

## 10 Things to Help Lesbians Choosing Donor Insemination

1. **Get Healthy** In order to get your body ready for pregnancy, it helps to make sure you are as healthy as you can be. Re-evaluate your diet and exercise plans. Do you get enough rest? Start taking a multivitamin made for women or even prenatal vitamins. Talk to a physician you can trust about your plans and get a complete physical exam. Make sure your physician checks your hormone levels. Your baby needs you to be strong and healthy before and after it gets here, so it's not too soon to start shaping up.

2. **Know Your Body** Do you know how long your menstrual cycle is? Do you know when you ovulate? The answers to these questions will play a very important role in the baby-making journey you are about to embark on. Pay attention to the signs that your body gives you. Track your fertility by recording your basal body temperature each morning before you get out of bed. If you do not see a rise and fall in your temperature, you may not be ovulating. You also need to be conscious of you vaginal secretions and how they impact fertility. Basal Body Temperature (BBT) Charts can be downloaded and printed from the internet. Some women rely only on ovulation predictor kits which tell them when the best time to inseminate is. By understanding your cycle you can increase chances of conception, help diagnose any potential fertility issues, and place yourself more in control of conceiving. Since the window of opportunity for fertilization is very small, it saves lots of time and money to know what's going on and when.

3. **Find a Donor** There are numerous ways that sperm can be obtained. When choosing, you need to consider your own comfort levels, your own personal and moral issues, and how you see the role of the donor in your child's life. Many women choose to use frozen sperm from a sperm bank. Aside from their physical profiles and some personal information, these donors are anonymous, with some exceptions. There are some sperm banks that have donors who agree to release their identity when the child is 18 years old or sooner.

You may also choose to use a known donor. You will need to have candid and honest conversation with this donor to make sure you agree on what his future role will be. If you choose this type of donor, make sure his health (and sperm count) is checked out before you begin the process. Also, have legal contracts drawn up to define what everyone's role will be once the baby is here. Be aware, however, that those legal contracts may or may not be validated by a court of law.

(continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

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**4. Prepare for the Ups and Downs** Living your life in two week intervals while trying to get pregnant can turn even the most rational and reasonable woman into an obsessed nightmare. Be prepared to be looking up early signs of pregnancy in every book and internet site you can find when you think your period is a minute late. It's best to see the whole experience as a process—most people don't get pregnant the first time with frozen sperm—it usually takes anywhere from 3 to 9 months.

**5. Throw away the Romantic Notions (until later)** There is nothing very romantic about having your feet in stirrups in a doctor's office being inseminated. If you are coupled, realize this and make your own memories and romantic moments aside from the insemination procedure. This will help you get through it and keep you focused on the final result and all the love that will be shared once you have that baby in your arms.

**6. Trust Yourself** The best person to know what works for you is you. Everyone has advice on the perfect time to inseminate, the right way to tilt your pelvis, the food to avoid or the kind of tea to drink to make you the most fertile. If you feel that you need to take a break from inseminating, start up again next month. If it seems like the ovulation kit isn't working out for you, try another way to track your ovulation. Knowing your body and your mind will give you a lot of information to help you make these choices.

**7. Seek Out Support** Chances are, you will be riding this roller coaster for a while. Talk to others who are going through it, or to women who are pregnant now. Find out how they got through it and what helped them stay sane when things seemed hopeless. Chat to other parent-wanna be's online (there are lots) or go to a local LGBT parents group. Straight women (and men) can be great allies too, since many of them are as baby-obsessed as we are. It always seems to help to know we are not the only ones trying to conceive, and that babies really are created everyday.

**8. Keep Your Perspective** I realize that this is much easier said than done, but it is very wise and important to see things the way that they actually are. When we see pregnant teens walking in the mall when you have gone through another cycle with no pregnancy, it is easy to feel like the world is playing a very cruel joke on you. Remind yourself often that your conception and pregnancy are your own experiences. Believe that what is supposed to happen will.

(continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

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**9. Know When to Say When** Make a plan in the beginning about how far you are willing to go on this journey toward pregnancy. Many advanced fertility treatments are available today; some are quite invasive and expensive. Before ending up on a road that you never intended to be on, set your limits. Accept that your plan may change several times during the process, but your original feelings about how far you are willing to push your mind, your body and your bank account will probably stay the same.

**10. Be Flexible** Some people will never get pregnant. There are many other ways to have children. It may mean having your partner get pregnant, or maybe adoption or a surrogate would be the right choice for creating your family. Look into all of your options and choose the one that works best for you.

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### Book List - Donor Insemination

A Donor Insemination Guide: Written by and for Lesbian Women, by Marie Mohler

The Ultimate Guide to Pregnancy for Lesbians, by Rachel Pepper

The Essential Guide to Lesbian Conception, Pregnancy and Birth, by Kim Toevs, Stephanie A. Brill

Considering Parenthood, by Cheri Pies

Lesbians choosing Motherhood: Legal Implications of Alternative Insemination and Reproductive Technologies, by The National Center for Lesbian Rights

Taking Charge of Your Fertility, by Toni Weschler

Helping the Stork: Choices and Challenges of Donor Insemination, by Vercollone, Moss and Moss