



## Welcome! A brief guide to your IVF journey

We are excited to be sharing your Fertility Treatment Journey with you.

Making the decision to have IVF can be a big leap and is often not what you expected, at times you may feel overwhelmed as you experience the ups and downs of assisted reproductive fertility. At Ballarat IVF we pride ourselves on being here with you every step of the way. The best way to contact us is via email: [nurse@ballarativf.com.au](mailto:nurse@ballarativf.com.au)

The following information is an outline of the treatment pathway and some of the aspects of your treatment that may be mentioned. Just as everyone is different, everyone's fertility journey is different, depending on the complexity of your situation.

## When you meet with a fertility Nurse coordinator (in-person or telehealth):

A package regarding your IVF treatment will be emailed to you prior to an appointment being made with a fertility coordinator. This appointment can be either an in-person appointment (preferred) or can be arranged as a telehealth appointment via TEAMS or Zoom. In - person appointments can be arranged at our Geelong or Ballarat clinic sites Please allow up to 45 minutes for this appointment. We recommend you & your partner/support person are involved in this appointment.

## Blood Tests:

You will be asked to have some basic blood tests before you start treatment. If you have a partner, they will also be required to have some blood tests performed. These tests are mostly bulk billed and include screening tests for infections and hormone tests. An **AMH (Anti-Mullerian Hormone)** test will be included. This is not funded by Medicare and incurs a small out of pocket cost of around \$90. It helps us to select the correct medication dose for your cycle, but also gives an indication of your ovarian reserve, which you may want to speak with your doctor about. ( A semen analysis may also be required if this applies to your situation).

## Counselling and Support:

You will be required, as per Victorian legislation, to undertake a counselling session, via telehealth prior to commencing your fertility treatment to complete consents. This provides a great opportunity to consider and clarify any issues around your treatment that are of concern, or you are not sure about. Fertility treatment can be stressful, often with big highs but sometimes, big lows. Counselling is a chance to identify any strategies that may help you on your journey to deal with these potentially stressful times. It is also an important time to discuss various aspects of using donor gametes (egg or sperm) if they are required. Counselling is not required for fertility preservation, however, can be helpful in decision making and expectations. Please speak to your doctor if you think you would like to speak to a counsellor before undergoing fertility preservation.

## Outcomes and Results:

Here at BIVF, we pride ourselves on taking an individualised approach to your fertility journey. We believe our results speak for themselves, for more information or to compare our results to other clinics, please check our results page [www.ballarativf.com.au](http://www.ballarativf.com.au) or go to the webpage [yourivfsuccess.com.au](http://yourivfsuccess.com.au)

## Consents & Admission Paperwork

There is always some paperwork! We need to organise various consents & forms prior to your fertility treatment including:

**Consent for IVF treatment** will be forwarded to you via e-consent when your counselling appointment has been confirmed. Be sure to read through these documents carefully and ask your counsellor if there is anything that needs further clarification. Consents for your treatment as per Victorian legislation, must be completed **with the Counsellor**, prior to the commencement of any IVF treatment cycle.

Admission paperwork for your egg collection will need to be completed & forwarded to the appropriate egg collection facility when your egg collection is booked. The BIVF admin team will forward the appropriate paperwork to you when required.

Once all requirements for undergoing an IVF cycle have been met, a fertility coordinator will discuss cycle commencement dates with you and organise collection of your medications from an IVF pharmacy closest to you.

## Medications/Collection of Medications

Normally a woman's ovaries release a single mature egg each month, under the influence of 'follicle stimulating hormone' (FSH). During IVF treatment we stimulate the ovaries to develop more follicles to produce a greater number of eggs by giving injections of FSH. FSH is usually given as a daily injection. An appointment will be booked with a fertility coordinator (in person or telehealth) for education and instructions on how to administer these medications. You will be given a schedule to follow with all medications, doses and dates documented for your reference.

Other medications are also used to control your own hormone signals and prevent you from releasing the eggs early. Bloods tests and ultrasounds (usually transvaginal) are then used to monitor the development of follicles (containing the eggs) until they are the correct size. Once this happens, we can plan for your egg collection. A trigger injection then follows, and this prepares your ovaries for the Oocyte (egg) collection. It can all sound daunting – but our fertility nurses are there to guide and support you through all the steps!

*It is important that you check the names of the medications and follow the medication schedule carefully.*

## Costs

All cycles are different, and costs vary. Some patients require more complex treatment regimens which may include ICSI (injection of the sperm into the egg), or other fertility treatment medications.

Quotes will be organised for you by the administration staff at Ballarat IVF. Make sure you understand all potential costs involved and feel free to ask our admin team any questions, if you require clarification. You will be sent an e-sign financial consent to acknowledge the potential cycle costs & payment for your stimulation cycle is due on the medication collection day.

You will need to pay a fee for each script collected from your pharmacy under the IVF arrangement. This is a subsidised fee, the remaining costs for the medications are covered by the Government.

## Your IVF Cycle: a general overview

*Note: Every treatment plan is personalised by your Fertility Specialist and may vary from what is outline below. The most commonly used protocol is an Antagonist cycle.*

### **Standard “Antagonist” cycle**

Day 1 – The first day of your stimulation cycle! You will need to email the fertility nurses with the first day of your menstrual cycle (period): [nurse@ballarativf.com.au](mailto:nurse@ballarativf.com.au)

Medications usually commence day 2 or 3, so it is important that you are well prepared and have asked any questions around medication timing, administration and dose.

Day 3 – This is the day most people commence their FSH injections.

Day 8 - Commence daily injections to prevent ovulation.

Day 12 - Follicle Tracking Scan to assess follicle development, and hopefully plan for egg retrieval. You will be required to have a blood test to check your Estrogen and Progesterone levels around the time of the trigger injection. These tests help us to decide if you will be suitable for a fresh embryo transfer (if you are undergoing IVF), or if you may be at risk of ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome which will require all suitable embryos to be frozen.

### **Egg collection / Oocyte Pickup (OPU)**

#### **The Big Day!**

Your fertility nurse coordinator will assess your follicle tracking scan results and discuss these with your Fertility Specialist. They will decide on the best time to have your eggs collected.

We then discuss this with you via phone and advise you when to use the trigger injection.

The egg retrieval may take place at the Ballarat Day Procedure Centre or the Epworth Hospital Geelong. An Anaesthetic is required for this procedure. It is often possible to have an egg retrieval performed through our public hospital egg collection service in Maryborough, no bed fee is required if you are uninsured – but the timing must be right, and it is not something we can guarantee.

After your egg collection, you will receive information via email on the number of eggs collected. Your fertility Nurse Coordinator will call you the day following your egg collection and provide you with an update on your embryos and to answer any question you may have.

### **IVF or ICSI?**

If you are creating embryos, your eggs will be fertilised with sperm by IVF, (the egg plus many sperm combined in special culture media) or ICSI, (injection of sperm into the egg).

Your specialist will discuss the options of IVF or ICSI, depending on the cause of your infertility. It is important that you are aware which fertilisation method is planned for you before commencing your cycle.

The embryos that are suitable for freezing at day 5 or day 6, the blastocyst stage, will be frozen for future use. Not all eggs collected will reach the blastocyst stage and there can be a significant drop from the number of eggs retrieved to the number of blastocysts formed. We understand it's an anxious wait, and we will be in touch as soon as we have news! You can receive updates through the process by contacting the Ballarat IVF scientists at our Lab.

### ***Fertility Preservation (Egg freezing)***

At this point your eggs will be frozen for later use. Some of the follicles may not contain an egg, and some eggs do not meet the criteria for freezing. We are always happy to speak further about your result, and whether another cycle is recommended, to optimise your stored egg numbers

### ***Fresh embryo Transfer***

We know that you are hoping for a fresh transfer, however there are certain reasons & situations that mean doing a fresh transfer isn't the safest option, for example if you are at risk of hyperstimulation or your hormone levels are elevated prior to the collection. We always make these decisions with your health as a priority, and to give you the best chance of becoming pregnant. Statistically you are more likely to have a 'Freeze all' cycle.

### ***'Freeze all cycle' & Planning for a Frozen embryo Transfer***

When we know how many embryos have progressed to day 5/6 and are suitable for freezing, we will contact your doctor to organise a plan for a frozen embryo transfer.

A frozen embryo transfer plan (FET plan) usually entails taking oral medication for 5 days, a scan & blood test, & sometimes a trigger injection. The embryo is thawed and placed into your uterus about 6 days after trigger injection/ ovulation. The fertility nurse will guide & support you through this process.

The aim for a successful FET is to ensure your endometrial thickness (EMT) is of the desired thickness around the timing of ovulation. You will be advised to use vaginal pessaries (vaginal tablets) to enhance your chances of implantation & ongoing pregnancy.

The embryo transfer involves an examination, like a pap smear. This is not an operation, and you will not need an Anaesthetic. You can drive yourself to and from this procedure which will take place at our Ballarat IVF lab 1119 Howitt st. Ballarat. The transfer is carefully performed by one of our Ballarat IVF Fertility Specialists under ultrasound guidance, to ensure the best placement of your embryo. At Ballarat IVF, it is our policy to perform single embryo transfers.

### ***Pregnancy blood test***

This will be performed around 16 days after your egg collection for a fresh embryo transfer or 11 days after your frozen embryo transfer. You will be notified with this result by a fertility nurse coordinator. The nurse will then help to navigate the next steps regarding planning.

### ***When things don't go as planned***

Sometimes things don't turn out as we'd hoped. The number of eggs collected could be much less than expected, fertilisation rates could be disappointing, you do not have any suitable embryos for freezing, your pregnancy test is negative, and rarely, frozen embryos may not survive the thawing process.

We appreciate how hard these times can be, and how much your life is revolving around this process. We will always try our best to guide you through these difficult times. If you need further help or more time, just let us know. We can provide additional supportive resources that may assist you during this difficult time.

We look forward to working with you through your IVF journey.

## CONTACTING - IVF NURSE COORDINATOR:

Whilst you are undertaking fertility treatment through Ballarat IVF, we are committed to providing you with as much support as possible. If you have non urgent questions about your fertility treatment, please email a Ballarat IVF Nurse Coordinator at [nurse@ballarativf.com.au](mailto:nurse@ballarativf.com.au). An IVF nurse coordinator will endeavour to respond to your email within 24 hours, however this will depend on the nature of your enquiry.

### **BLEEDING:**

Email an IVF Nurse Coordinator [nurse@ballarativf.com.au](mailto:nurse@ballarativf.com.au).

- Menstrual period / Day One
- Light pink or brown staining – this is common; simply continue with your medications.

Phone an IVF Nurse Coordinator on 53398100 (business hours) 0407338447 (after hours / weekends)

- You have heavy vaginal bleeding which is not your period.
- You have heavy bleeding or increasing pain in early pregnancy.
- Bleeding in pregnancy after 7 weeks

### **PROCEDURES:**

Email an IVF Nurse Coordinator [nurse@ballarativf.com.au](mailto:nurse@ballarativf.com.au).

- Questions regarding your upcoming procedure
- You have concerns about your treatment plan, or need to confirm your treatment plan

Phone an IVF Nurse Coordinator on 53398100 (business hours) 0407338447 (after hours / weekends)

- Pain, nausea, vomiting, or fever FOLLOWING a procedure –

### **MEDICATIONS:**

Email an IVF nurse Coordinator [nurse@ballarativf.com.au](mailto:nurse@ballarativf.com.au)

- You are going to run out of medication or require a new script.

Phone an IVF nurse Coordinator on 53398100 (business hours) 0407338447 (after hours / weekends)

- You are concerned you may have made a mistake taking your medications.
- You think you may be having an adverse reaction to a medication.

### **APPOINTMENT ENQUIRIES:**

Email the practice administration staff on [office@ogballarat.com.au](mailto:office@ogballarat.com.au) :

- Booking, changing, or cancelling an appointment
- Requesting carers / sick leave certificate.

