

**DRIZZLE CAKE  
DELIGHT!**



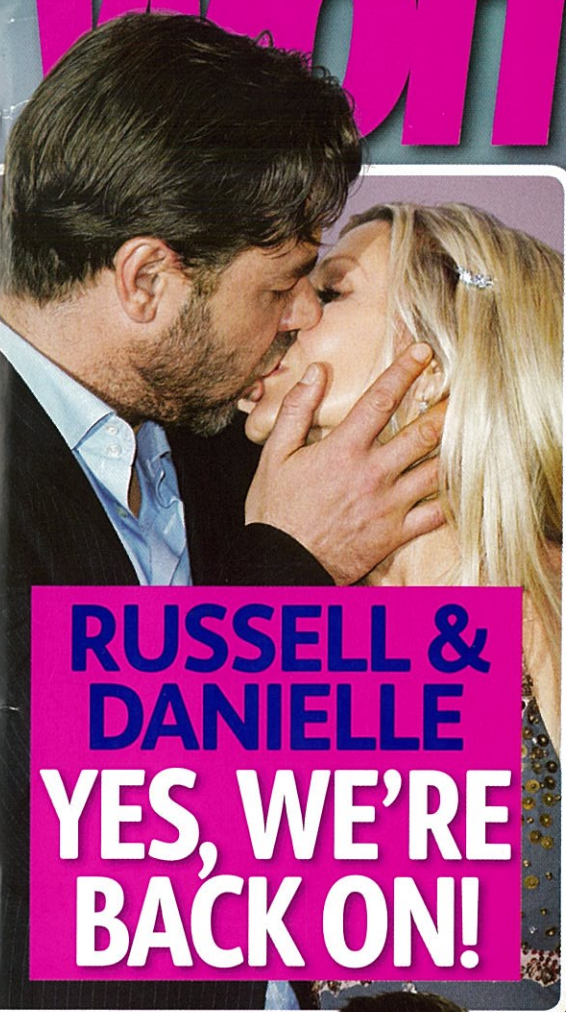
**AUSTRALIA'S  
MIRACLE IVF BABIES**



AUSTRALIA'S **NO.1** WEEKLY MAGAZINE

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# Woman's Day



**RUSSELL &  
DANIELLE  
YES, WE'RE  
BACK ON!**



**LATEST PALACE UPDATES**

**'I'M SO  
PROUD OF  
KATE'**



**HUGH:  
HOW DEB  
CHANGED  
ME**



**BIG BANG  
BABE SNAGS  
SUPERMAN!**

**AUSSIE DAD TELLS  
CONNOR CRUISE  
'Hands off  
my daughter'**



**How to knit  
this 'beary'  
cute hat!**

ISSN 1321-9839





# Miracle IVF babies

When Mother Nature let them down, these four determined would-be mums turned to science, writes ERIN HOLOHAN

## I HAD IVF 22 TIMES!

**W**hen Aussie midwife Nicole Dunn and her husband turned to IVF, they never dreamed it would be such an emotional roller-coaster.

Nicole underwent 22 treatments over nine years, spending tens of thousands of dollars, before succeeding at age 34.

"I always had this feeling that it would work," explains Nicole. "Each time it didn't, I searched for a new reason why."

Triplets Grace, Isabella and Amelia, now two, were a blessing for the Wagga Wagga couple.

What's more, they were amazed that they conceived one of the girls naturally at the same time as the IVF conception of the other two!

Nicole believes Dr Gavin Sacks' treatment of the natural killer cells in her bloodstream – cells that stop an embryo implanting – was the key to her miracle pregnancy.

The proud mum says triplets are challenging, but she's forever thankful. "I wouldn't change it for the world!" she says. "They're the best of friends."

Nicole's advice to those considering IVF is to try anything, get second opinions, and always remain positive.

"I had this feeling it'd work."



## I'M AN IVF DOC.. AND AN IVF MUM

**S**he's devoted her life to making IVF

dreams come true for others. But now Dr Sonya Jessup and her husband Dr David Knight, who also works in the field of assisted reproduction, are celebrating an IVF miracle of their own in one-year-old Samuel.

Although they have children from previous marriages, the couple wanted a child together. But at 41, having undergone a tubal ligation and with a low egg count, Sonya knew IVF was her best chance.

"We were excited to experience all the ups and downs," she says.

"That said, when we didn't fall pregnant, we had the same emotions any couple does."

Using a specialist they both trusted, Sonya underwent two IVF cycles before she got the good news.

Samuel joins Sonya and David's brood of seven other children – aged between 21 and three – who all live at home with them. While busy as a mum and as a specialist, Sonya says she wouldn't have things any other way.

"Kids are just delightful," she says, beaming. "They make you laugh and smile all the time."

The couple share their own experiences with their patients, and Sonya says it's confirmed her

"Get the correct advice early on!"



belief that Australian women are lucky to have the IVF option.

"Thirty years ago, I wouldn't have been able to have Sam," she explains. "We're blessed to have that technology."

But Sonya cautions people about trusting what they read online.

"See a specialist and get the correct advice early on," she advises. "You can make the right choices from there."



# I WAS MENOPAUSAL AT 25

**R**ockhampton's Ky Baxendell was just 25 when she received the devastating news that she had ovarian failure.

"I'd been sweaty and losing some of my hair – both symptoms of menopause – but, given my age, I didn't put two and two together," recalls Ky. "When I found out, I was beside myself."

Recently married, Ky and her husband Dirk were told their only options were adoption – a difficult task – or to find an egg donor, which is only legal in Australia if there is no fee involved.

Ky couldn't ask her friends to donate when they hadn't even started having kids of their own, nor could she ask her sister, who had also been diagnosed with ovarian failure.

Desperate for help, Ky and Dirk came across a program called Donor Eggs Australia, run by medical fertility specialist Dr Joel Bernstein and IVF Scientist Denyse Asher.

The program offers women the opportunity to receive eggs from anonymous donors in Greece, who are selected

based on the physical attributes that they share with the recipients.

Ky says she wasn't concerned about using another woman's eggs.

"The women undergo basic genetic testing and health screens," she explains. "I also believe nurture has a lot to do with how children turn out. I was just overwhelmed to have an option that gave us hope."

Ky had her first embryo transfer in Athens in 2006. It was after her second visit the following year – by which time she'd spent \$11,000 – that she fell pregnant with twins.

Siena and Noah, now five, were born in 2007, and Ky couldn't have been happier.

"I love being a mum!" she says, laughing. "They're just so beautiful."

But Ky says while overseas egg donor programs are great, she hopes Australian women won't have to travel internationally for eggs in the future.

"I would have gone to the ends of the earth to have kids but it would be great if something like this was more accessible for women like me."

*"It'd be great if this was more accessible."*



real life

*"It's hard draining and all worth it."*



# I DEFIED THE ODDS AT 42... AND 46!

**H**aving always wanted children, Sonya Silcock knew she and husband Stephen had to act fast after marrying when she was 40.

"We tried for 18 months, then got some help," says Sonya.

After being diagnosed with endometriosis and having surgery, Sonya was told IVF gave her the greatest chance of falling pregnant.

With time running out, she began treatment straight away.

Four IVF cycles later, Sonya was overjoyed when she fell pregnant with Sienna, now five, at age 42.

Desperate to give Sienna a sibling, the Sydney couple tried IVF again when Sonya was 46. She was given a one-per cent chance of conceiving, but under Dr Michael Costello, who used a treatment where sperm is inserted into a mature egg, she fell pregnant with Sophie, who turns one on July 17.

Sonya says she was blessed to have children at her age. But she describes IVF as an emotional roller-coaster.

"You see couples having children and wonder if it will ever happen to you," she says. "It can be quite heartbreaking and puts a strain on your relationship."

Sonya says people considering IVF should decide how long they are willing to try for, then just do it.

"It's hard on your body, it's emotionally draining and it's a financial stress," she says. "But in the end, it's all worth it!"

● **For everything you need to know about IVF, turn to page**

Nicole wears Events, Peter Lang, Billini; Amé Grace and Isabella wear Pumpkin Patch, Ky wears Isabella Olivier, Georgini, Equi Windsor Smith; Samuel wears Mossimo, Country Road. Ky wears Wayne Cooper, Div Lipstick; Noah wears Mix at Coles, Mossimo Rivers; Sienna wears Tutu du Monde. Sonya wears Autograph, Chrissy L.; Sienna wears Tutu du Monde; Sophie wears Tiny Little Wond



# Your IVF questions answered

Every year, around 10,000 IVF babies are born to Australian parents. Here's what to expect if you're considering the process

Since the first IVF baby was born in the UK in 1978, there have been more than five million IVF births worldwide. Yet the process still remains a mystery to many. We asked leading Australian IVF doctors to answer your questions about this life-changing procedure.

## What does IVF involve?

In vitro fertilisation is the most commonly used form of assisted reproductive technology. Eggs are collected from the ovaries and fertilised in a laboratory before individual or multiple embryos are implanted back into the uterus. Unused embryos can be frozen for later attempts.

## How long does a cycle take?

The IVF cycle takes 4-6 weeks, broken into short procedures. After a consultation, the regime begins with self-administered hormone injections daily before later visits to the clinic for blood tests and an ultrasound.

The egg collection takes between 15-30 minutes and is done as a day surgery procedure performed under light general anaesthetic or local anaesthetic with sedation. The embryo transfer is a faster procedure that uses a very fine catheter. The cycle concludes two weeks later with a pregnancy blood test, performed in the clinic.

## Is it painful?

"The embryo transfer is similar to a pap smear," says Associate Professor Peter Illingworth of IVFAustralia. "But the egg collection is uncomfortable, so we use anaesthetic." After the egg collection, expect several hours of recovery time and, if working, plan to take the day off. The rest of the IVF cycle should not impair your ability to work.

## Who is eligible for IVF?

Women who've been unable to fall pregnant are eligible, along with same-sex couples who

want to conceive with donor sperm (note, restrictions may apply in some states for same-sex couples). "In Australia, we offer IVF until the natural age menopause," says Dr Andrew Zuschmann, specialist with clinic Demeter Fertility, whose cut-off age for treatment is 51.

## What are the success rates?

Age is the big factor, dictating the number and quality of egg that a woman has remaining. Those under 30 have close to a 50 per cent chance of successful birth from transferred embryos while women 40-plus see their chances dip to below 20 per cent. Other factors include genetics



After the Medicare rebate, the cost of an IVF cycle in Australia is typically from around \$1500 to \$3000. Private health funds can cover certain procedures carried out in a hospital or day surgery facility – check with your fund.

Dr Zuschmann says it's best to talk to a clinic before you rule it out as too expensive.

"There are a lot of urban myths with costs," he says. "When I tell somebody they're going to be \$2500 out of pocket, they say 'Wow, I thought it was going to cost \$30,000!'"

### What emotional toll can I expect?

Every woman will respond differently – some are matter-of-fact, while others become highly emotional and stressed during the procedure. The effects of the hormonal changes can affect

find it strengthens their bond. Couples are encouraged to continue their sex life as usual, except when men are asked to abstain from ejaculating for a couple of days before they need to provide a sperm sample.

### If I have IVF, is that the only way I can conceive?

"You'd think that that would be the case, but we see tonnes of couples who get pregnant naturally after one IVF cycle or pregnancy," says Dr Zuschmann.

Many factors can increase your chances of falling pregnant. Eating well and exercising are important, as is maintaining a healthy weight and minimising toxins from smoking, alcohol and caffeine. Speak to your GP about your circumstances.

**"The most important thing women need to know about their fertility is that they are all individuals and that fertility varies from woman to woman."**

your emotional state, along with many other factors.

"Needles, bloating and fluid retention can be unpleasant, but the emotional effects can be worse," says Prof Illingworth. "If IVF works, it's the best thing, but if it doesn't, they've invested a lot of energy and money for nothing. That makes it tough."

"Accredited psychologists are always available and there are some circumstances where counselling is mandatory, such as any person or couple using donor eggs or sperm."

### How do I know when to give up?

"It's a mutual decision, rather than one party enforcing it to say, 'That's it for you,'" says Dr Zuschmann, who always suggests counselling. "We involve fertility counsellors for situations where we are not getting the results we want."

### How will it affect my relationship?

Some relationships are strained by the experience, while others

### Can I choose my baby's sex with IVF?

No. In Australia, sex-selection isn't available. There are some genetic conditions for which it's appropriate to choose sex, but anyone seeking sex selection would need to travel overseas.

### Are there higher risks with IVF pregnancies?

Risk depends on what has led to difficulty in getting pregnant in the first place, so if there are medical conditions involved they may impact on the pregnancy. IVF also means a slightly higher chance of a multiple birth, and carrying twins and triplets have their own implications.

For more information on IVF, call IVFAustralia on 1800 111 483 or visit [ivf.com.au](http://ivf.com.au). For up-to-date information on IVF and Medicare, call the Department of Human Services on 132 011.

## HAPPY FAMILIES

IVF has helped these celebrity mums fulfil their baby dream...



**Celine Dion**

The singer tried for six years before conceiving her eldest son René-Charles in 2001, on her first IVF try. She then had five failed rounds of IVF before having twins Eddy and Nelson in 2010, at 42.



**Brooke Shields**

The star, 48, underwent seven rounds of fertility treatment to fall pregnant with her eldest daughter Rowan, born in 2003. Brooke's other daughter Grier, conceived naturally, was born in 2006.



**Courteney Cox**

The *Cougar Town* actress and her then-husband David Arquette conceived their daughter Coco via IVF after several miscarriages. An only child, Coco was born in 2004 when her mum was 40.



**Penny Lancaster**

Rod Stewart's third wife Penny tried for two years to conceive the couple's second son Aiden. She fell pregnant with Aiden on her third IVF cycle, at age 39, and he was born in February 2011.



**Marcia Cross**

The *Desperate Housewives* star started IVF soon after marrying Tom Mahoney. Marcia conceived on her first try, giving birth to twins Eden and Savannah in 2007, a month before her 45th birthday.

### How much does one cycle cost?

It depends upon your provider, the necessary procedures and whether you're starting a new cycle or using frozen embryos.