



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR IVF CYCLE

### A Step-by-Step Guide

In Vitro Fertilisation (IVF) is an often-used fertility treatment process that can be life-changing for couples struggling to conceive. Keeping this in mind, understanding each phase of the IVF cycle can help ease anxiety and empower patients to navigate the process with confidence. Read on for a step-by-step guide to what you can expect.

#### Step 1: Initial Consultation and Testing

An in-depth consultation is crucial to kick off the IVF journey. Doctors will review your medical history and conduct fertility tests, including hormone evaluations, ultrasounds and semen analysis. This helps identify any underlying issues and is invaluable in helping create your personalised treatment plan.

#### Step 2: Ovarian Stimulation

Once treatment begins the second step starts wherein hormone injections stimulate the ovaries to produce multiple mature eggs instead of the single egg typically released during a natural cycle. During this 8–14 day phase, your doctor will monitor follicle development with blood tests and ultrasounds.

#### Step 3: Egg Retrieval

When the follicles are ready, a trigger shot induces final egg maturation. About 36 hours later, eggs are collected through a minor surgical procedure using ultrasound guidance and a thin needle under light sedation.

#### Step 4: Fertilisation and Embryo Culture

In the next step, the retrieved eggs are fertilised with sperm in the lab. Fertilisation can be done traditionally or via Intracytoplasmic Sperm Injection (ICSI),



depending on the circumstances. The resulting embryos are cultured for several days during which period they are monitored for quality and development.

#### Step 5: Embryo Transfer

A high-quality embryo is then selected for transfer into the uterus, typically on day 3 or 5 after fertilisation. This is a simple, painless procedure which is performed without anaesthesia.

#### Step 6: The Two-Week Wait and Pregnancy Test

After the transfer, patients have to undergo a waiting period before taking a blood test to check for pregnancy. Hormonal support may continue during this time to help the uterine lining support implantation.

#### The benefits of being aware

IVF is a complex but highly effective fertility treatment. **Knowing each step of the process can make the experience less overwhelming and understanding your IVF cycle can help you make informed decisions and stay hopeful.**