

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority (HFEA), which licences and controls the use of IVF and PGD, recently raised the possibility of using PGD so that couples can choose the sex of their child simply because they prefer a boy to a girl or vice versa. This is equally unethical.

The existence and use of technologies such as IVF and PGD has widened the possibilities for “choices” in childbearing beyond those opportunities that nature provides. This has resulted in the tendency of our society to treat children as commodities or property instead of receiving them as gifts.



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# Pre-Implantation Genetic Diagnosis

*What you need  
to know*



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## What is pre-implantation genetic diagnosis (PGD)?

PGD is a technique used to test embryos created in the laboratory for genetic disabilities or sex-related disabilities such as haemophilia, which only affects boys.

A court case in April 2003 allowed PGD to be used for the first time to test for a genetic disability and at the same time select an embryo who is a tissue match. This enabled a couple to create a child who can be used to help an older brother by supplying blood, stem cells or a tissue transplant.

## How is PGD performed?

Once the embryo has been created and develops to the 4 or 8 cell stage, one of his/her cells will be removed. The cell contains a complete set of the embryo's DNA. By examining the cell scientists can tell if the embryo has certain

genetic conditions, whether he/she may develop a sex-related disability and whether the embryo is a tissue match for another person.

If the embryo does not meet these criteria he/she will be set aside or discarded.

## Does PGD prevent disability?

No, PGD does not prevent disability. It prevents embryos with certain disabilities from continuing to live. PGD is used to discriminate against the embryo on the basis of disability, sex and tissue type.

## Could PGD affect the gender-balance of the population?

In some cultures, and among certain ethnic groups, boy-preference is very strong. In China and India (for different reasons) screening during pregnancy and abortion are used to eliminate unborn baby girls. PGD could be used for the same purpose.

## Pre-implantation genetic diagnosis: Ethical or not?

The use of PGD technology is unethical as it discriminates against individuals on account of their disability, sex and tissue type.

This discrimination is fatal when those embryos discovered not to meet certain requirements are discarded. The use of PGD shows no respect for the dignity of the human individual as it accepts the destruction of human lives that fail to meet particular criteria.

PGD shows no respect for those born with disabilities as it suggests that lives affected by disability are not worth living.

The use of PGD to select human embryos with a particular tissue type to provide transplants violates the right of all human individuals to be treated as valuable in themselves. Children created in this way and for this purpose are being treated as important for what they can provide, rather than for who they are.