

Endometrial Scratch

What is an endometrial scratch?

An endometrial scratch is a procedure that is performed to try to improve the chance of implantation when an embryo is transferred back in to your uterus.

What does an endometrial scratch involve?

Having an endometrial scratch is similar to having an embryo transfer. During embryo transfer, the embryo is loaded into a very soft catheter and placed into the womb as gently as possible. In contrast, an endometrial scratch involves using a firm catheter that is moved repeatedly inside the uterus, which creates a vacuum to intentionally cause a minor injury to the womb lining.

Most people report the scratch as being more uncomfortable than an embryo transfer, however the discomfort is best described as mild and result in period-like cramps. The procedure itself rarely takes more than 30 seconds to complete once the pipelle tube has been inserted into the womb.

It is important to use a barrier method of contraception (for example, a condom) from day 1 of the cycle that the scratch is going to be performed.

How does it work?

We are not entirely sure. Some studies suggest that traumatising the lining of the uterus (endometrium) promotes an immune response that increases new blood vessel growth and an influx of certain chemicals and cells that play important roles in implantation. On the contrary, other studies have not reported any difference in live birth rate.

How do I know if I would benefit from an endometrial scratch?

To date, the evidence is contradictory. Your IVF specialist may talk to you about this procedure, however please ask if you feel you require more information.

How do I arrange an endometrial scratch?

In order for you to have an endometrial scratch, you will need to be seen by a clinician. It is normally performed between days 20 and 25 of your menstrual cycle and its effect can last up to 3 months. You will be given a provisional date for the procedure based on your last period date. You will then be contacted the day before your procedure to confirm a specific time. Please arrive 15 minutes before your scheduled appointment and with a full bladder.

Do I need an anaesthetic?

No, the procedure is performed whilst you are awake. It is more uncomfortable than an embryo transfer, but we are able to offer you gas and air which is a mild inhaled anaesthetic. We also suggest taking a simple painkiller such as paracetamol or ibuprofen about an hour before the procedure. Please note we do not allow partners to accompany you whilst you have the procedure.

Document Code: MED-FORM-7	Version No: 12	Document Title: Endometrial Scratch – Patient Information Leaflet	
Date of issue: 09.12.2024	Date of review: 09.12.2027	Owner: A Drakeley	Author: A Drakeley

Are there any risks?

It is generally considered a very safe procedure. The procedure is uncomfortable and you may experience some discomfort and very mild vaginal bleeding after the procedure. There is a very rare chance of developing an infection. If you develop a high temperature within a few days of the procedure, experience severe cramping, or unusual bleeding (not just spotting), or offensive vaginal discharge, or are concerned at any time, please contact the Hewitt Centre for further advice. There is also a small chance that the procedure gets abandoned due to difficult entry.

How much does it cost?

There will be an additional charge as this treatment is not funded by the NHS. Please see our fee schedule or website for more information.

<https://www.thehewittfertilitycentre.org.uk/costs-and-funding/costs/>

Add-on treatments

Endometrial scratch is generally described to be an 'add-on' treatment. For more information on treatment add-ons please refer to the HFEA website:

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/treatments/explore-all-treatments/treatment-add-ons/>

Please discuss the current HFEA traffic light status for endometrial scratch with your fertility specialist.

This leaflet can be made available in different formats on request. If you would like to make any suggestions or comments about the content of this leaflet, then please contact the Patient Experience Team on 0151 702 4353 or by email at pals@lwh.nhs.uk

If you are unsure as to whether you should have endometrial scratch performed please contact the Hewitt Fertility Centre.

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