

Getting started on your surrogacy journey can feel daunting, but it doesn't have to be. There are plenty of ways to get the information and support you need, so you can move toward the joys of being a parent. Understanding how the process works for you as a single gay man or part of a gay couple can reduce any stress you feel when thinking about how to start your family.

It hasn't always been easy for male couples to start families, but thanks to medical advancements and legal changes it's becoming far less difficult. Now you have the option of working with fertility specialists on procedures that can give you a healthy, biological child.

If you're ready to get started on your surrogacy journey, but you're not sure where to begin, this guide can help you understand the basics and focus on questions you want to ask for the future. Here is all you need to know about your journey, so you can make important decisions and move forward with confidence and peace of mind.

Getting Started: The Basics

To move through a [surrogacy journey](#), single men and gay couples typically use an egg donor and what's called a "gestational surrogate," which is the person who actually carries the baby to term. In a scenario like this, IVF ([in vitro fertilization](#)) is used.

The first part of this process requires someone willing to [donate eggs](#). This is not an uncommon process, and many times there are friends or family members who will agree to donate eggs to a gay man or male couple. There are also anonymous donors who can be part of this process.

The egg donor will undergo a process called ovarian stimulation, to encourage egg production and improve the quality and viability of the eggs at the same time. Then the donor will have an egg retrieval procedure done, which is an outpatient process that carries very little risk. Once the eggs have been collected, they will be fertilized with the sperm of the intended father.

For gay couples, eggs can be split between both fathers. In other words, one person's sperm can be used for one child, and the other person's sperm for another child. That allows for both fathers to have children that are biologically theirs, as this is very important to some couples.

However, this is not a requirement for the surrogacy process or your particular journey through it. Couples who only plan to have one child, or fathers who aren't concerned about their biological relationship to the children don't need to worry about doing this.

After fertilization, one or two embryos will be transferred to the gestational carrier's uterus. The gestational carrier will not have any biological connection to the child.

Understanding Egg Donor Options

One of the most important parts of your surrogacy journey is a good understanding of the options you have for egg donors. Donors are what make families possible, and they're an extremely valuable part of the process.

For gay couples and single men who are looking to share biological connection to their children, an egg donor can help them become a father. Some gay men have an egg donor in mind, through close friendships or other connections. But for most, an egg donor will be someone they don't know.

Choosing a donor means working with an IVF or other fertility center to find information about the traits of the donor who's being chosen. The goal is to produce a healthy pregnancy and child, and donor eggs that are of good quality is a big part of that.

High-quality eggs, typically from a younger woman who has no known genetic abnormalities or health conditions, are the best choice. Working with a fertility clinic can help you get answers to all your questions about donor eggs and where they come from.

Not only is that more likely to help you feel confident about the chances of a healthy baby, but it can also make you feel like a bigger part of the process and help establish more of a connection with your child.

A Quick Overview of IVF

IVF is the process of collecting eggs, fertilizing them, and implanting them into a surrogate with the goal of creating a healthy pregnancy. Anyone undergoing the IVF process as a donor to help you create a family should be aware of what they need to do for the best chances of success.

Donors who are providing eggs should always follow the recommendations of their medical provider. In addition, they should avoid:

- **Alcohol**
- **Recreational drugs**
- **Smoking**
- **Fish with high mercury levels**
- **More than one caffeinated product per day**
- **Certain pain relievers, including Advil, Motrin, Aleve, aspirin, naproxen, and ibuprofen**

All of these can have serious effects on the quality of a donor's eggs and the body's ability to produce them, so avoiding these things during the IVF cycle increases the chances of healthy eggs for a successful pregnancy.

Prenatal vitamins are often recommended before any kind of IVF treatment. Egg donors can choose to take these vitamins but the gestational carrier will be required to take them so as to decrease the risk of neural tube defects in the baby. There may be medications that interfere with these vitamins, so it's important to have a doctor review everything first.

In preparation for IVF, the egg donor will be given injections of fertility medications. This will stimulate egg production, and the donor will be monitored through ultrasounds and blood work. When the donor's eggs are mature, they will be removed from the ovaries. This is an outpatient surgical procedure.

Egg retrieval is done through guidance with a transvaginal ultrasound, and intravenous sedation. General anesthesia is available but is rarely required. In most cases, with intravenous sedation, the patient sleeps through the procedure and does not feel any discomfort.

Once the eggs have been successfully retrieved, an embryologist will fertilize the eggs using the father's sperm. For many male couples, the sperm comes from whichever one the couple has agreed will be the biological father. Alternatively, the eggs can be split between two fathers in order to produce genetic embryos for each father.

The embryos are cultured for 5 to 7 days and the embryos that reach the blastocyst stage will undergo a biopsy whereby a few cells are removed. These cells will undergo PGT-A (preimplantation genetic testing for aneuploidy) which is testing for missing or additional chromosomes. Immediately after the embryo biopsy, the embryo is cryopreserved or frozen. Embryos with missing or additional chromosomes generally do not result in a pregnancy. If a pregnancy does occur from a genetically abnormal embryo, either a miscarriage or a baby with chromosomal abnormalities results.

After at least one embryo has been created that is genetically normal, the embryo(s) will be implanted into a gestational carrier. That involves a FET (frozen embryo transfer) cycle, which involves taking injections in order to prepare the lining of the uterus for implantation of the embryo(s). The embryo transfer is performed under ultrasound guidance.

Approximately 9 days after the FET the gestational surrogate will take a blood test to see if a pregnancy was established. The gestational carrier must also take estrogen and progesterone for a short period of time to maintain the pregnancy.

Carriers will be weaned off these medications once the placenta starts to produce its own hormones in sufficient quantities. Monitoring of the hormone levels in the blood will be done during this time, to reduce risk.

Choosing a Gestational Carrier

The choice of a gestational carrier is an important one. This is the person who will carry your future child for nine months, and what that carrier does during that time can affect the health and safety of your child.

You will select the surrogate, so you can feel comfortable with the person you've chosen for this help and support. The surrogate will also sign legal documents that relinquish any rights to the child, for your security.

You can ask a friend or family member to be your surrogate, or you can select one from an agency. Surrogates have extensive screening that they have to undergo, as well as a psychological assessment, to make sure they're healthy and able to carry a child. That doesn't guarantee a healthy pregnancy or baby, but it greatly reduces the risk of problems.

Any gestational carrier has to sign legal contracts and provide written consent to the procedure before they can proceed. If you have someone in mind that you would like to serve as your surrogate, talking to them about being a gestational carrier is the first step toward getting that agreement and relationship in place.

Where you live can make a difference in how you choose a gestational carrier, too. Some gay male couples live in areas of the country or the world where having a gestational carrier help you start a family isn't as easy.

If you're in one of these locations, you still have options. There are out-of-state and even [international opportunities](#) for you to find a surrogate and move toward the creation of a family. It may take longer, and there are more steps to follow, but don't give up on the idea of being parents.

Don't Forget the Legal Requirements

Don't forget any other legal requirements or concerns you might have, or that could come up as you raise your child together. Getting all of that established and taken care of is important. You might have questions about how the birth certificate is handled, for example, or other issues that are related to using an egg donor or surrogate.

What you need to do, and the requirements you need to meet, vary from state to state and country to country. Talk to a surrogacy lawyer about all of it, and get a plan in place. It's understandable that you want to move forward right away and get started on the creation of your family, but taking the time to get all the legal aspects in place is the right foundation to start from.

The Fertility Institute of San Diego

The Fertility Institute of San Diego is a patient-centric practice, honoring each patient as a unique individual and providing best in class and compassionate fertility care in a warm and nurturing environment. We realize that undergoing fertility treatment is an intimate, complex and emotional process for patients. It is for this reason that Dr. Hosseinzadeh practice philosophy is to treat each patient as she would her own family members. You will be taken care of by a single physician who knows everything about your case and will be there at every visit to perform all of your procedures including ultrasounds, egg retrievals and embryo transfers, unlike the larger practices.

Our team of dedicated professionals has been carefully selected to understand and appreciate what patients experience in treatment and take the time to listen to our patients, make personal contact with them and pay close attention to their individual needs and situation. We provide this level of individualized and personalized care as we determine the best treatment approach for our patients. Our state of the art facilities have been created to provide a relaxing environment conducive to giving patients the best possible fertility experience and outcome.

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