

# POI and Fertility

## What is POI?

Premature/ Primary Ovarian Insufficiency (POI) is when the ovaries stop working normally before age 40. It can happen suddenly and often the cause of POI is unknown. POI can also happen after medical treatments such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

## Impact of POI on Fertility:



POI means fewer or no eggs are available in the ovary, making it hard to get pregnant. Your periods may become irregular or stop and your estrogen levels drop. Medical treatments such as chemotherapy, pelvic or whole body radiotherapy, or ovarian or pelvic surgery can cause POI. POI can also happen without warning (spontaneous POI). Currently there are no treatments which can cure POI or increase your number of eggs. There is a small chance that some women with spontaneous POI can become pregnant, usually in the first one to two years after diagnosis. If you do not want to become pregnant, you should use contraception.

## Options for Fertility Preservation and Treatment:

Sometimes it is possible to identify that you might be at risk of developing POI, for example before some treatments for cancer, or if other members of your family have developed POI. **Options for protecting your fertility or having a family are listed below. You may also choose to be child-free.**



**1**

### Egg Freezing:

Eggs can be collected and frozen for future use if you are at risk of developing POI. This requires ovarian stimulation, as in IVF treatment.



**2**

### Embryo Freezing:

Eggs are collected and fertilized with sperm to create embryos, which are then frozen for future use. This also requires ovarian stimulation.



**3**

### Ovarian tissue cryopreservation:

If you are at risk of POI, some ovarian tissue can be taken and frozen for later use. This requires keyhole surgery.



**4**

### GnRH analogues (GnRHa):

Injections with GnRHa are given to some women during chemotherapy to try to protect their ovaries and prevent POI.



**5**

### Donor Eggs or Embryos:

Using eggs or embryos from a donor is the most reliable way to become pregnant if you have POI.



**6**

### Adoption

Adoption or fostering is another way to build a family.



**7**

### Choosing to be child-free

You may also choose to live without children.

## What You Can Do:

**1**

### Talk to Your Doctor:

Discuss your fertility options and make a plan that suits your needs. This is especially important before you have medical treatments, such as chemotherapy, which may affect your fertility. You may need referral to a specialist.

**2**

### Seek Support:

- Loss of fertility due to POI impacts your emotional wellbeing and can also impact the emotional wellbeing of people close to you.
- Seek support from your health care professional and a counsellor or psychologist.
- Join in person or online support groups for women with POI if available (e.g Daisy Network ) to share experiences and get advice. Infertility or cancer support groups may be helpful for some women.

### Remember:

POI greatly affects fertility, but there are options available. It's important to seek professional help and support to explore the best choices for you.

**Ask Early Menopause**



The free **Ask Early Menopause App** provides comprehensive, high quality POI and early menopause information, women's stories and support tools that are based on the latest evidence ([www.askearlymenopause.org](http://www.askearlymenopause.org)).

Information from the updated **2024 ESHRE POI guideline:**

([www.eshre.eu/Guidelines-and-Legal/Guidelines/Premature-ovarian-insufficiency](http://www.eshre.eu/Guidelines-and-Legal/Guidelines/Premature-ovarian-insufficiency))

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\*Primary ovarian insufficiency is the term for POI often used in North America