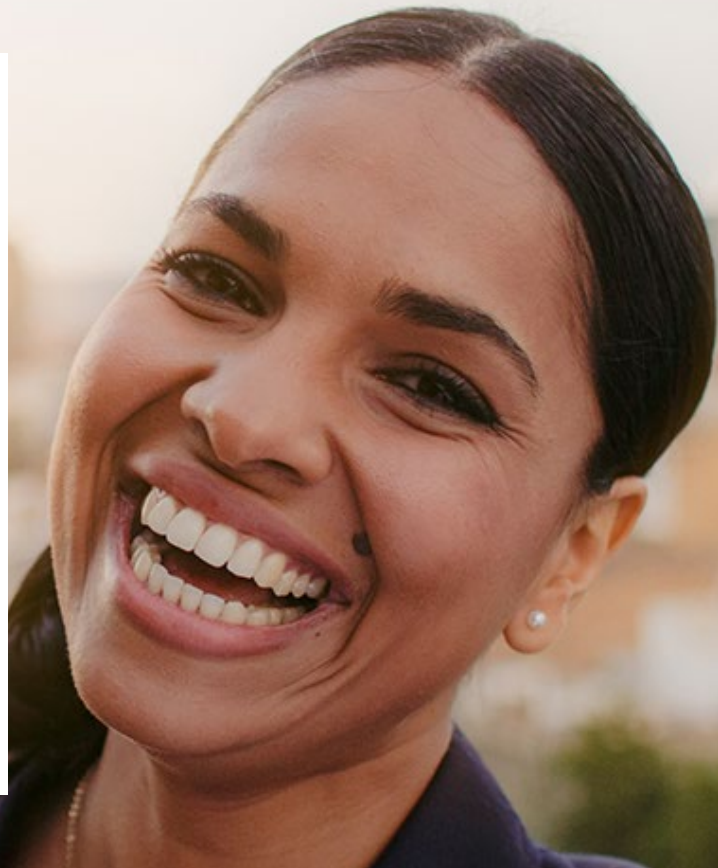


Loved Ones

Increasing numbers of people are considering fertility preservation, and in particular egg freezing, as a way of helping to make sure that when they're ready to start a family, they have the best possible chance of conceiving.

If you've taken the decision to begin your fertility journey, it is not one which you'll have taken lightly. There are many things to consider, including the impact it may have on those around you. You might feel a little apprehensive about telling friends and family – who should you tell, when and how, and what will they think?

This guide will help you to navigate these conversations – it contains useful insights from a fertility expert and someone who has been through the journey first-hand, too.



The authors

Dr. Julie Nekkebroeck

Julie Nekkebroeck is a clinical psychologist and psychotherapist working at Brussels-IVF. She is involved in fertility screenings and counselling patients on oocyte cryo-preservation. Julie helps patients make well-informed decisions supporting them before, during and after treatment to feel ready to embark on (single) motherhood.



Chloé Vandebussche

Chloé Vandebussche is a Belgian digital content creator who shares videos and photos of her daily lifestyle on TikTok and Instagram. In late 2021, she began the IVF procedure and documented her journey, eventually conceiving naturally after several IVF attempts. As someone who has been through the journey, she is a great candidate to share her advice on how to navigate starting conversations with friends.

Informing loved ones about your fertility journey

There's no magic formula available that outlines how, when and who you need to inform about your fertility journey. Your loved ones want the best for you and will want to help in any way they can. With time off for clinic appointments, side effects from fertility treatments and the emotional impact procedures and processes may take on you, friends and family could be essential.

But don't feel obliged to tell those who it may be uncomfortable to discuss it with. Be sure to tell people at a time which is right for you – you might want some loved ones to be a part of your whole journey, or you might value time to process parts of the journey alone first.

Thoughts from Julie

“At first, it is about finding the right balance between safeguarding the intimacy/privacy of this experience and not becoming isolated in your own emotions. Informing your loved ones about your fertility journey can be very beneficial. It allows you to get support and distraction, from this often stressful journey. Provide your loved ones with a ‘personal manual’ on how they can support you. Being assertive in this matter makes your loved ones less insecure about how they can approach and assist you in the best way, for example accompanying you on the oocyte retrieval day.

By opening up, you will soon encounter other friends or relatives who are going (or went) through a similar experience and might better understand what you are going through.”

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You have no way of knowing how people will respond to you about your fertility journey, but one thing you can probably expect is some questions. Thinking through these questions in advance may take the pressure off when that moment arrives.

How long have you been considering fertility preservation?

Some friends and family may want to be reassured that this isn't an impulsive decision. You'll have many reasons for making the decision you have – sharing them (or as many of them as you feel comfortable) will help people understand, and ultimately to support your decision.

How will this affect your day-to-day life? What will it involve?

Remember, your knowledge of fertility preservation will probably be far greater than that of your loved ones! They're likely to be interested in the process, so think through what you feel comfortable sharing

Consider how your journey may affect things you have planned with

loved ones – will you miss a family gathering or birthday for example? It's always useful to address any potential issues upfront.

Is this something you are ready for other people to know about?

Consider if it would be useful for some people to share your news with others (you may want certain members of the family to know but not have the time or emotional energy to tell them, for example).

What can they do to support you?

Think carefully about what help and support would be useful before, during and after your journey, and be as open and honest as you can be. Would you like them to come with you to appointments for example?



Thoughts from Chloë

"As a couple, we were often asked the same question by strangers: 'Do you want children?' I usually found myself gasping for air because the question always catches me off guard. It's asked as if it's the most normal thing in the world. But I always answered honestly, just like I did on my socials. Going through an IVF process has given me thick skin when it comes to a lot of things. Although it's been a challenging journey, it's also made me more confident in my daily life. I am no longer the same girl I used to be."

Dealing with difficult questions

Try to be as open and honest as possible about your reasons and hopes for fertility preservation, as well as any concerns you have. The healthcare expert can then give you the best/most appropriate advice for your specific circumstances.

"Could we talk about this another time?"

"It would be good if we could take a break from this discussion for now"

"Can I get back to you about that question?"

"I don't know about that yet. I'm still working through some things"



Thoughts from Julie

"First reflect upon who you want to seek support and help from. It can be your partner, friends, family, professionals, etc. Make clear what you do and don't want to discuss and how they can best support you. It needs to be someone that you trust and that you expect to be supportive. Some women don't inform their parents because they think they wouldn't understand as they come from a generation where egg freezing and IVF didn't even exist.

A loved one with a critical attitude is not necessarily unsupportive. Entering the debate with pros and cons can help better align reasons and motivations for performing egg freezing or IVF."

Remember, every situation and every person is unique, though the value of being prepared for a discussion in advance is universal.

Additional support: [Questions on fertility preservation?](#) See our [Q&A](#).
[Hear from others about their unique fertility journey](#)

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