

# COUNSELLING PATIENT HANDOUT



## EXPLORING EGG DONOR OPTIONS

It is frequently reported that when people begin to explore egg donor options, they are unsure where to start. Navigating the potential pathways can seem overwhelming and it can be difficult to source accurate information. This handout is intended to provide some current information on options to explore.

A trusted source of information for donor conception within Victoria is the Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority (VARTA). They have updated their “Finding an Egg Donor 2020” Brochure, which provides a helpful overview of the context of egg donation in Victoria:

<https://www.varta.org.au/resources/brochure/finding-egg-donor>

This brochure highlights some key information about donation in Victoria, such as that donor arrangements are non-commercial (a person cannot pay for a donor), and that donations are open identity (that is, a child is legally entitled to access the identity of the donor when they turn 18 years).

### Emotional implications of exploring egg donation

In our experience, it is very common for individuals and couples to feel overwhelmed when they begin considering egg donation as women and couples are simultaneously grieving their own fertility and the loss of a biological connection, whilst navigating a new and uncertain pathway. Wherever possible, try to acknowledge and process your grief and loss, and access support whenever you need it. The uncertainty about how long it may take to find an egg donor and anxiety about finding a good fit donor can be some of the most challenging aspects. It is helpful to seek trusted sources of information and personalised conversations wherever possible.

### How do I find an egg donor?

#### Your own social networks

For those who feel comfortable sharing their fertility experiences with family and friends, it is possible to let some or all of your social networks know that you are looking for an egg donor. It is common for people to let others know in general that you are looking for an egg donor, and then stepping back, to see if any social connections come forward with an offer.

Alternatively, if there is a specific person known to you who you would like to ask, you can consider approaching them to ask them if they would consider acting as an egg donor. The Newlife IVF counsellors can assist in approaching these individual discussions in a sensitive and respectful way, if you would like to discuss this further.

#### Online forums

Many people connect with their egg donors through online forums. There are two popular forums that people from Victoria commonly access:

- [www.eggdonationaustralia.com.au](http://www.eggdonationaustralia.com.au)
- [www.eggdonorangels.com.au](http://www.eggdonorangels.com.au)

These forums are moderated and require approval to join from the moderators. They wish to seek if you are genuinely interested in being an egg donor or recipient. In these forums, you are asked to share your personal story of fertility and the type of person you are seeking to connect with. It is hoped that through connecting and 'talking' to people online, you may strike up a relationship with a potential egg donor and decide to talk over the phone or meet in person. Anecdotally, we are aware that many people do connect with potential egg donors through these forums, however it does require a degree of emotional investment and energy in posting personal information and "chatting" with others.

There is also a Facebook page for Egg Donation Australia, which can be found here:

<https://sarahjefford.com/egg-donation-australia/>

Sarah Jefford is a lawyer who is actively engaged in the donor and surrogacy community in Melbourne, and she has helpful information, a blog, and a link to the Facebook group on her webpage.

### **Advertising for an egg donor**

You may also choose to advertise for an egg donor in a printed publication, such as the free 'Melbourne's Child' magazine that is often available in community and hospital settings such as maternity wards, childcare centres, and maternal and child health centres.

Before you may place an advertisement, you must gain an approval number from the Minister of Health by sending a copy of your advertisement. Contact details are listed here, and further guidance is contained in the VARTA 'Finding an Egg Donor 2020' brochure.

Minister for Health Department of Health and Human Services GPO Box 4541

MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Email Address: [minister.health@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:minister.health@health.vic.gov.au)

### **Once you have identified a donor**

If you have connected with a person who is willing to take the next steps, please contact your Fertility Specialist who can assist in arranging the necessary screening tests and if treatment plans. Subsequently, you and your donor will be provided with information regarding the steps involved in preparing for a donor cycle, such as counselling, nursing, and consenting processes.

### **Further resources**

We understand that exploring egg donor options can feel unfamiliar and that you will have questions as you navigate this information.

VARTA has a helpful brochure, "Thinking of Using Donor Eggs, Sperm or Embryos?" brochure, which provides an overview of the donor legislation. They also have personal stories, podcasts and research articles on donor conception: <https://www.varta.org.au/information-support/donor-conception/information-parentsand-recipients>

### **We're here to help**

Please contact the Newlife IVF Counselling Team on (03) 8080 8933, or email [counselling@newlifeivf.com.au](mailto:counselling@newlifeivf.com.au) if you would like to discuss your individual circumstances in further detail.