



## Week 2 - Questions for the Clinic

When embarking on the journey of fertility investigations and treatment, the vast range of options available can be dumbfounding. Below are some of the most important questions to ask when getting started and figuring out which clinic is right for you. These questions focus on IVF specifically.

### **Tell me how your clinic is different to others?**

Most fertility clinics offer different types of treatment depending on the expertise of their staff and the resources available. If you already know what type of treatment you are looking for (perhaps due to a pre-existing condition) then you will need to find out whether a prospective clinic can meet your needs and whether you are happy with their experience and success rates for someone in your situation. This is also an opportunity to find out if their approach and ethos fits your needs.

### **How do you decide which treatment is best for me?**

Treatment programmes differ for everyone. , Factors such as your personal history, existing conditions, test results, past treatment and the clinic's specialist areas will determine their recommendations. If you don't understand how these decisions are made, ask for more information. You are the client. This is your journey.

### **What types of treatment exist other than conventional IVF?**

There are now a number of different types of IVF available as awareness grows that traditional IVF with long stimulation cycles are not always appropriate. Other lower, or no drug, treatments are now offered by some clinics, and include:

**Natural Cycle IVF:** which aims to collect the one egg that has been naturally selected by the body, and is carried out without the use of any fertility drugs. Fertilisation is then carried out as normal.

**Modified Natural Cycle IVF:** a form of Natural Cycle IVF where medication is given to the woman for just 3-4 days in order to block spontaneous ovulation. A small dose of stimulation hormone is also given in order to keep the follicles healthy and growing.

**Mild Stimulation IVF:** takes place within the natural menstrual cycle using a minimal amount of fertility drugs. For just 5-9 days stimulating medication is given, compared to 4-5 weeks of medication in traditional IVF.

**In Vitro Maturation (IVM):** includes the collection of immature eggs from the ovaries, which are then matured in the lab before being fertilised. This treatment retains the benefits of IVF, but gives an opportunity for multiple embryos to be created and frozen for later use.

### **What tests do you recommend before treatment?**

Before you begin fertility treatment, a clinic should carry out thorough tests on both you and your partner. These tests can be crucial in identifying any fertility problems or issues you may have before treatments are decided or take place. Alternatively, they may discover that you may not need fertility treatment, and that you just need advice to help you conceive naturally. A fertility MOT is a simple process that can help to identify cases of infertility and may mean less invasive and more affordable fertility treatments are suitable.

### **Would you advise any tests during treatment?**

During treatment, clinics will usually offer vaginal ultrasound scans to monitor your ovaries, as well as blood tests.

Clinics may offer 'state of the art' tests or imaging systems, which are not always necessary for the success of the treatment, but can add to the cost. It's worth discussing these options in advance so you have time to consider and do further research if you need it. Making a decision mid treatment cycle while hormonal and under pressure is worth avoiding if possible. Ask what costs are attached, then determine whether you need or can afford them.

### **What are your success rates?**

It's worth remembering that not all clinics measure fertility success rates in the same way. Some limit the age of women they accept or only work with those who have particular FSH or AMH levels. This can give the impression of very high success rates which may not reflect your situation. It can be confusing, but be sure to ask for success rates for someone in your specific situation. If the consultant you are meeting with is vague or rushed, push for a real answer.

### **Do you provide treatment to women who have low egg reserve and high FSH or low AMH?**

Clinics may turn away women whose prospects for successful IVF treatment under their current programme are low, and would therefore lower the clinic's overall success rates. It is important to ask your clinic this upfront if you know that you are affected by low egg reserve, low AMH or any other issues.

### **Are there often complications in treatments from the clinic? Have any patients been admitted to hospital?**

Ovarian Hyper Stimulation Syndrome (OHSS) is a condition that affects the ovaries of some women who undergo high stimulation IVF treatment. Most cases are mild and can include symptoms such as nausea, vomiting and abdominal bloating, but in rare cases the condition can become severe and lead to serious illness or death. It is possible to entirely avoid OHSS by using lower drug IVF treatments, so if a clinic has had patients admitted to hospital with OHSS then it may be an indication that they favour a high drug approach and you should consider if this approach is right for you.

## How much is a full cycle and are there any other costs involved?

IVF typically includes a pre-cycle consultation with your fertility nurse, vaginal ultrasounds to assess development of follicles and endometrium, hormone monitoring, egg retrieval, anaesthetic and theatre fees, day-5 blastocyst culture, embryo freezing and storage (for first year) and initial embryo transfer. Ask if this is included in the quoted price for an IVF cycle.

If you need to use donor egg or sperm, ask how much this costs and if the clinic can support you in sourcing them.

Often, blood tests to screen for STD's and other diseases are mandatory, but not included in the price of an IVF cycle, so ask if there are costs like these that should be factored in.

Print off these questions and if you're on this journey with a partner, talk through your questions before a consultation. Ask your partner if there is anything they need to know.

If you don't get answers to all of your questions, ask if you can email them directly to get clarity.

**REMEMBER, YOU ARE  
THE CLIENT. THIS IS  
YOUR BODY & YOUR  
JOURNEY.**

It can be a good idea to agree that one person will ask questions and the other will take notes. It can be a lot of information to take in and it's hard to remember everything, particularly if the terminology is new to you.