**Should My Daughter Donate Her Eggs?** A look inside this big (and costly) decision

<http://mom.me/parenting/2156-should-your-daughter-donate-her-eggs/>

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Your daughter is in a bit of a financial bind. Maybe she needs money for tuition, or cash to furnish her first apartment. Then she calls you with a plan: she’s going to donate her eggs! Or maybe donate isn’t quite the operative word here, as they’re offering to pay her serious money in return for a piece of your family’s genetic material.

There are lots of questions a mom might ask at a moment like this. Below, we’ve tried to anticipate them and offer some answers.

**Will she regret this?**

Donors often report their mothers asking them, “Aren’t you going to be upset that you have a child out there somewhere? My grandchild?” according to Patricia Sachs, a clinical social worker with Shady Grove Fertility Center, based in Rockville, Md. “The donors typically say, ‘I’m not giving away my child. I’m giving away my DNA, my eggs.’”

Of course, that’s what they say today. But a study published in the scientific journal *Fertility and Sterility* in 2008 shows those young donors may continue to feel that way in the long term. RELATED: [Great quotes for college grads](http://mom.me/parenting/614-quotes-for-grads/)

The researchers found that two-thirds of the women surveyed reported satisfaction with the process, while 13.8 percent reported long-term negative effects and 12.5 percent described both positive and negative feelings about their past egg donation.

The study by scientists at the University of Washington included 80 women who donated eggs at clinics in 20 states.

One woman cited in the study, Donor 28, told the researchers, ‘‘It was a great thing to do for someone else that I could feel good about, and the money made the discomfort worth going through.’’

Donor 18, however, was among the women who reported both positive and negative reactions:

"I am happy I donated my eggs.... I’d love to know the recipients involved and see their children, but understand that I signed those rights away a long time ago.... I do wish that all communication with the recipients and the program hadn’t ended the second I was handed a check."

**Is it safe?**

That depends on who you ask. Those in the fertility industry say donors are not taking a considerable physical risk.

“History indicates that egg donation is not a problem,” says Dr. James Goldfarb, medical director of the University Hospitals Fertility Center in Beachwood, Ohio, and a past president of the American Society for Reproductive Medicine.

Mild, short-term side effects are possible, Goldfarb and other industry officials say. These include mood swings, headaches, abdominal bloating, weight gain and nausea, as a side effect of the drugs taken to induce egg production. RELATED: [Celebrating Mother's Day as an empty-nester](http://mom.me/parenting/495-mothers-day-in-an-empty-nest/)

As for more severe health issues arising directly from donation, Goldfarb said, “there is a very, very low risk of complications.”

The most common complication is ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome, a condition marked by chest and abdominal fluid buildup and cystic enlargement of the ovaries that can cause permanent damage and even death. Fertility clinics say less than 5 percent of donors are at risk of developing OHSS.

But what about the long-term risks?

Goldfarb cited studies (such as [this one from 2004](http://aje.oxfordjournals.org/content/160/11/1070.full.pdf)) that showed little to no risk of long-term physical effects from egg donation.

Opponents believe there is at least ample anecdotal evidence of future fertility problems and increased cancer risks associated with egg donation, and they are calling for further research.

“Absence of harm does not equate to evidence of safety,” says Judy Norsigian, executive director of [Our Bodies, Ourselves](http://www.ourbodiesourselves.org/)*,* a Boston-based nonprofit, public interest women’s health education, advocacy and consulting organization.

Though Goldfarb cites studies, Norsigian said the ones that exist are inadequate—too narrow, or too short-term in scope, or derived from too small a sampling. “Understand,” she said, “we don’t have adequate information.”

Norsigian has college-aged daughters, and said if one of them came to her for advice on this subject, she would tell her, “Don’t do it, even if the risk is not huge. If you are one of the minority of women who have problems, the risk is 100 percent for you … and the money would not be worth it.” RELATED: [The do's and don'ts of lending money to your adult child](http://mom.me/parenting/253-should-you-lend-your-adult-child-money/)

To which Goldfarb responds: “I tell [egg donors] it’s less than a 1 in 1,000 chance of a significant risk. If you want to make sure there’s no risk, you should not go through with it.”

**What can she expect to earn from the experience? And how will that color her decision?**

Clinics generally offer egg donors $10,000 or less per donation, with repeat donors commanding higher prices. But some infertile couples, looking for a more precise match or an especially remarkable donor, hire egg brokers who offer much more—ads on Ivy League campuses have dangled figures like $50,000 or more for the right donor. As for how that affects a donor’s decision, the University of Washington study found that women who donated more out of altruism than financial gain tended to feel better, long-term, about their decision (84 percent) than women who were mainly driven by compensation (61 percent).

“We were asking these women years later,” said Nancy Kenney, a UW associate professor and the study’s lead author, in a press release, “and a feeling of helping may last longer than money.”