

Removal of ovary for fertility preservation found safe in girls as young as five months

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In the first publication from the U.S. on surgical techniques and outcomes of single ovary removal for fertility preservation in girls, surgeons from Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago report that the procedure caused no complications and can be performed laparoscopically, on an outpatient basis, without delaying treatment for cancer or other therapies posing high risk of infertility. They present experience with 64 girls, aged 12 years on average, with the youngest only 5 months old at the time of surgery. Their findings were published in the *Journal of Pediatric Surgery*.

"We describe the unique technical nuances of removing a tiny [ovary](#) without damaging it, since it needs to be preserved in the purest form for future transplantation when the patient is ready to pursue pregnancy," says lead author Erin Rowell, MD, Director of the Fertility and Hormone Preservation and Restoration Program at Lurie Children's and Associate Professor of Surgery at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine.

To preserve future fertility potential, the removed ovarian tissue is frozen—a process called cryopreservation. When a woman is ready to have a child, one of the current options is to implant the preserved tissue onto the remaining ovary, where it starts to function normally and enables natural pregnancy. Or, the oocytes (immature eggs) in the ovary may be matured into eggs for in-vitro fertilization. These techniques are considered experimental. To date, over 130 live births have been documented in adult women who have undergone ovarian tissue cryopreservation. In the U.S., women who have had ovarian tissue cryopreservation as girls have yet to give birth, although two cases have been reported in Europe.

"Through our ongoing research, we are working on setting new surgical standards and developing innovative techniques for removing, preserving and transplanting cryopreserved [tissue](#)," says Dr. Rowell.

The Fertility and Hormone Preservation and Restoration Program at Lurie Children's is the only one of its kind for pediatric patients in Illinois. Children with a variety of cancer, genetic, endocrine and rheumatologic conditions may be candidates for [fertility preservation](#).

More information: Erin E. Rowell et al, Laparoscopic unilateral oophorectomy for ovarian tissue cryopreservation in children, *Journal of Pediatric Surgery* (2018). DOI: [10.1016/j.jpedsurg.2018.06.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpedsurg.2018.06.005)

Provided by Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

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