

Making motherhood an informed and happy choice

With the option for freezing eggs available, young women are now empowered

to freeze now and enjoy a planned motherhood. Dr Nahla Kazim, Reproductive Medicine and Infertility, Director of Fertility Preservation, Bourn Hall Fertility Centre and founder of Kazim's Fertility Barza, explains why egg freezing is such a big deal for women looking to achieve the right work-life balance.



Dr Nahla Kazim

Director of Fertility Preservation,
Bourn Hall Fertility Centre, Al Ain.
Founder of Kazim's Fertility Barza

When Elsa Norbert was diagnosed with breast cancer at 30, she was overwhelmed. However, she was relieved her cancer was in early stages which meant fewer rounds of chemo and no mastectomy. She had over 90 per cent chance of being cancer free for life when if she followed the strict protocols.

Elsa, a director in her telecommunication business was the typical well rounded modern woman who wanted it all - work - life balance and of course a brood of kids. So, she did the next best thing before undergoing chemotherapy; she opted for egg freezing. At 35, thanks to the quality of frozen eggs, Elsa is proud mom of two cherubic

twins.

"Egg freezing was one of the best decisions of my life. It not only helped me undergo my treatment guilt free, it also saved the health and quality of life of my kids. I would recommend this for every woman because it empowers them over their body, gives them the chance of pursuing their career without the fear of the ticking biological clock and giving them the option to prepare and plan their family at the right time, said the content mom.

Last month, doctors and happy parents celebrated the world In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) Day and Egg freezing, relatively new phenomenon has been made possible because of

the evolution of this modern science. Let us understand the nitty gritty of the technique

Egg freezing – taking a leaf out of nature's playbook

Dr. Kazim draws a very succinct parallel to nature. "The thought of time stasis through freezing has always mesmerized the mankind and has been portrayed in many Sci-Fi movies, like Demolition man and Captain America. Indeed, the phenomenon is also seen in mother nature. Creatures, such as wood frogs, have the capability of cryptobiosis, wherein all metabolic processes apparently cease temporarily, yet the creatures

remain alive, allowing them to survive while being frozen. Another inspiration from mother nature can be seen in Bears who enter winter hibernation, with slowing down of their metabolism considerably and the reawakening months later.

In the field of Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART), the Enigma of cryonics (rapid freezing) is called cryofreezing/ cryopreservation. Fertility cryopreservation increasingly became a real option and fundamental aspect of clinical practice. Thanks to the rapidly-advancing science of Assisted Reproductive Technology that helped in prolonging women's ability to have children or delaying motherhood and emerged as solution to many short-term and long-term complications driven by

Female Reproductive Journey

When a woman is pregnant, a female embryo contains about 7 million eggs at 20th week of gestation. At birth the number drops to 1-2 millions eggs. A healthy female at the time of puberty has about 400,000 primordial follicles, each of which contains an immature ovum. About 300-400 follicles reach maturity and ovulate during the reproductive life span, while others undergo atresia. Hence, there is continuous decline in quality and quantity of eggs with advancing age until menopause. This process is accelerated significantly from the age of 36 years and can be seen at a faster pace or earlier due to conditions, thus reducing the chances of a female of having

off-springs.

diseases, cancers, Genetic syndrome, ageing process or fertility treatment itself.

Indications when egg freezing is recommended

- Oncology patients receiving Gonadotoxic treatment
- Medical/ surgical conditions
- Single Gene Disorder or Genetic Hereditary conditions requiring PGD-ICSI cycles
- Women undergoing IVF/ ICSI cycle with risk of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome or premature ovarian insufficiency.
- Social, personal reasons and career plans
- It is the preferred option of Fertility Preservation for post pubertal females without partners. The cycle requires ovarian stimulation using subcutaneous injections and an egg retrieval procedure that may be done through transvaginal, transrectal or transabdominal route under the GA. The process may take 2-3 weeks. Indeed, several stimulation protocols, such as random start, DuoStim protocol, have emerged to increase the oocyte yield through multiple retrievals in shortest time frame specially prior to starting any gonadotoxic treatment in cases of cancer.
- Successful preservation depends on the age of a female and number of eggs frozen with chances of egg survival after thawing reaching to 90%, albeit different from center to center.
- UAE has been pioneering the egg cryopreservation techniques since almost two decades with thousands of children continue to be born, and live birth rates comparable with the international benchmark.

UAE Legislations

- Oocyte cryopreservation is allowed for both married and single

females.

- Cryopreservation is allowed up to a period of 5 years, with yearly renewal of storage consent
- Donor Embryo, Gamete (Sperm, eggs, ovarian and testicular) and Gestational carriers/ surrogacy are all prohibited as per the UAE law

In conclusion

Dr Kazim adds, "whether you make this choice because of a cancer treatment, various medical conditions, or because you wish to delay having children until later in life, egg freezing has proven to be a reliable fertility preservation method with excellent results.

- The procedure has advantages with limitations and a personalized consultation with fertility specialist is empirical prior to considering egg freezing.
- Fertility Preservation counselling is a fundamental aspect of egg freezing and multidisciplinary approach in patients' management requiring clear explanation of the process with expected outcomes is commendable to reduce the physical and psychological impact on the patient.
- The role of healthcare service providers for females at risk of premature ovarian failure is to facilitate patients' rapid access to fertility services in timely manner

Dr Kazim with experience of over 25 years, continues to provide patient-centered, evidence-based, and individually customized reproductive care in a compassionate setting with state of Art technology; embracing body and mind as a

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