Fertility Preservation for Teens and Young Adult Oncology Patients

Advances in cancer treatments have given better results for many children, teens, and young adults diagnosed and treated for cancer. Some types of cancer treatment can harm the reproductive system (ovaries or testicles). Sometimes men and women who have had cancer treatment have fertility problems and may no longer be able to have children.

Talk with your child's doctor about whether the treatment they will have may cause fertility problems.

What affects fertility?
1. Type and amount of chemotherapy
2. Dose and location of radiation therapy
3. Location of surgery
4. Age
5. Pre-existing fertility risk factors

Although not all treatments cause fertility problems, we want you to be aware of your child's options for future family planning.

Are there ways for children, teens, and young adults to preserve fertility before starting treatment for cancer?

For Women
Medicines to protect the ovaries from harm due to chemotherapy may stop menstrual periods during chemotherapy treatment, and decrease the chance of excessive bleeding.

A recent research study suggests giving a medicine to turn off the ovaries. Leuprolide (Lupron®) or Goserelin (Zoladex®) may help to protect the ovaries from harm due to chemotherapy. Young women who had their ovaries "turned off" were more likely to have periods come back or have a successful pregnancy after cancer treatment.

Some centers do experimental treatments using freezing eggs or part of an ovary. Your doctor will talk with you if these treatments are appropriate for your child.

For Men
For men who have gone through puberty, sperm can be frozen by a process called cryopreservation.

- If possible, sperm freezing should be done before starting chemotherapy.
- The cost of saving sperm is not normally covered by insurance.
- Estimated cost of saving sperm is about $1500.
- You are asked to fill out a questionnaire, have a physical exam, and have blood and urine testing around the time of the sperm freezing.

If you are interested in cryopreservation of sperm: If your child is younger than 18, you should call: UW Generations Clinic, (608) 824-6160
If your child is over 18, you or he should call: UW Generations Clinic, (608)824-6160
The staff at Generations explain the process, the cost, and the tests needed to help you decide if sperm cryopreservation is right for your child.