The Pros and Cons of Disclosing or Nondisclosing the Use of Donor Gametes to Your Child(ren)
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Gamete donation offers couples a chance to preserve some genetic link to their hoped-for child. However, many parents find the decision to disclose to their child(ren) the fact that donor gametes were used quite challenging. The decision to disclose should be thoughtfully considered so that parents can make the best possible decision for their family. Listed below are some of the advantages and disadvantages of disclosure and nondisclosure to assist you in wise decision making.

DISCLOSURE...

Pros:

• Children have a right to know their genetic history
• Eliminates need to foster deception
• Engenders trust between parents and child
• Offers greater emotional intimacy among family members
• Eliminates worry about accidental revelation by others
• Gives parents control over when and how to tell
• Minimizes the potential for shame
• Eliminates the need for the deception ‘dance’ in trying to hide personal information
• Avoids the chance for an emergency disclosure due to a medical issue
• Offspring need not carry the burden of perceived hereditary medical risk due to non-genetic parent’s medical issues
• Eliminates the threat of betrayal of children by their parents

Cons:

• Child may have lots of questions over time
• Child can use this as ammunition against parents when angry or wanting something
• Parent may worry child will feel less bonded to his/her parents
• Children may see themselves as different from their peers and feel alienated
• May create frustration for the child resulting from an anonymous arrangement with little or no information available about the donor

NONDISCLOSURE...

Pros:

• Protects parents from the social stigma of infertility
• Protects a child from being ostracized
• Protects a parent’s right to privacy
• Protects child from feeling different
• Can avoid negative societal reactions to using donor gametes
• Eliminates concern that child will reveal they are a product of a donation
• Avoids rejection by family members where cultural lineage is crucial
•Avoids frustration and confusion regarding identity
• Parents may feel a greater sense of parental entitlement if their child is unaware of their donor origins
• Avoids potential rejection from child if he/she never finds out

Cons:
• Undermines trust among family members
• Couple is reminded of their conception choice whenever a resemblance comment is made
• Secrets have insidious way of eroding relationships
• Greater risk of child inadvertently finding out
• Parents live in fear of unanticipated revelation by others that know
• Parents forced to remain vigilant in their communication so as not to inadvertently reveal
• Communication vigilance can inhibit open communication within a family
• Nondisclosure becomes more challenging as children grow older and become more attuned to the nuances of communication between family members
• Not knowing one's genetic heritage can put the child at medical risk in the future
• Increased risk of consanguinity (i.e., mating with unbeknownst relative)
• Legal climate may change in the future forcing disclosures
• Creates a lopsided balance of power in family between those who know and those who do not know

It is important to understand your options and make your decisions keeping in mind your needs as well as the best interests of your hoped-for child, both now and in the future. Remember that good decision making starts with good facts and clarification of your feelings. Your considerations for making this decision should include obtaining the greatest benefit for your child and family, determining who the information ultimately should belong to, and what, if any, is the potential for damage regarding familial relationships now and into the future. It is critical that you know yourself and assess your ability to tackle any unforeseen outcome of your decision regarding whether to disclose or not disclose.

For further information see:


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