

In Vitro Fertilisation

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to know

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Tel: 020 7222 5845
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What is *in vitro* fertilisation (IVF)?

IVF is used to help couples that cannot conceive naturally. A number of eggs are fertilised by sperm in a petri-dish and one or two of the newly created embryos are then transferred to the womb in the hope that they will implant.

How often is IVF used?

IVF births account for about 1% of the total number of births in Britain each year and 68,000 IVF babies have been born since 1978. However IVF is much more widely used than the number of births suggest. This is because IVF has about an 80% failure rate.

What does the 80% failure rate mean?

For the total number of IVF treatment cycles carried out in Britain every year only about 20% result in a live birth. However, far fewer than 20% of embryos actually survive because many more are created than will be transferred to the womb and survive to birth.

Is IVF safe?

There is a risk in IVF treatment of the woman suffering over-stimulated ovaries as a result of the drugs given in order to harvest eggs. Some women have died, although this is rare.

Leading IVF scientists would like to run periodic health checks on all IVF babies, as they do not know if IVF can lead to health or developmental problems in the children it produces. They believe that there may be health risks for children created from frozen embryos and a risk of infertility for boys created by intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI) used in cases of male sub-fertility.

Above all, IVF is highly dangerous for the embryos involved.

In Vitro Fertilisation: Ethical or not?

IVF techniques put the life of the human embryo at undue risk since only about 1 in 25 embryos created through IVF survives to birth.

Between 1978 and 2002 68,000 IVF babies have been born but in the process 1.2 million embryos created by IVF were frozen, destroyed or used in research.

IVF is a multi-million pound industry despite having a failure rate of about 80%. Infertility is big business despite the emotional distress inflicted on 80% of hopeful couples who go for this treatment and end up with nothing.

IVF has been linked to higher rates of rare childhood cancers and diseases. One study also found that IVF babies were three times more likely to have cerebral palsy.

The IVF industry has led to children being treated as commodities, or property with couples going to court in legal battles over frozen embryos.

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), which licences IVF clinics, has consulted on the possibility of parents being allowed to choose the sex of their children. Adult and parental choice is given ultimate priority over the health, development and emotional and psychological welfare of children.