

PATIENT GUIDE

IVF TREATMENT

Everything you need to know about IVF treatment,
the ideal fertility patient journey and typical success rates



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Dr. Shipra S. Krishna, MD MRCOG

*Consultant Gynaecologist
Specialist in Reproductive Medicine*

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Introduction

My name is Dr. Shipra S. Krishna and I am the Head Consultant Gynaecologist and Specialist in Reproductive Medicine at London IVF & Genetics Centre. I have worked with patients across the UK developing a unique approach to fertility treatment. I established the London IVF and Genetics Centre so that I can offer more people the higher than average pregnancy success rates that my patients enjoy. Our patients have recognized our services and you can check our testimonials on <https://www.londonivfandgenetics.co.uk/testimonials/>.

One in six couples will seek the advice of a fertility specialist to help them achieve pregnancy. Thirty percent of these couples may need IVF or ICSI treatment. I work with couples to thoroughly assess and investigate all their options. Based on this detailed assessment, we are able to prepare an individualised treatment protocol that offers the highest change of a successful pregnancy.

Enjoy this patient guide which answers the most common questions I hear every day in my practice. Please call /write to us if you have any feedback, or wish to know more about our services.

Wishing you all the very best,

Dr. Shipra S. Krishna, MD MRCOG

*Consultant Gynaecologist
Specialist in Reproductive Medicine*

"In this guide, I will answer the most common questions I get asked about IVF treatment and tell you what you need to know to confidently make the best decision about your treatment."



What is my background and experience?



I am a Consultant Gynaecologist and a Specialist of Reproductive Medicine (a Fertility Specialist) for many years. I have extensive experience in this field gained while working in the NHS and private sector fertility clinics. I have consulted in the management of male and female fertility concerns and have assisted with conception across the full range of complex cases.

To become a Consultant, I went through postgraduate training in obstetrics and gynaecology. I did further training in reproductive medicine and assisted conception to become a fertility specialist.

I'm very passionate about empowering my patients, informing them, bringing transparency to their care, and helping them make the best informed decisions when going through fertility treatment.

During my career I have held the hands of a few thousand patients and supported them through their treatment. I have also done many hundreds of surgical procedures. I'm sensitive to the special emotional challenges that my patients face and also sensitive to how important it is that the treatment should be successful.

Dr. Shipra S. Krishna, MD MRCOG

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Or write to us at enquiry@londonivfandgenetics.co.uk

IVF treatment at a glance

What does IVF stand for and what is it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IVF stands for in vitro fertilisation • It's a process by which we remove eggs from your ovaries and then fertilise them with sperm in the laboratory • We then return the fertilised egg, called an embryo, to your womb
What is the success rate?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Success rates depends on: clinical factors, the stage of the embryo replacement and the number of embryos that have been put back. • Clinical pregnancy rate at London IVF & Genetics Centre: 75% (for patients younger than 35).
Do I need IVF?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you been trying to get pregnant naturally for more than 2 years? • Are there any other fertility risk factors a specialist fertility consultant has found in your clinical assessment?
How can I make an IVF treatment more successful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smoking: Give up smoking completely. • Alcohol: Abstain from alcohol three to six months before treatment. • Caffeine: Reduce caffeine consumption • Healthy diet: Eat a well-balanced diet. • BMI: Keep BMI between 19 and 35. • Stress: Manage and reduce stress.
Does IVF cause cancer?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No clear results, but some studies have associated a small increase in the risk of ovarian cancer. • No increase in the risk of cancer in the babies born following fertility treatment.
Is IVF painful?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most injections are experienced as a sharp scratch rather than anything painful. • The majority of patients cope very well after some supportive coaching.

Learn about your fertility options



Before starting and embarking on a treatment or exploring your treatment options, it's important that you do a research. It's helpful to start by asking yourself what are your top three criteria in finding the right Fertility Consultant for you.

Comparing success rates

There is plenty of information available nowadays. A good starting point is to go onto the HFEA website (The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority) and that gives you information about outcomes, treatments, and fertility treatment success rates. It also breaks down this information into how the treatment itself was done

(whether it was using your own gametes, using donor gametes, or whether frozen embryo replacement was done.) Use this tool to begin shortlisting certain clinics.

The dangers of just looking at success rates



While it is something I wouldn't advise, if you are just looking at published success rates as the key measuring stick to base your treatment decision, then the HFEA can be useful for this.

An important point to note here is that the published success rates may not exactly be replicable in your case. You do have to be aware that these are a useful guide, but may not apply to your case. This is why the first port of call for most people is a fertility assessment which is often called a *Fertility MOT*.

The next important thing when you're looking for fertility clinics would be to clearly understand what specific problem is causing you to need treatment and, which clinics specialise in offering services that can solve your problem.

Fitting the treatment into your life

Besides looking at the services offered, and clinic success rates, you also have to look at other key criteria. If you're a professional woman for example, then having more flexibility of appointment choices is important. You can inquire at the clinic about the opportunity for early evening and weekend appointments, and how you would be able to integrate the treatment into your professional diary.

Clinic Location

Another important thing to note is where the clinic is located. Can you access the clinic? You will have to go to the clinic at least five to seven times, during a typical IVF or assisted conception treatment.

Continuity of Care

Something that is very important to my clients is whether the clinic provides a real continuity of care. This means: Will the same fertility specialist who takes your case history and develops your treatment plan work with you throughout your entire patient journey? This allows you to develop trust in your treatment provider and reduce the undue stress of having to repeat your story every visit..

Finding a Female Gynaecologist

Many women feel more comfortable with a female gynaecologist. You can inquire with the clinic to see whether they can offer you a female gynaecologist for each of your appointments.

The fertility patient journey

The patient's fertility journey, in my opinion, is anything but straightforward. Really, the challenges start coming up from the very beginning when couples try to decipher whether they might have a problem.



Figuring out whether you have a problem or not

The first step involves a lot of self learning and internet research to understand what may be going on. It takes a lot of courage for people to go to the GP, doctor, or sometimes even a fertility specialist to understand whether they need help.

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By the time a patient is booking the appointment for their fertility consultation, I think they have taken the most difficult step in the fertility patient journey.

The first consultation

When you come in for the first consultation, people are trying to assimilate lots of information. Questions like whether they need the treatment, who might be to blame, what treatment they need, what the effects would be short term or long term, and whether it will work are top of mind at this stage.

Beginning the treatment

Fertility treatment goes on for anywhere from four to eight weeks, and in this brief period patients are doing plenty of injections. Some of them might have side effects from the injections and/or mood swings. While the female partner is enduring the injections, it's equally stressful for the male partner to ensure that she's comfortable and approaching the treatment in a healthy way.

Monitoring the treatment

Once they've been through the treatment, the next part of the patient journey is to work with the fertility specialist to monitor the treatment results on a daily basis. This includes monitoring whether the embryos are developing well and looking at putting one or two embryos back. Patients are asked to make these decisions as

choices based on the facts. There is, in fact, no wrong or right decision.

Discovering the outcome of treatment

The next part of the journey is dealing with the outcome. In some patients, where the treatment has been unsuccessful, it can be a frustrating and devastating end to the treatment. In some patients it can become even more challenging when we might say that we don't know why it hasn't worked.

In my experience I have also seen patients with a successful outcome becoming very apprehensive about the pregnancy. Dealing with an ongoing successful pregnancy for some patients has been just as challenging. Obviously however, a positive outcome is much better to deal with compared to dealing with an unsuccessful outcome.

The emotional aspect of the patient journey

I'm very sensitive and aware that a fertility patient will face challenging emotions, which are different in nature at each step of the journey. Obviously what keeps patients applying themselves through the journey is the absolutely priceless end result. In my experience, a majority of patients who were about to end their journey but kept going, end up coming to see me with their babies. This is the utmost job satisfaction I could ever get.

What is IVF?



IVF stands for in vitro fertilisation, and it is a fertility treatment that utilises assisted reproductive technology (ART) in helping couples achieve a pregnancy when they have failed to do so naturally.

History of IVF

IVF was first developed by Professor Wood and Patrick Steptoe in the late nineteen seventies. As a result, the first IVF baby, Louise Brown, was born in 1978. Since then over 3 million babies have been born using IVF technologies.

The IVF Process

The IVF process involves taking fertility medications to encourage the development of multiple follicles. These follicles are fluid-filled structures which are surrounded by a membrane and contain an egg inside. You will then be monitored by ultrasound scans and blood tests to assess the development of these follicles. When the eggs are considered to be mature enough, you will undergo a minor surgical procedure under conscious sedation called egg collection. This procedure is done vaginally.

Once the eggs are retrieved these are then inseminated with the sperms and then the embryologist will do checks on a daily basis until the embryo is ready to be implanted back into the mother. The transfer of the embryos usually takes place nowadays on day 5 or blastocyst stage. Once the embryos have been replaced you will then take a pregnancy test two to three weeks later.



Connected treatments

It's also important to know that the IVF process forms the basis for other treatments such as intra-cytoplasmic sperm insemination (ICSI) and pre-implantation genetic screening (PGS) or comprehensive chromosome screening (CCS).

Do I need IVF?



"Do I need IVF?" is a common question that most patients have - especially when they have been trying to get pregnant for some time.

1. In my opinion, whether a patient needs a fertility treatment (IVF or another treatment) depends on how long you've been trying for, or the duration of infertility.
2. The other aspect will be if any other risk factors in your clinical assessment increase the risk of having either male infertility or female fertility issues.

Duration of infertility

With regards to the duration of how long you've been trying to get pregnant: if you are younger than 35, and you've been now trying for less than two years then you probably can try naturally for a bit longer. If you're anxious and want to proceed with a fertility treatment, you can consider a simple treatment such as insemination rather than proceeding straight to IVF.

However, if you have been trying for two years or more, then IVF is probably the right treatment for you.



Female Fertility

If you are over 35, your age has implications for your fertility. This will impact both natural conception and fertility treatment assisted conception. Therefore, if you've been trying for over a year then you should seek further advice. Additionally, I'd recommend seeing a specialist immediately if you are experiencing any symptoms such as:

- Irregular cycles or absence of periods
- History of past Chlamydia Infection
- History of moderate to severe endometriosis
- You have had an extensive pelvic surgery
- History of a burst appendix leading to a major surgery
- Genetic conditions such as Turner syndrome or Mayer-Rokitansky-Küster-Hauser Syndrome (MRKH)

Additionally if you do have a family history of early menopause, premature ovarian failure, or autoimmune conditions, then it is important that you seek advice early.

Male Fertility Concerns



For men it is important to see whether they could have any history related to:

- Medical illnesses
- Diabetes
- Autoimmune conditions
- A history of infections
- Nongonococcal urethritis
- Prostatitis
- Use of anabolic steroids
- Testosterone supplements

These are the factors that can affect male fertility and therefore early advice would be suggested.

In summary, it strongly depends on how long you have been trying and what the detailed clinical assessment will suggest. If you think there is a reason to believe that you may have a risk factor for fertility, and you are anxious, you should seek help early.

What is the IVF success rate?

It is important to understand that the success rate of an IVF treatment depends on many variables. These are often based on the clinical



circumstances behind your infertility. Sometimes success rates can also be related to other factors such as the quality of the eggs, sperms or the embryos.

Success rates are also affected by when we are replacing the embryos back, or how many embryos we're replacing back.

We also need to look at other clinical factors like the presence of medical illnesses or immune conditions, as well as check to see if you're taking any medications that might have the potential to affect the quality of the eggs. All of these things can impact individual success rates.

Age as an IVF success rate determinant

One of the most important determinants of the success rate for patients is the age of the mother. Clinical pregnancy success rates for those patients less than 35 years old, tend to be around forty to fifty percent on average. The live birth rates would be slightly lower. The success rates for patients between 38 to 42 tends to be around

twenty to forty percent for the the clinical pregnancy rate, with live birth rates generally less than 30 to 35 percent.

For patients more than 42, there is a significant drop in the clinical pregnancy rate, and it tends to be less than ten percent. The majority of fertility specialists would advise considering the use of an egg donor if you happen to be more than 42, because results are higher.

The success rates when using an egg donor are very comparable to what it would be for women who are less than 37. With age, it is the egg quality that leads to the reduction of the clinical pregnancy rate, as the success of an IVF treatment is very much dependant upon the successful implantation of a healthy embryo within the womb.



What to look at when viewing IVF success rates

When you are looking at the success rates of different clinics, it is important that you look at the clinic profile and what kind of patients they are treating. Every clinic has its niche area of working - at least to a certain extent. You should also consider the cause of your infertility. You want to look at whether the clinic you choose is treating enough patients with infertility conditions similar to yours. The success rate can vary widely depending on fertility causes and if you merely look at a clinic's average success rate, they won't tell this part of the story very well.

On the other hand, it's also important to know how a clinic's success rates are being represented. Whether the key denominator being used is a clinical pregnancy rate, or whether the denominator is a live birth rate. When you go for your initial consultation it is important you ask your specialist how recent the success rates are, because IVF processes are dynamic. The treatment, success rates and quality control processes in a clinic can change within a few months.

It's important to know that a clinic's success rates are fairly recent for you to make an informed decision. At London IVF and Genetics, our success rates for patients (less than 35 years old), for a clinical pregnancy have been 75%, which is much higher than the UK average of 35%. This is for patients who went for treatment in the last year. That is my guide mark. This is a general indication for what you may expect if you're coming into treatment.

Obviously, we tend to discuss in detail what variables may decrease your success rates, so that you have a realistic expectation of what your chances for a successful treatment should be. It's also important to know you should not use these numbers as a predictive tool because sometimes situations can change and success rates cannot always be replicated for every patient.

We are very sensitive to the fact that the journey of an IVF patient is anything but straightforward. There are known physical and emotional challenges that patients go through, so it's very very important that we empower you with the most realistic expectations of what treatment might be able to achieve. This way you can make a properly informed decision.

In summary, the IVF success rates have considerably improved in the last few years. They depend on clinical factors, the stage of the embryo replacement, and the number of the embryos that have been put back. Based on these factors your specialist can give you a personalised idea of what range of success you might be able to expect from treatment.

Why is continuity of care so important?



Continuity of care is a very key factor for patient to consider when seeking a fertility treatment. I believe it is important for any treatment in any area of medicine. Developing rapport with your doctor and having the right doctor-patient relationship can help alleviate a lot of stress and anxiety that patients go through.

When we say continuity of care, what does this mean? In general it's the same person providing as much, if not all, of the fertility treatment. So this means that the patient is seen by the same consultant right from the first appointment, through the monitoring

scan appointments, egg collection procedure, embryo transfer and up to the follow-up consultations. Even out of hours, you should be able to speak to your consultant. This gives patients a huge degree of reassurance.



There has been a lot of discussion about the impact of stress on fertility. While there is no direct associations or links that have been studied to date, we do believe that stress may affect the outcome of fertility treatment. In keeping with our commitment to deliver extraordinarily high success rates, we believe that lowering stress, wherever possible, is one of the factors that can help improve your success rates. And one of many ways we reduce stress levels is by ensuring the same Consultant interacts with each patients at every step of their journey.

How can you make an IVF treatment more successful?



I think this is a question that every patient asks to give themselves the very best chance of getting pregnant following an IVF treatment. There are many things that you can do below to give yourself the very best chance. Multiple lifestyle factors have been associated with positively impacting the outcome of fertility treatment.

Smoking

If you have any history of smoking, it is important that you give up smoking completely both before and during your treatment. This is relevant to both you and your partner. Smoking negatively impacts the quality of eggs as well as the response to fertility drugs. This has a further negative knock on affect of changing the timing for when we might be able to put the embryos back.

Alcohol

On the same note, heavy alcohol consumption or binge drinking can affect both male and female infertility. Also, drinking during pregnancy can give rise to foetal alcohol syndrome. Therefore, it is important that when you are preparing for a treatment that you abstain or restrict your intake of alcohol (woman 1-2, Men 3-5 units a week). Generally, at London IVF & Genetics Centre we recommend patients to abstain entirely from alcohol for at least three to six months before starting treatment.

Caffeine

Excess caffeine consumption should also be addressed. The general advice is to either totally abstain from caffeine or consume it in moderation. Caffeine consumption has been associated not only with infertility but also with an increased risk of miscarriage.

Healthy diet

A healthy balanced diet is very important to make a fertility treatment more successful. To give yourself the very best chance, the diet should be rich in macronutrients, micronutrients, trace elements and minerals. I would also suggest that you start taking a folic acid supplement before you even begin the treatment.

Particularly for men, it's important that the diet also contains zinc, selenium, lycopene, vitamin A and vitamin C.



For women, it is important that you consume enough oily fish to maintain a healthy ratio of omega-3 to omega-6. More omega-3 is considered to have anti-inflammatory properties and therefore might improve your

success rate. Again the evidence is not robust, but these are some of the early studies that are being associated with better outcomes.

BMI (Body Mass Index)

Maintaining a healthy BMI is very important. Patients with a BMI of more than 35 can have reduced implantation potential of embryos as well as a reduced stimulation response. It is best that you start working on a weight management strategy for optimal results.

On the other hand, patients with very low BMI can also have an erratic response to treatment. They are predisposed to certain complications such as Ovarian Hyperstimulation Syndrome. So if you have a BMI which is less than 19, we would not recommend starting the treatment until you brought your BMI to 19 or 20.

Stress

As mentioned in the section about continuity of care, stress management is an important part of fertility treatment. If you feel that you might be exposed to high levels of stress, or



you are stressed about the future treatment, then it is best to take counselling support. All patients going through fertility treatment can seek fertility counselling services at no extra cost at London IVF & Genetics Centre. Patients may do this either before, during, or after the treatment.

We believe that it is quite important to manage stress when patients are going through treatment. You might also want to consider practising meditation or mindfulness to help you through the treatment. Many patients find this a useful tool during treatment.

About London IVF and Genetics Centre

London IVF and Genetics Centre is an exclusive fertility clinic that is conveniently located in Central London. We provide the full range of assisted conception treatments for male and female fertility. We have extensive experience in working across the full range of clinical complexity from straight forward cases through to the highly complex.



We pride ourselves in being able to deliver the best possible success rates that we can offer to couple's coming for treatment at our clinic. As part of that, we have developed a guaranteed success program because we believe in our unique processes.



Besides our exceptional success rates, we also have a strong patient-centric approach. We offer an unparalleled continuity of care. Our patient's get seen

by the same consultant from the beginning of their appointments all the way through to going through monitoring scans, the treatment, the surgical procedures, follow-ups, pregnancy scans, and out of hours support. This really relieves a lot of stress and anxiety that a majority of patients have.

Besides this commitment to the continuity of care, we've also introduced many new options for patients to book early mornings, early evenings and even weekend appointments. This allows our patients to continue with their professional priorities without having to be unnecessarily anxious or stressed about their fertility treatment.

We also firmly believe in empowering patients and as part of that, we have introduced a free 20 minute consultation, which - along with other options to contact us - can be accessed at <https://www.londonivfandgenetics.co.uk/contact-london-ivf-genetics-centre/>

The most difficult part of the patient journey is often the period prior to speaking to a fertility expert. We offer potential patients the chance to have a brief discussion with the actual consultant who will treat them. This allows them to feel whether our clinic is the right fit, there is chemistry, and whether they will be able to give us their trust and confidence.

Patient testimonials

Below are some of the testimonials from our web-site. You can access a more detailed list of patient testimonials at <https://www.londonivfandgenetics.co.uk/testimonials/>.

23 October 2024,

Dr. Krishna is absolutely wonderful. I travel a long way to see her and she is always professional, kind, well prepared. She is the only person I trust for my fertility journey and I highly recommend her for anyone seeking family planning services.

22 October 2024,

Best doctor i've ever had!

Finally got the answers + treatment I need.

9 October 2024,

We are incredibly grateful for everything you did to help us get here, thank you from the bottom of our hear

13 April 2021

I just wanted to send you our best wishes and to remind you how much happiness and joy you have brought to our wider family ... I wanted to express how appreciative & fortunate we are to have had the benefit of your generosity, time, compassion, patience and attentiveness ... You will always have a special place in our family's story and in our hearts.

17 March 2021,

Having the same person to go through each stage was a much more positive experience for me than previous clinic...My previous experience is feeling one of many 'at a clinic here it felt very different. Having my consultant do each stage was so reassuring to me and to have someone familiar was very comforting.

6th April 2020

.....I am totally convinced you are the best fertility specialist in the world...

18 Dec 2018

Dr Krishna is wonderful, she is the most patient, understanding and warm Doctor we have ever met...I would highly recommend Dr.Krishna to anyone ... always explains things in a way that we could understand... I would advise anyone to at least book a consultation with Dr.Krishna and see for yourself what an amazing Doctor she is. I am thrilled to say we are 12 weeks pregnant and everything seems to be going great.

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Or write to us at enquiry@londonivfandgenetics.co.uk

The first step of the patient journey

The first step for patients who either have been diagnosed with a fertility problem, or are still exploring their options, is to contact a fertility clinic or two.



At London IVF and Genetics Centre, we encourage patients to either give us a call, or some even prefer to come in and talk to us. This is why we now offer free 20-minute consultations with a fertility specialist to give

you an initial idea of whether you are on the right track.

The *first steps consultation* will help you in addressing some of the real fears that you might be facing and give you an idea of the next steps. You'll get a chance to gauge rapport with our Consultant, discuss potential causes of your infertility, look at potential treatment options and get a view as to whether private fertility treatment is right for you.

You can contact us using the following options:

1. To book a free initial consultation you can visit our website at:
<https://www.londonivfandgenetics.co.uk/contact-london-ivf-genetics-centre/>
2. Call us at 02075800207 (London) and 01908915151 (Milton Keynes).
3. Or, write to us at enquiry@londonivfandgenetics.co.uk