



Post Embryo Transfer

What to expect on the day of embryo transfer

For women undergoing in vitro-fertilisation (IVF), having an embryo transfer is a big step towards pregnancy. On the day of embryo transfer, the embryologist thaws your frozen embryo(s) and allows them to rest for several hours before embryo transfer takes place. The doctor then carefully places a soft catheter which contains your embryo(s) into the uterus and gently unloads them.

The two-week wait after embryo transfer

The days leading up to the pregnancy test is commonly referred to as the 'two-week wait', as the test is done roughly 14 days after embryo transfer.

The hormone, beta-human chorionic gonadotropin (beta-hCG) is tested to check whether implantation has taken place. Beta-hCG is secreted by the developing placenta. A good indicator on the progress of pregnancy is the doubling of beta-hCG levels every two days. On the 6th week of implantation, you will have transvaginal scans for the doctor to visualize early structures of the fetus's life.

Different ladies have different opinions on what to do during the 'two-week wait'. Here are several tips as you anticipate the pregnancy test.



Do's and Don'ts after embryo transfer

The Do's

1. Having a healthy diet and supplements

Whilst the benefits of a good and balanced diet are known, supplements can also help give your body a boost in nutrition. Some supplements which are helpful include folic acid, vitamin D, and several others. As always, it's advisable to speak to your fertility specialist to find out which supplements to take as some may contain herbs that are not suitable for pregnancy.



2. Continue on with medications prescribed by your doctor

Your doctor will prescribe you medications after embryo transfer to support implantation of the embryo and sustain early pregnancy. Medications such as progesterone may come in the form of vaginal suppositories, tablets or injections. Having these medications is important because in a medicated transfer cycle, the womb now relies on externally given hormones to support the pregnancy.

3. Relax and take it easy

Remember to stay positive and try your best to reduce stress during this time. Take this opportunity during the two-week wait to care for yourself, mentally and physically, and focus on maintaining good health. Complete bed rest is not necessary, but you are advised to have adequate rest and sleep.

The Don'ts

1. Having sexual intercourse after embryo transfer

Generally, sex after embryo transfer is not recommended as it might cause contractions of the uterus and potentially interfere with embryo implantation. As a precaution, do abstain from sexual intercourse at least until the end of your first trimester of pregnancy.

2. Taking a pregnancy test right away

Some women choose to have early urine pregnancy-tests; whilst this is not wrong, the test results may be inconclusive. As such, it could be helpful to avoid early tests to save from unnecessary disappointment or anxiety.

3. Doing strenuous exercise

It is all right to go on with your daily lifestyle during the 'two-week wait'. You can remain active and have light exercises such as stretching. However, you should not overdo it with strenuous exercises such as jogging, cycling, weight-lifting or long walks at the park.

Symptoms after embryo transfer

Most women expect symptoms or 'signs of pregnancy' after embryo transfer to indicate whether implantation is successful. Although some symptoms may suggest so, it could be due to the intake of hormone medications such as estrogen or progesterone. Some women experience no symptoms at all and eventually, go on to become pregnant. Hence, it is best not to read into these symptoms and wait for the b-hCG test and ultrasounds scans by the doctor, as this is most conclusive.



Bearing that in mind, here are several symptoms that are known to occur after embryo transfer.

Bleeding or spotting	Light bleeding/spotting is another common symptom within the first few days after transfer. This often shows as brownish discharge or a small amount of fresh blood. It could be a sign that the embryo has started to implant in the lining of the uterus.
Cramping	You may experience cramping, similar to that during a period. It might indicate that the embryo is implanting and causing you discomfort. Similarly, it could also mean that your menses is on the way.
Sore or tender breasts	Sore or tender breasts which are pain to the touch could be because you're pregnant or from the effects of hormones from fertility medications.

As with the nature of fertility treatment, there will be uncertainties, and not all situations have clear indications. Similarly, some women who have had their embryo transfer experience these symptoms, and some do not; and either can go on to become pregnant.