

Fertility Leave and Guidance

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1 Introduction

The university recognises the physical and emotional stresses of undergoing fertility treatment and is committed to supporting staff throughout the process.

As part of our commitment to reproductive health, this guidance outlines the support available for employees balancing fertility treatment with work commitments, whether they are undergoing treatment themselves or supporting a partner. It also provides practical advice for line managers to help them support employees effectively.

We are dedicated to fostering an inclusive and supportive workplace where all employees can thrive and feel a sense of belonging. Fertility treatment may affect people of different gender identities, including those assigned female at birth such as cisgender women, trans men and some non-binary individuals. This guidance applies to all employees who may be affected by fertility treatment and includes all family structures, same sex relationships, and solo parents, and regardless of length of service.

Reproductive health is a lifelong journey, from menstrual health through to menopause intersecting with fertility. Employees can find further support in the university's [menstrual health guidance](#) and [menopause guidance](#), available on the staff portal.

While some resources may use gendered language, the university acknowledges that fertility treatment can affect individuals who do not identify as women or female.

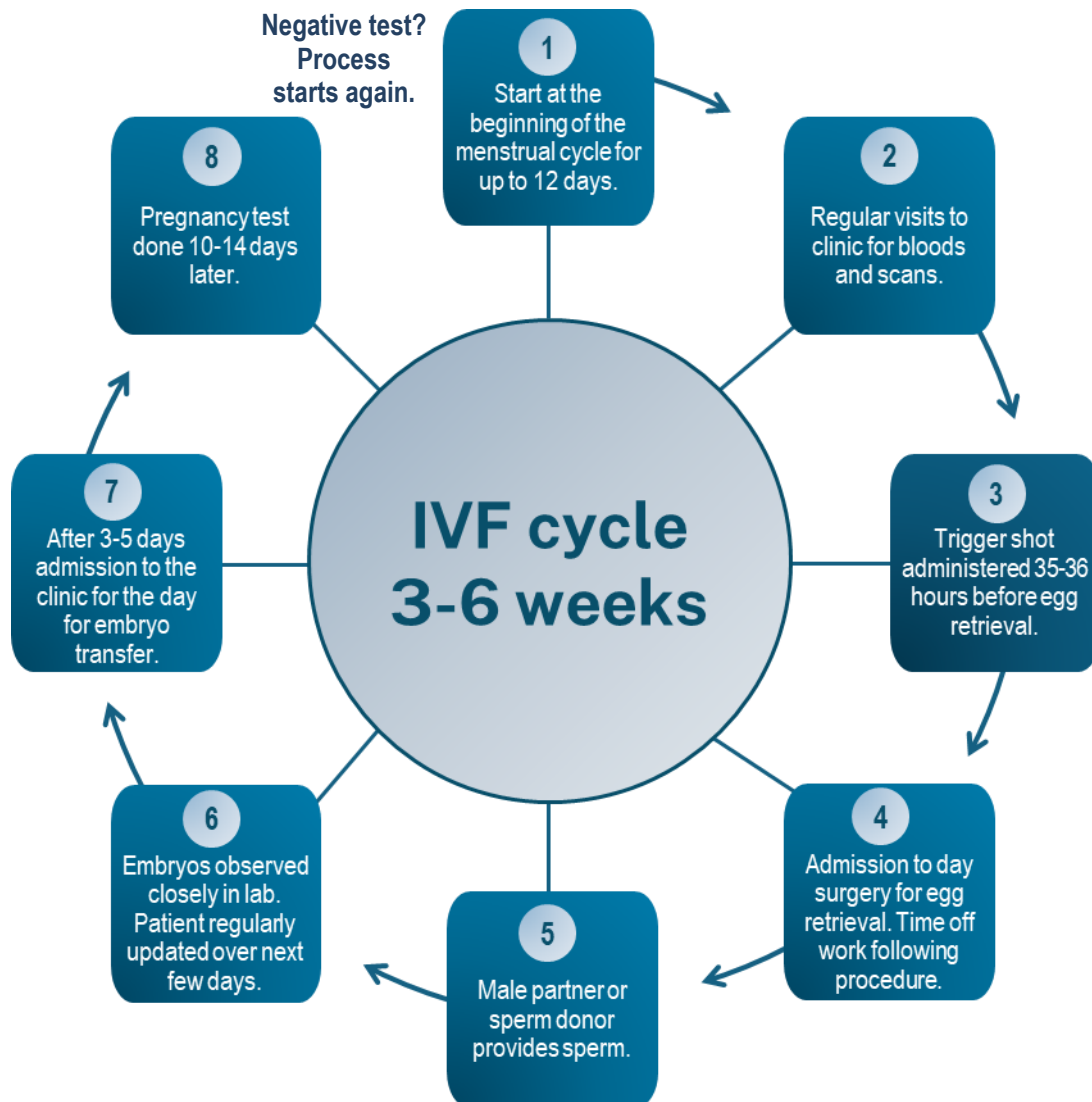
2 What is fertility treatment?

Fertility treatment encompasses a range of medical interventions aimed at helping individuals or couples who are having difficulty conceiving a child naturally. These range from Assisted Conception Treatment (ACT) procedures which are typically more complex such as IVF (in vitro fertilisation) and IUI (intrauterine insemination), to other methods such as fertility medicines, surgical procedures and egg or embryo freezing. The most suitable treatment will depend on the individual's or couple's circumstances and there is no one treatment that is right for everyone. Other methods of assisted conception can also include surrogacy and adoption and employees should refer to the university's [Adoption Leave Policy](#) for further guidance and information.

Whilst there are several types of treatment available, IVF is the most widely recognised and frequently used form of fertility treatment in the UK. It is also considered the most impactful in terms of medical complexity and the emotional, financial and workplace implications.

A cycle of IVF treatment typically takes around 3 to 6 weeks to complete ([NHS](#)) with several steps including clinic appointments and recovery time, making it harder to balance alongside work than other less intensive treatments. It may take several cycles before treatment is successful.

3 What does IVF involve?



4 The impact of fertility in the workplace

Fertility challenges affect around 1 in 7 couples in the UK, who may undergo treatment to support their journey to parenthood.

The impact of IVF fertility treatment is felt physically, emotionally and financially and can also be logistically challenging (with multiple appointments). Individuals can experience wide ranging emotions such as the anxiety of waiting for results, the fear of treatment not working, the joy of becoming pregnant and sadly, the grief of losing a pregnancy. Treatment can also create significant financial pressures as limited NHS support drives individuals to self-fund their treatment. In addition to treatment, the unpredictable nature of short notice appointments and medications administered at specific times of the day, brings added stress making it difficult to plan and juggle work alongside treatment.

Research has found that fertility and infertility can affect people of all sexes and genders, with implications for participation and progression at work. Evidence shows that women undergoing fertility treatment are disproportionately impacted in terms of career progression ([Paths to Parenthood: Navigating Fertility at Work](#)). The university's commitment to supporting staff affected by fertility includes ensuring a workplace where women can thrive in their careers without feeling the need to choose between their job and their desire for children.

The university are committed to raising awareness and playing a positive role in supporting employees to navigate fertility challenges with a support package for those affected.

5 Fertility leave and support for employees

If an employee is impacted by fertility treatment and they are finding it difficult to cope at work they are encouraged to speak confidentially in the first instance to their line manager or alternatively they can request to speak to a member of the People Directorate (by raising a Help Desk Request via Horizon). Whilst not every employee will want to disclose details of their fertility journey, they are encouraged to do so to ensure they can access the best possible support at the university. Any information shared with a line manager or the People Directorate will be treated sensitively and in confidence and not recorded in writing unless this is initiated by the employee, for example by completing a flexible working request.

The range of support available for employee's undergoing fertility treatment or those who are supporting a partner undergoing fertility treatment is outlined below. However, fertility leave and partner's fertility leave is only available for employee's undergoing IVF treatment.

Click on each link to navigate directly to the relevant section:

- [Fertility leave \(for employee's undergoing IVF\).](#)
- [Partner's fertility leave \(for employee's undergoing IVF\).](#)
- [Time off for health related appointments.](#)
- [Flexible working arrangements.](#)
- [Hybrid working \(where the role permits\).](#)
- [Wellbeing Days.](#)
- [Sickness absence.](#)
- [Employee Assistance Programme \(EAP\).](#)
- [Mental health and wellbeing at the university.](#)
- [Special Leave](#)
- [External Support and resources](#)
- [Menstrual health, pregnancy loss and menopause support at UoG](#)

Fertility leave

An employee undergoing IVF (in vitro fertilisation) is eligible for up to 5 days of paid leave in any rolling 12 month period for the purposes of receiving and recovering from their treatment. The 5 days will be prorated for part time workers. The 12 month period begins from the first day that fertility leave is taken. The 5 days can be taken as a single block, separate days or half days. Employees are entitled to fertility leave from their first day of employment.

Any unused days cannot be carried forward to the next 12 months and cannot be carried forward once the employee has a positive pregnancy test. From the point of a positive pregnancy test, the employee will be regarded as being pregnant and so any appointments that fall after this time (if the IVF is successful) will be regarded under the maternity leave policy. If the IVF treatment is not successful any remaining days that have not been taken may still be used within the same 12 month period if the employee begins another cycle of treatment.

Partner's fertility leave

The university recognises that employees whose partner is undergoing fertility treatment may need to take time off to support them. Employees whose partner is undergoing IVF (in vitro fertilisation) are eligible for up to 2 days paid leave in any rolling 12 month period for the purposes of supporting their partner. The 2 days will be pro-rated for part time workers. The 12 month period begins from the first day that fertility leave is taken. The 2 days can be taken as a single block, separate days or half days. Employees are entitled to partner's fertility leave from the first day of employment.

Any unused days cannot be carried forward to the next 12 months and cannot be carried forward once the employee's partner has a positive pregnancy test. From the point of a positive pregnancy test, the employee's partner will be regarded as being pregnant.

After this time (if the IVF is successful) the employee can take unpaid time off to attend up to two antenatal appointments with their partner (see the Time off for health-related appointments section under the university's [Sickness Absence Policy](#)). If the IVF treatment is not successful any remaining days that have not been taken may still be used within the same 12 month period if the employees partner begins another cycle of treatment.

Booking fertility leave or partner's fertility leave

If an employee wish to book fertility leave or partner's fertility leave they should inform their line manager and agree the time off directly with them. The line manager should approve the request without delay and notify the People Directorate by submitting a Help Desk request via Horizon. The People Directorate will then record the leave on the employee's file.

The employee may be asked by their line manager to provide evidence that they (or their partner) are undergoing IVF fertility treatment. This may include a confirmation letter from a hospital or medical professional. This evidence should only be requested once. If evidence is shared electronically the line manager must ensure that any related emails, attachments, or messages are deleted immediately after review.

Time off for health related appointments

As with all medical appointments, wherever possible, employees undergoing fertility treatment should arrange appointments outside of their normal working hours. Where this is not possible and the employee gives their line manager reasonable notice of the date and time of an appointment, time off with full pay will be granted. Full details can be found in the [Sickness Absence Policy](#).

Flexible working

If an employee wishes to make a flexible working request, they are encouraged to discuss this with their line manager first. Employees should make a formal flexible

working request in accordance with the requirements and procedures in the university's [Flexible Working Policy](#).

Hybrid working

The university operates [Working Principles and Guidelines](#), which offer hybrid working and may assist an employee to work flexibly where it is appropriate for their role. Employees should discuss hybrid working with their line manager in the first instance.

Wellbeing Days

Staff can take up to two Wellbeing Day's during the 12 months between 1st October to 30th September. Staff can take a Wellbeing Day when they have an immediate need to take care of their mental health and wellbeing. Wellbeing days can be booked by an employee in Horizon. Further guidance can be found on the staff portal.

Sickness absence

If an employee is impacted by the side effects of their fertility treatment and requires additional time off work beyond fertility leave, this time should be taken as sickness absence and reported and recorded in line with the Sickness Absence Policy. Fertility related sickness absence will be monitored sensitively.

EAP (Employee Assistance Programme)

Staff members can access free information, advice and confidential support (including counselling) through the university's Employee Assistance Programme, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The university encourage staff who are struggling to cope with the impact of their fertility treatment to consider using the EAP as a supportive resource. Full details can be found on the staff portal by clicking [here](#).

Mental health and wellbeing at the university

- Mental health and wellbeing support for university staff can be found [here](#).
- Employees can speak to the Samaritans or access occupational health and wellbeing advice by selecting **wellbeing assistance** through the **SafeZone app** (download the app [here](#)).
- Employees can join the university's Wellbeing Network [here](#)

Special Leave

The university's Special Leave guidance sets out staff entitlement to time off following the loss of a loved one (including pregnancy loss). If an employee sadly experiences the loss of a pregnancy they are entitled to take up to five days paid leave. This can be booked in Horizon as follows:

**Time and absences > add absence > absence type (select special leave)
> reason (select bereavement) > submit**

Please refer to the [Special Leave](#) for full details.

External support and resources

Fertility matters @ work
Fertilitymattersatwork.com

Fertility network UK

Nice guidelines
[NICE guidelines on assisted reproduction](#)

<p>Fertilitynetworkuk.org</p> <p>British Fertility Society britishfertilitysociety.org.uk</p> <p>NHS nhs.uk - infertility nhs.uk - IVF</p>	<p>MIND the mental health charity provide people with help, support and information. mind.org.uk</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">National Fertility Awareness Week UK</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Every November the focus is on fertility for Fertility Awareness Week, typically held in the first full week of November.</p>	

Menstrual health, pregnancy loss and menopause support at UoG

- The intersection of fertility and all female reproductive health is recognised and staff can find further support for menstrual health, pregnancy loss and menopause on the staff portal.
- Employees can join the university’s menstrual health Teams Hub [here](#).
- Employees can join the university’s menopause Teams Hub [here](#).

6 Guidance for managers

Line managers should familiarise themselves with this guidance to ensure they can support employees who are undergoing fertility treatment. All of the support available to employees is outlined in detail in this guidance.

Employees are not obliged to disclose their fertility treatment to their line manager but they are encouraged to do so to ensure they can access the best support available. Whilst line managers are not expected to be experts on fertility, it is expected that they should:

- Listen without judgement or assumptions.
- Treat any information shared by the employee about their fertility journey with sensitivity, discretion and confidentiality.
- Not share any information with anyone without the employee’s consent.
- Note that any information shared should not be recorded in writing unless this is initiated by the employee, for example by them completing a flexible working request.
- Ensure conversations are led by the employee and avoid intrusive questions.
- Be mindful of the impact of any fertility treatment on an employee’s mental health and ensure they are made aware of all the support available including the EAP service.
- Consider flexible working options if appropriate with tailored temporary support during the period of treatment such as adjusted start and finish times or working from home where the job role allows.
- Respond to any flexible working requests appropriately and in the timescale set out in the university’s [Flexible Working Policy](#).
- Ensure that any sickness absence that is fertility related is recorded and reported in line with the Sickness Absence Policy and monitored sensitively. If the absence is approaching a trigger in accordance with the policy, the line

manager should notify the People Directorate by raising a Help Desk Request via Horizon to ensure that the employee is supported in the best way possible.

- If an employee is undergoing IVF treatment, be aware of the unpredictable nature of the schedule, frequency of clinic visits and of the impact IVF can have on an individual (see [What does IVF involve?](#) in this guidance).
- Ensure the employee is aware of fertility leave that may be available to them (only available to employees and their partners who are undergoing IVF).

The decision to undergo fertility treatment is a personal choice and an individual experience. It can be easy to make assumptions about who will undergo fertility treatment and the reasons why. Line managers are advised to be aware that an employee undergoing fertility treatment may be:

- Undergoing treatment themselves.
- The partner of someone undergoing treatment.
- In a same sex or mixed sex relationship.
- Undergoing fertility treatment whilst they do not identify as female.
- Undergoing fertility treatment as a solo parent.

Line managers are advised to ensure that nobody experiences less favourable treatment because of their fertility treatment. Be mindful of the sensitive nature of pregnancy and fertility and ensure that derogatory comments or inappropriate behaviour about fertility are dealt with promptly. If further advice is required related to this please contact the People Directorate by raising a helpdesk request via Horizon.

7 Related policies and guidance

All of the following policies and guidance can be found on the university staff portal:

- Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure
- Flexible Working Policy and Procedure
- Working Principles and Guidelines (hybrid working)
- Menopause Guidance
- Menstrual Health Guidance
- Maternity Leave and Pay Policy
- Paternity/Partner's Leave and Pay Policy
- Adoption Leave Policy
- Shared Parental Leave Policy
- Special Leave
- Pregnancy Loss Guidance

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