

Fertility and Cancer: Are we making progress in Texas?

An Update From the 2017 LIVESTRONG Survey

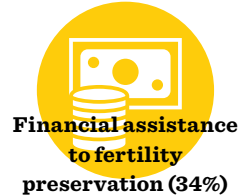
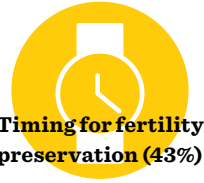
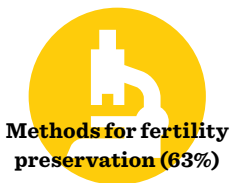
Each year approximately 120,000 Texans are diagnosed with cancer. Some cancer treatments may negatively impact fertility, and 40-80% of women and 35-70% of men diagnosed during their reproductive years (15-39) are at risk for reproductive compromise. However, less than 50% report being informed of potential risks to their fertility by their healthcare team according to a study in 2009.¹

In 2017, LIVESTRONG conducted a survey to better understand whether patients are being informed about potential fertility risks due to a cancer diagnosis and/or related treatments, whether they are receiving the necessary education and access to resources to make informed decisions about fertility preservation, and the financial burden associated with preservation. A total of 123 people diagnosed with cancer between ages of 15-39 during 2006 to 2017 in Texas responded to the survey. This infographic presents key highlights from the survey results.

Good news: More people are being informed.

75% of respondents reported that a doctor or health care professional discussed fertility issues related to cancer treatment with them. Of these respondents, 26% reported that they raised the topic themselves. The majority reported that they discussed fertility issues with an oncologist (86%), and while most discussed it prior to starting treatment (76%), many discussed it at the time of diagnosis (48%).

Respondents diagnosed with leukemia/lymphoma (87%), female reproductive cancers (83%), testicular or prostate cancer (82%) were more likely to report that a doctor or other HCP discussed fertility issues with them. Most frequently discussed topics included:



Communication is key.

Receiving a cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming and cause fear and anxiety. Twenty-eight percent and 38% of respondents reported that their health professional informed them that they were at high risk or some risk of experiencing fertility issues respectively. However only 40% reported being referred to a fertility specialist. Respondents who did not take steps to preserve their fertility (55%) cited the following reasons:

- **Cost (29%)**
- **Desire to start treatment right away (25%)**
- **Doctor said there was not enough time (24%)**
- **Lack of knowledge it was a possibility (21%)**

Among respondents who did take steps to preserve their fertility (43%), 69% reported that insurance did not cover any costs of fertility preservation. Additionally, 68% reported receiving financial assistance to cover costs of fertility preservation.

Patient experiences with fertility preservation are very inconsistent.

“I don’t remember fertility ever being brought up in conversation. I didn’t ask then because I didn’t even think about it at the time. A few years later it was a big concern for me and I still feel like I never got any answers.”

– Survey Respondent

“My primary oncologist made sure to tell me about the potential infertility issues prior to starting treatment. His office set up my appointment with the urologist to bank my sperm prior to my first round of chemotherapy. Since my treatment, I am currently sterile. My wife and I have a 5 month old son born using the banked sperm through IVF.”

– Survey Respondent

We are making progress but we have much further to go.

Infertility affects a cancer survivor’s long-term quality of life by causing unresolved grief and depression, as well as reduced life satisfaction and increased anxiety. All patients diagnosed in their reproductive years should be informed of infertility risks and receive information/resources on preservation options, regardless of education, income level, and insurance status. Additionally, it is our position that health insurance providers should provide coverage for all standard fertility preservation services for individuals at risk for infertility from necessary medical treatments.

About LIVESTRONG Fertility

LIVESTRONG supports young adult cancer survivors by offering discounted access to fertility preservation (egg & embryo freezing, sperm banking and IVF) in partnership with over 650 fertility clinics across the country. We also provide free stimulation medication to female cancer survivors or women whose male partners have been diagnosed with cancer through a partnership with EMD Serono. Learn more about LIVESTRONG Fertility at www.livestrong.org/fertility.

¹ Quinn, G. P., Vadaparampil, S. T., Lee, J., Jacobsen, P. B., Bepler, G., Lancaster, J., Keefe, D.L., Albrecht, T. L. (2009). Physician Referral for Fertility Preservation in Oncology Patients: A National Study of Practice Behaviors. *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, 27(35), 5952-5957.