

Ask the Fertility Doctor

The Path to Parenthood Isn't Always Straight

by Wendy B. Shelly, MD FACOG



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The doctors of Fertility Specialists Medical Group, Arlene J. Morales, M.D., and Wendy Shelly, M.D. See their advertisement on the back cover

Q. I would like to use my friend Scott's sperm to conceive a child. How do I do this?

Waiting, Tammy

A. When counseling individuals/couples about using a known sperm donor, I focus on three things **(1) Safety (2) Efficacy and (3) Parenting rights.**

Safety is of utmost concern when you are exposing yourself and potential offspring to tissues (the sperm!) that may carry infectious diseases. I recommend that all individuals follow the guidelines issued by the FDA (www.fda.gov/BiologicsBloodVaccines/SafetyAvailability/TissueSafety/ucm232876.htm) regarding any sort of tissue donation (sperm, kidney, heart, etc). This involves screening for infectious diseases through blood and a physical exam as well as answering a questionnaire. If your friend screens "positive", then after medical counseling, you can then make an informed decision about using his sperm.

Efficacy is also important when considering using your friend's sperm. The typical 30yr old female has an expectation of 15% pregnancy per coital cycle; a single insemination yields even fewer pregnancies. A fertility specialist can evaluate you and your friend prior to initiating attempts: Is the sperm "OK"? Are my tubes open? Do I ovulate?

Parenting rights are the final and most important topic. In today's evolving legal climate, parenting rights in third party reproduction (using donor sperm/egg/GC) are not clear-cut. It is vital to establish clear "intent-to-parent" prior to conceiving a child. I strongly recommend seeking legal counsel prior to any attempts with your friend's sperm.

Q. My partner, Marc, and I have decided to start a family using an egg donor and a gestational carrier. What now? Lawyer? Doctor? Gestational Carrier Agency? Help, Rob, San Diego

A. Congratulations! Starting a family with "third parties" can be daunting, and many individuals / couples don't know where to start. Choosing your ideal egg donor (whether anonymous or a friend) and a healthy, appropriate gestational carrier (GC) (whether commercial or a friend) are the most important elements to ensure success. With this in mind, I recommend **beginning** with a medical consultation with a board-certified Reproductive Endocrinologist ("fertility specialists"). A fertility specialist will:

- (1) assess you (and/or your partner) for sperm quality and its use
- (2) screen potential egg donors for suitable egg quantity and health/genetic history- some fertility centers, like ours, have their own pre-screened anonymous egg donor pool
- (3) evaluate GC for likelihood of successful term delivery
- (4) explain and perform mandated (FDA) infectious disease screening on required parties
- (5) coordinate and conduct the actual getting pregnant part (IVF)!

Once you have established care with a fertility specialist, you then have a firm grounding to move forward selecting the egg donor and GC. Your fertility specialist will work with your donor, carrier agency and attorney (need them!) throughout the process of building your family. Best of luck!

You can find a board-certified Reproductive Endocrinologist at www.abog.org/credential_search.asp

Have a question about fertility, family building, or reproductive health? Email Dr. Shelly at GSDBA@ivfspecialists.com, and your question could be answered in the next edition of GSDBA's Community Connection magazine.

Dr. Wendy Shelly, MD (*pictured right*) serves as the Director of Third Party Reproduction for FSMG (Fertility Specialists Medical Group). Her medical school, OB/GYN residency and Reproductive Endocrine/Infertility Fellowship were respectively at: Pennsylvania State University, University of Virginia and University of California, San Francisco. Dr. Shelly is passionate about educating the San Diego community on fertility and reproductive health. She is especially dedicated to informing LGBT individuals /couples about their family building options. Dr. Shelly moved to San Diego to join FSMG in 2011 with her family.

