



November 1, 2007

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Note to editors: November 4 to 11 is National Infertility Awareness Week.

**Making a Choice for Fertility**

By Dr. J. Todd Spradlin, Chief Medical and Laboratory Director  
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**Augusta, GA** – While the term sperm bank is often greeted with a giggle or two, for many couples it's no laughing matter. Reproductive tissue banks often provide one of the only options for those wishing to have children.

The ability to have children is something many of us take for granted, until that ability is taken away. More than six million Americans today are affected by infertility, and their struggles to have children have resulted in a number of advances in medicine. Especially for couples struggling with male factor infertility or otherwise unable to have a child by traditional ways, single women wishing to have children and those diagnosed with cancer or other diseases that could affect fertility, reproductive tissue banks have become a viable option.

Those seeking help should consider the following when making their decision about choosing a reproductive tissue bank:

- **Donor selection:** For those seeking a donor, reproductive tissue banks universally feature medically screened, healthy young men. Donors are tested for a variety of genetic and communicable diseases such as HIV. A medical and genetic history (with regular updates) should be obtained from the donor, and many banks also ask for the medical histories of family members, as far back as four generations. Information should also be provided on social and physical attributes such as education and height.

Certain banks offer special options for those seeking further information. Examples include baby, child, teen and adult photos, audio files of the donor, help with donor selection (including photo

matching), and voluntary open identity disclosures, which help children locate their donors when they are 18 years old.

- **Storage:** Many people wonder about the safety and effectiveness of storage. Cryopreservation of reproductive tissues has actually been around since the 1950s. It requires careful selection, adding materials to protect the cells from freezing injury, as well as regulating cooling and freezing in such a way as to minimize freezing injury. For those seeking donors, sperm that is cryopreserved can even be considered more effective than “fresh” sperm. Thanks to processing, many banks are able to exceed the standard sperm count of 20 million per milliliter.

Research has also confirmed the safety of long-term cryopreservation. In fact, a recent study found that women have had normal births from sperm stored for up to 28 years.

- **Certifications:** Certification by the Food and Drug Administration is the gold standard for all reproductive tissue banks. In addition, banks can join certain organizations for voluntary certification. Along with the FDA, these organizations inspect banks on an ongoing basis to ensure they continue to operate at the highest quality standards. A bank’s years of experience, backed by research, can also be an important indicator of quality.
- **Customer service:** Selecting a reproductive tissue bank is a very personal choice. So having a live person guide you through the process can be extremely helpful. Whichever bank you choose, make sure their customer service team is available, willing to listen to your specific concerns and needs, and addresses those needs in a caring manner.

Whether your goal is to have a child, or to safeguard your reproductive tissues until you are ready to have a child, you have options. Doing research and asking the right questions will help you make the right choice for you and your family.

#### **About Xytex International:**

Xytex International has been enhancing lives through cellular ingenuity since 1975. A worldwide leader in reproductive tissue storage and research, Xytex International is made up of Xytex Corporation, which provides donor semen; Xytex Tissue Storage, Inc. (XTS), which provides long-term safekeeping of reproductive cells; and Xytex Research, which works to improve reproductive tissue technologies. For more information, please visit [www.xytex.com](http://www.xytex.com).

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