ?

Go to the 2nd floor of maternity block in Clinique Bouchard (except on Sundays and public holidays, when you'll have to go to central welcome desk).

There, the secretaries planned everything from your pre-admission file.

They have a complete list of patients scheduled to be hospitalized so you'll be called when your turn comes. You'll be received in couple.

You'll have a few more administrative details to go through with the secretaries then they'll stick labels with Madam's name everywhere, even on you !

Madam, you'll be put in a room while your companion stays in the waiting room.

Madam

you're put in your room

you're taken to the surgical unit, close to your room

you're put in gynaecological position, then anaesthetized by intravenous way

your oocytes are collected : it's a brief procedure, done with the help of a probe similar to the ones used for ultrasonography

after the procedure, you come through the recovery room

finally you are taken back to your room where you'll have breakfast ! Finally indeed, since you were on an empty stomach since midnight

Meanwhile, Mister...

You spend time in the waiting room, you have time for a coffee

When the doctor gets back to the waiting room, he or she entrusts you with the refrigerated briefcase containing your spouse eggs, labelled with her name, to which you'll be called

You bring the briefcase to the IMR. There, usually, if the sperm collection hadn't been done, it will be at the laboratory.

Afterwards you come back to the clinic to pick up your spouse.

What happens on the days following hospitalization ?

On the day after the egg collection : nothing, you can lead a calm and normal life. Strict rest may be necessary if there is a risk of hyperstimulation.

Two days after the egg collection : you contact the IMR lab to know the result. If there are embryos, you go to the lab for the transfer at the appointment time given by the secretariat.

Does it hurt ?

No. Sometimes the transfer is done under echography, but only in some specific cases. The procedure is short. You don't need to lay down after the transfer.

Embryo freezing : when and why ?

On the same day the transfer takes place, you'll decide with your doctor and the biologist if you want to put embryos in cryopreservation, depending on the amount of embryos and their chances of survival through the thawing process.

This will allow you to transfer embryos at a later time, without going through the whole procedure again (heavy hormonal treatment and general anaesthesia for the egg retrieval).

Do I need to ask for sick leave ?

The decision to ask for sick leave must be taken with your physician. Generally, it's prescribed only in two cases : if you have a demanding job physically speaking, or if your stimulation worked too well and you feel abdominal pain.

The sick leave is by no mean mandatory, most of the women still go to work.

In fact, it's better to keep yourself busy rather than to go round in circles... You have to keep in mind that a woman starting a pregnancy naturally doesn't actually know she's pregnant and still lives normally.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESS

Why so much paperwork ?

To be able to take care of you, the Clinic, the laboratory and the physicians need a special authorization delivered by the Health department. We are regularly inspected by competent authorities in order to be sure we apply laws and decrees governing our practice.

Why do we have to fill our application twice, at the IMR and at the Clinic ?

Each team, clinical and biological, must have the law-required pieces given in the files.

What are these documents ?

You must be married, or at least able to bring proof of at least two years of life as a couple. The team has to ask you for pieces of ID for each of you and the aforementioned proofs of marriage or life in community.

Why do we carry out STD screenings ?

As part of your parental project, it is mandatory to screen both parents for HIV, B and C hepatitis and syphilis. These exams are only valid for 12 months.

Why do we have to sign so many authorizations ?

We need a written proof of your consent for each step constituting IVF. It's a contract between you and us.

We have to stay vigilant, because this parental project must lead to the birth of your child in the best conditions possible, but also while respecting your rights and your child's rights. There is a law governing ART and also a law governing patients rights and their access to information.

What if I didn't understand everything ?

We created a monthly information reunion, which we encourage you to attend. Actually, a biologist and a clinician are present and try to simplify the medical speech in order to make you understand the IVF treatment as a whole.

Do I need to constitute a whole application file for each attempt ?

Your file is valid for a year from the day you deposit it at Clinique Bouchard. Nevertheless, you need to call us at the start of each treatment.

We may need to check with you if your file is valid due to a change in administrative regulations.

At what point do I need to contact the clinic ?

When your doctor gives you your prescription for your treatment, he or she will also give you the clinic booklet. It contains the procedure to follow. In case of incomprehension, you should call us right away.

Does a frozen embryo transfer count as an attempt ?

It's considered as being part of the attempt that allowed to obtain the embryos.

Where can we find legislative data about IVF procedures ?

<http://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/>
<http://www.imr-marseille.com/>

YOU AND IVF, MISCELANEOUS QUESTIONS

Can we still have a regular sexual activity during treatment ?

Yes, but a few days of abstinence are required for sperm collection, egg retrieval and transfer... You should talk about it with your doctor and according to your medical file.

Do hormonal treatments have an effect on weight ?

No. There is no real fattening observed, simply some minor abdominal bloating occasionally.

Do I have to lie down after transfer ?

No, unless your doctor says so.

I'm bleeding after transfer, it means I'm not pregnant...

Wrong. Your pregnancy can start with some bleeding. It can also happen in natural pregnancy. That's why you must take the plasmatic β HCG blood test, prescribed after embryo transfer. This test must be run in a laboratory.

When is the amount of transferred embryos decided ?

This matter is discussed with your doctor the first time on the day of the egg retrieval, and a second time on the day of the transfer, depending on the results obtained after the IVF.

Does the egg retrieval hurt ?

No, since it's done under general anaesthesia.

What kind of anaesthesia is it ?

It's a DIAZ-analgesia : a short time general anaesthesia with no side effect.

Does the transfer hurt ?

No, it is done without anaesthesia (except in some rare cases) and doesn't hurt. It's pretty much like a regular gynaecologist consultation.

Can an IVF be cancelled for administrative reasons ?

Yes, if the decrees or laws governing the ART are not respected.

Can an IVF be cancelled for medical reasons ?

Yes, if the ovarian response is inadequate (too high or too low).

Does my companion have to come with me for the retrieval procedure ?

Yes. If he can't be present, he must fill in a discharge declaring he's aware the IVF is taking place.

You need to be accompanied by another person of your choice who will be entrusted with the briefcase containing the sample. This person must have a piece of ID.

How much time do I have to stay at the Clinique Bouchard ?

No more than half a day, always in the morning.

I was late for an injection, what can I do ?

Disrespect of the time schedule for injections must not become a habit. If you're late, do the injection as soon as possible and if you actually skipped one during the day, call your doctor to know what consequences it'll have and what you should do next.

Do the frozen embryos always survive through the thawing process ?

No, some of them don't resist to the shift in temperature.

Do we obtain oocytes with each retrieval procedure ?

No, in some rare cases, the procedure doesn't yield any oocyte. It can happen, for instance, if the triggering injection was poorly done or if the ovaries didn't react properly to stimulation.

Do we obtain embryos with every attempt ?

No, unfortunately some IVF don't yield any result. But there are other techniques that can be used to yield better results.

How many IVF attempts do we get ?

Four. But the counter is reset after a childbirth.

How many can we do a year ?

It is necessary to let the ovaries rest for one or two cycles between each attempt, which makes for 2 or 3 possible attempts a year.

Is the pre-anaesthesia consultation mandatory ?

Yes

Do I have to bring spare clothes for my hospitalization ?

No, everything is provided to you.

When I'm supposed to be on an empty stomach, does it mean I also have to stop smoking and drinking ?

Yes, it means smoking, drinking and eating. Breakfast will be brought to you at the clinic after the egg retrieval procedure.

In any case, it is contradictory to smoke and do an IVF since smoking is bad for the baby during pregnancy.

If I have abdominal pain, how do I know if it's related to a possible hyperstimulation syndrome ?

1/ Before the egg collection, the doctor ascertains on echography if there is a hyperstimulation and will talk to you about it. Same goes for the day of the retrieval procedure.

2/ In case of severe abdominal pain after the egg collection, you must signal it to your doctor on the day the transfer takes place.

3/ After transfer, on a pain assessing scale, it must be more important than your menstruation.

In case of multiple pregnancies, what are the options ?

If it's a twin pregnancy, it won't be reduced.

If it's a triple pregnancy, an embryo reduction is considered, in order to minimize risks of miscarriage and for the mother's health.