



Assisted Hatching

What it is and how it may help

Pregnancy rates for IVF patients who are over 38 years old are much lower than the pregnancy rates of younger patients. This problem may be partly related to their embryos not being able to implant in their uterine lining and create a pregnancy.

Assisted hatching is a technique that can help embryos implant.

After an embryo is transferred into the uterus, it must free itself from its outer protective coating before it can implant into the uterus. This freeing process is called “hatching.” Embryos from some patients may not be able to hatch efficiently, and this makes them unable to implant.

What is assisted hatching?

Assisted hatching is an optional procedure that the In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) Laboratory provides to improve the pregnancy rates of patients who meet certain criteria. It uses very precise techniques to create a tiny hole in the embryo's outer protective coating. This is done a few hours before embryo transfer on day 3. The tiny hole gives these embryos "a way out," which may improve the chance of successful implantation.

Patients who may benefit from assisted hatching:

- Are older than 38 years of age
- Have eggs with thicker than normal *zona pellucida* (shell)
- Have had previous IVF cycles that did not result in pregnancy
- Are undergoing a frozen embryo thaw cycle

Your doctor will talk with you about whether this procedure will benefit you.

What are the risks to my embryos?

Assisted hatching is very easy to do and takes only 2 to 3 minutes. It exposes the embryos to only a very small risk of damage. Assisted hatching is not done on day 5 blastocysts that have normal thinning and expansion of the zona pellucida.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or other UWMC health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

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But, any technique like this means that the embryos are handled an extra time, and this creates a small risk of physical damage. We use great care when doing these procedures to reduce this risk.

When is it done?

The procedure is done on the morning of day 3 after egg recovery, if a day 3 embryo transfer is scheduled.

Who may use this procedure?

Your doctor will talk with you about assisted hatching if your health history or previous IVF cycles show that it may benefit you.

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