



**Boston IVF**

## **Intended Parents Handbook**

*For couples working with a Gestational Carrier*

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## **Created for Intended Parents preparing for a Gestational Carrier Cycle**

### ***Introduction***

This handbook was created to help you understand and navigate the process of participating in a Gestational Carrier cycle at Boston IVF. There are many steps, including physician visits, legal consultations, as well as medical tests, to prepare for a Gestational Carrier cycle. The medical team at Boston IVF is here to help you understand and complete the required steps.

The process of using a gestational carrier has 6 distinct steps:

1. Physician Consult
2. Selection of Gestational Carrier
3. Screening of Gestational Carrier and the Intended Parents
4. Completion of legal contract between Intended Parents and Gestational Carrier
5. Determination of insurance eligibility / financial clearance
6. Cycle coordination.

## **The Gestational Carrier Process: Step by step**

### **Physician Consult**

You are required to meet with one of the Boston IVF physicians to establish medical eligibility for a gestational carrier cycle. If you and your partner have not seen your Boston IVF physician within the calendar year, please make an appointment before contacting the Third Party Reproductive Team at Boston IVF. Your physician will then notify the team who will coordinate your care, and forward your chart to the Waltham office.

### **Selection of a Gestational Carrier**

The next step is to choose a gestational carrier. Boston IVF does not recruit carriers, but works with agencies who do recruit. You can ask the coordinating team for names and numbers of trusted agencies. Some couples choose to work with a known carrier, either a family member or a close friend. A Gestational Carrier cycle presents a number of unique medical and legal issues that need to be carefully considered.

It is important to remember that a potential Gestational Carrier should be healthy, have had a previous uncomplicated pregnancy and delivery, and be free of infectious disease.

Most women who become Gestational Carriers have an altruistic desire to help other women have a family.

The Carrier will experience some discomfort and inconvenience, which includes at least two visits to Boston IVF, daily injections for 12 weeks if she is pregnant, and the medical risks that are linked to pregnancy and delivery. Part of the screening for Gestational Carrier is to insure that their participation appears reasonable and voluntary.

### **Screening of the Gestational Carrier and the Intended Parents**

There are a number of tests that the Intended Parents, as well as the Gestational Carrier and her partner are required to have done before coordinating a cycle. The Third Party Reproduction Team at Boston IVF will inform all those involved of what needs to be done, and assist in scheduling the appointments.

Your medical screening will be done by your Boston IVF physician. During this appointment, the physician will meet with the Intended Parent and the Gestational Carrier couples, each separately, then all together. All parties will be asked to sign the required consent forms at these visits.

The medical screening includes blood and urine testing for infectious diseases. These tests are required by the Federal Government within a 6 months of the treatment cycle.

Pap smears and mammograms are required to be up to date with evidence of medical follow up, if needed, for the Intended mother and the Gestational Carrier. The lab reports for the Pap smear and the mammogram should be forwarded to Boston IVF.

Another part of the medical appointments will be a meeting with the Intended Parent couple and the Gestational Carrier Couple with the nurse from the Third Party Reproductive Team to review the process of coordinating your cycle and injection lesson. Medication mixing and the administration, as well as possible side effects will be addressed.

The psychological screening is a large and very important part of the evaluation. As the Intended Parents you will meet with a licensed Social Work initially by yourselves then again with the Gestational Carrier and her partner. During this meeting communication and understanding among all those involved in the cycle will be addressed.

We know that many Gestational Carriers have children; however, we ask that they make arrangements for care either in their home, or outside of Boston IVF, wherever they are staying. This is an important visit filled with a large amount of information, which requires full attention from all who are involved. Also while we love children, our patients are particularly sensitive to the presence of children due to the nature of our practice. We thank you in advance for your respectful compliance.

### **Completion of a Legal Contract**

It is a requirement that there be a legal contract executed by a lawyer that specializes in Reproductive law, in place between the Intended Parents and the Gestational Carrier couples before proceeding with a cycle at Boston IVF. This is required whether a Carrier is a family member or friend, or if they were recruited by an agency. Although Boston IVF does not want a copy of the contract, we do require a letter from the lawyer stating the contract has been signed.

## **Determination of Insurance Eligibility/ Financial Clearance**

A Gestational Carrier cycle is expensive. It is important that you meet with a Boston IVF financial coordinator before you embark on the process, ideally at the time of your initial consult with your Physician here at Boston IVF. During your meeting with the financial coordinator you will learn what costs, if any, will be covered by your insurer, and also what costs will be your responsibility. Please do not proceed with screening or treatment until you understand your financial responsibilities.

## **Treatment Cycle Coordination**

The Nurse Coordinator on the Third Party Reproductive Team at Boston IVF will be responsible for coordinating you and your Carrier's medicated cycle. The easiest way to begin cycle coordination is to start both the Carrier and the Intended mother on birth control pills. These are typically started 1 to 2 months before the anticipated cycle. Please contact the nurse coordinator at Boston IVF with the start of your menstrual cycle, a prescription will be called in for you.

When the nurse is ready to coordinate the dates of the cycle, you as the intended mother, will be given medications to stimulate your ovaries, as well as medication to keep you from ovulating prematurely. As your ovaries respond to the medication by producing follicles, your carrier will be taking medications that will prepare her uterus to receive an embryo. There are many different medication protocols, and your physician will be able to choose the right protocol for you and your carrier.

You will be monitored throughout the cycle with blood tests and ultrasounds, as will your carrier. The day of each test, you will receive a call from the nurse coordinator with results and instructions. Eventually, you will be given a date and time to take medication to release the eggs, and a subsequent time and date to have the eggs retrieved at Boston IVF. At this time, the Male Intended Parent will need to be present to produce a sperm specimen. There are no restrictions on sexual relations during your stimulation cycle. However, it is important that a man not ejaculate between the day you are notified to take hCG and the day of your egg retrieval. Abstinence for more than one week prior to the day of the egg retrieval is discouraged. Masturbation is ideal method of sperm collection. If this presents a problem, it is important to speak with your doctor about possible alternatives. If you live within 60 minutes of Boston IVF's Waltham Center, you may produce your specimen at home. It must be

collected in a sterile specimen container, which is available at Boston IVF.

Three days after the eggs are retrieved and fertilized; your Gestational Carrier will come to Boston IVF to have an embryo transfer. She will be given a specific date and time to come in, and you will be informed of that time, as well.

To prepare your body for the medicated IVF cycle, we ask that you read and follow this list: this handbook was created to help you understand and navigate the process of participating in a Gestational Carrier cycle at Boston IVF. There are many steps,

- 1.) Quit smoking.
- 2.) Discontinue alcohol consumption.
- 3.) Take a prenatal vitamin, one tab daily.
- 4.) Limit caffeine intake to one cup or less a day.
- 5.) Choose low-impact exercise over high-impact activities. Walking and swimming are recommended. Wear supportive shoes and bra when exercising. Drink plenty of fluids.
- 6.) Avoid changing cat litter.
- 7.) Wear gloves while gardening.
- 8.) Limit or avoid fish such as tuna, salmon, swordfish, and shark due to its high mercury content.
- 9.) Avoid raw meat or raw shellfish. Wash hands and cutting boards carefully after preparing raw meat.
- 10.) Avoid hot tubs and Jacuzzis; this is for both male and female partners.
- 11.) Consult your Boston IVF physician before taking any prescription or over-the-counter preparations during your treatment cycle.

## **Summary**

All of us at Boston IVF hope that your experience is a positive one, and we wish you luck in your upcoming treatment cycle.