

## WHAT IS IVF?

In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) combines eggs and sperm “in vitro” or “in glass.” It is promoted to individuals and couples who cannot conceive naturally for various reasons (e.g., blocked fallopian tubes, severe male factor infertility, etc.) as a means of achieving pregnancy. IVF does not address or correct the underlying causes of infertility but instead circumvents natural fertilization.

## IVF PROCESS

- An embryo is created in a lab using eggs retrieved from the biological mother and sperm from the biological father. From a biological perspective, a distinct human life is formed at fertilization when the sperm and egg combine to create a zygote—a genetically distinct individual. Cell division follows and one directional growth continues until the child's birth.
- The IVF industry routinely “grades” embryos based on their characteristics and “fitness.” Some embryos will be discarded at this stage due to a perceived lower chance of successful implantation. An embryo's grade may not be a direct indicator of its genetic health. Many embryos that appear to be of lower quality may still be genetically normal and capable of developing into healthy babies.
- Embryos are frequently screened for chromosomal abnormalities or genetic disorders, with over 75% of clinics engaging in this practice. 73% of IVF clinics allow for sex selection, and concerns have been raised about the industry allowing the selection of traits such as hair and eye color.
- Once one or more embryos have been selected for implantation, “surplus” embryos are usually frozen, allowing for additional attempts at pregnancy without undergoing another cycle of egg retrieval. Roughly 1.5 million embryos are currently frozen in liquid nitrogen freezers.

## HOW COMMON IS IVF?

Approximately 2.3% of all infants born in the United States every year are conceived using Assisted Reproductive Technologies (ART). According to the CDC's 2021 Assisted Reproductive Technology Fertility Clinic and National Summary Report, “approximately 238,126 patients had 413,776 ART cycles performed at 453 reporting clinics in the United States, resulting in 112,088 clinical pregnancies, 91,906 live births (deliveries of one or more living infants), and 97,128 live born infants.” To date, it's estimated that over eight million babies have been born using IVF. Another 1.5 million embryos are frozen in liquid nitrogen freezers.

## HOW CAN WE SUPPORT COUPLES FACING INFERTILITY WITHOUT IVF?

IVF is not the only (or most affordable) option for couples facing infertility. Treatments such as NaProTechnology seek to improve egg or sperm quality, address underlying health concerns, or surgically repair reproductive organs to restore natural fertility. Depending on the infertility diagnosis, NaProTechnology success rates are often higher than IVF. They are often much more affordable than IVF and do not rely on creating embryos outside of the womb, thus avoiding the ethical concerns in the IVF industry, including embryo destruction, indefinite storage, and genetic selection.

A recent Library of Congress report on international IVF practices demonstrates that the U.S. has a uniquely lax approach to an industry responsible for creating human lives. In the U.S., couples are exposed to the risks of an unaccountable industry, and the children created face serious harm.

## IVF ROUTINELY VIOLATES CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO LIFE

IVF's success rate is only 23%. For women over 40, the odds drop to a less than 10% chance of success. However, that only counts the embryos that are implanted. Although the U.S. does not track how many IVF embryos are transferred to the womb and given a chance at life, research from the U.K. found that significantly more embryos were destroyed or left in storage than transferred. Based on CDC reporting of the number of IVF cycles in the U.S., it is estimated that only 2.3% of IVF embryos result in a live birth.

For the few babies born alive, there is significant evidence that being born via IVF increases the risks of cognitive, developmental, and physical disabilities.

## IVF ROUTINELY VIOLATES CHILDREN'S RIGHT TO THEIR MOTHER AND FATHER

Of the fraction of children created via IVF who are born alive, many will be separated from one or both biological parents via the use of "donor" sperm or egg. Estimates range between 30,000 to 60,000 children born through third parties every year. Because the fertility industry is not required to track or share numbers, we can only guess how many children are born via these arrangements that intentionally separate them from their mother and/or father.

- **"Donor" children are likely to struggle with identity issues.**

"...the system is not being fair to children like us who don't know who we look like when facing that mirror, don't know whose genes made what, don't know our family tree, don't know our medical history and don't know whose bodies we were once apart of.. before traded off for 75 dollars."

- **"Donor" children may have dozens or even hundreds of half-siblings.**

"I was also shocked to find out what a huge number of donor-conceived half-siblings I probably have living near me. At least 20, maybe over 50. It is painful to know that I likely won't ever even know most of their names... I love them and miss them without even knowing them. I'm grateful that I didn't accidentally marry one of them, and I worry that my own children will accidentally enter into a romantic relationship with one of their many (hundreds, maybe?) of cousins...It makes me nervous to think about the complexity of it all for my children."

- **"Donor" children often lack access to accurate medical history and health information.**

"I do not have a father, or the sense of identity that goes with one. I do not have any knowledge of half of my roots, my father, my medical history ... so every time a doctor asks me, 'Any family history of ...?' I have to tell them I do not, and cannot, know."

- **"Donor" children raised without a mom or dad can struggle with mother or father hunger.**

"Growing up without a father sucks...I feel like I have missed out on all of the little things, like having your dad give you piggybacks or teaching me how to ride a bike or getting overprotective when I show an interest in boys. I don't miss my donor personally, I mourn the loss of a childhood without a dad."

