

A MAGAZINE FOR FERTILITY AND ADOPTION

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PATHWAY 2 FAMILY

7 Helpful
Self-Care Tips

Laying the
Adoption
Foundation

Traveling First Class:
Embryos Arrive
Safely



A Journey
From Two Sides

WINTER/SPRING 2019

A PUBLICATION BROUGHT TO YOU BY



nightlight®

PATHWAY 2 FAMILY

Have you heard?

.....
Embryo donation and adoption have allowed more than 8,000 babies to be born into loving families. It may be the solution for which you have been searching. Learn more in this issue of **Pathway2Family** or at www.EmbryoAdoption.org

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Cover image: handsome and energetic five-year-old Alex is **Snowflake baby #355**.

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Check out our website for more information, videos, and webinars about embryo donation and adoption at www.EmbryoAdoption.org.



Understanding the Particulars of Embryo Adoption

Welcome to our Winter/Spring 2019 edition of Pathway2Family. This edition is focused on helping you understand this unique form of adoption and how you can give birth to your adopted child! Perhaps you've never heard of this option before.

Does it actually work? How long does it take?
Is it affordable?

These questions and many others may be spinning around in your mind. Embryo adoption may be the newest adoption model, but it has now existed for more than 20 years! And it's not complicated, but it is exciting, since the end result is the birth of a child...your child! Our team is committed to helping you determine if embryo adoption is the right choice for your family.

We hope this edition of Pathway2Family will pique your interest and motivate you to learn more.

Do you have more questions? Your answers are just a phone call away, 970.663.6799.

7 Helpful Self-Care Tips as You Work to Overcome Infertility

If you are struggling with infertility, you don't need anyone to tell you: it's hard. From the physical challenges and emotional rollercoaster, to the strain on your relationships and your finances, the pressure can be intense. And, of course, being under pressure doesn't do anything to increase your chances of becoming pregnant.

So, you need to add one more important item to your To Do list: **"Take care of me!"**

Here are some self-care techniques you can use to show yourself the kind of love you'll one day be showering on your baby!


1. **Get away.** It doesn't have to be a "dream vacation." Just a night at a hotel in the next town up the highway can bring a welcome change in perspective.
2. **Take a break from social media.** You may love keeping up with friends and family online, but constantly seeing how happy they are can amplify any feelings of sadness and frustration that you may have.
3. **Volunteer.** Helping others is one of the best ways to boost your mood and create a powerful sense of accomplishment.
4. **Develop a "mindfulness" practice.** Mindfulness is the concept of living, as much as possible, in the present moment. If you are washing your hands, wash your hands. Don't think about the results of your last attempt to get pregnant. Don't look ahead to your next attempt. Simply and exclusively focus on what you are doing right now.
5. **Stay active.** It's easy to get caught up in your worries when you are sitting on your couch and listening to the clock tick. Go for a walk. Ride your bike. Swim some laps. Work in your garden. Both your body and your mind will thank you for it!
6. **Get creative.** Whether it's painting, knitting or coming up with a delicious new recipe in the kitchen, creative outlets are very healthy. Don't focus on producing a masterpiece; just relax and immerse yourself in the process.
7. **Rest.** For many people, staying busy is a natural (if not always healthy) reaction to stressful situations. Be sure to schedule plenty of downtime into your days. It's alright to let the world take care of itself for a while!

Self-care isn't selfish, it's selfless.

Remember that self-care is anything but selfish. The small amount of time and energy you invest in yourself can produce huge benefits for others when you are rested, refreshed, and ready to overcome any obstacles you encounter.

Speaking to Your Doctor About Embryo Adoption

YOUR DOCTOR'S GOAL: Help Patients Achieve Pregnancy and Childbirth!



Frequently doctors achieve this goal, but sometimes treatments do not work. We want to empower your doctor to give you each option and every hope.

Infertility can be overwhelming. You may need your doctor's help in determining your next steps.

COULD YOUR NEXT STEP BE EMBRYO ADOPTION?

3 Benefits of Embryo Adoption

1. Snowflakes is best suited for couples looking for an affordable way to achieve pregnancy and for those who want detailed information about the embryo donor.

2. Embryo adoption is an excellent option for couples needing to use donor egg/sperm. 50% of all donated embryos were created using donor egg/sperm.

3. Adoptive parents receive all the embryos of their donor match, allowing them the opportunity to give birth to genetic siblings.

Answering the Top 4 Questions About Embryo Adoption

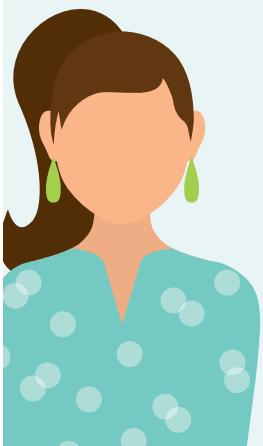
Are embryos available?

YES! Snowflakes has embryos waiting for adopting families.

How long does it take?

The process takes, on average, **8-12 MONTHS** until your Frozen Embryo Transfer (FET).

How much does it cost?



Snowflakes' program fee is \$8,000, plus the cost of the home study and a Frozen Embryo Transfer (FET).

THE TOTAL AVERAGES \$14,500.

Are there a variety of ethnicities available to adopt?

YES! Embryos of all ethnic and mixed backgrounds are placed for adoption.



snowflakes[®]
embryo adoption program



The experts at Snowflakes have successfully helped over 800 families use an adoption model to be matched with remaining embryos from IVF.

In 1998, the first ever Snowflakes baby, Hannah, was adopted as an embryo.

Since that time, 600+ babies have been born as a result of embryo adoption.

Want to learn more?

Contact a Snowflakes Inquiry Specialist at

970.663.6799
or info@Snowflakes.org

The Journey to Pregnancy: Laying the Adoption Foundation

The first phase of embryo adoption is the inquiry phase in which you'll gather information about embryo adoption and determine if this adoption choice is right for you and your family. If you haven't yet spoken to a Snowflakes Inquiry Specialist, we invite you to call 970.663.6799.

If you have made it through the inquiry phase, congratulations! Remember, the Snowflakes program is based on positive, time-tested adoption best practices. Our Adopting Parent Coordinator has developed an easy way for you to move through the next phase of the program at your own pace. The more quickly you complete the necessary documentation, the faster you will move forward into matching, the phase in which a placing/donor family is matched with an adopting family.

You will receive the documents in the form of an online checklist. Included in the checklist are the following five documents: the Agreement for Adoption Services, the Embryo Adoption Agreement Approval with a sample of our Snowflakes contract, the Understanding of Adoption Process form, Social Media Policy, and the Snowflakes Family Profile Instructions. As each document is completed and signed, you can submit it online, and check it off your to-do list!

The first document you must complete is the Agreement for Adoption Services. This form includes all the services available to an adopting family in the Snowflakes program. There is a clear list of the program fees, meaning no hidden or surprise charges.

Every adopting family is required to complete an adoption home study, also referred to as a family evaluation. You may complete a Snowflakes Family Evaluation (SFE), or you may complete a domestic adoption home study from another agency. Since the home study can take 2-3 months to complete, we encourage our clients to choose their provider as early as possible in the process.

We want you to make a great first impression!

Another important document created at this time is your Family Profile. The Family Profile is a mini-autobiography, including photos, to be shared with potential placing/donor parents during the matching phase. We provide you with many helpful tools to guide you in the creation of your Family Profile. The Coordinator will review your profile and make suggestions for improvement as necessary. We want you to make a great first impression!

Once all of the items on your online checklist are completed, you are scheduled for a pre-matching interview. During this call, the Coordinator will review your preferences in making a match and ensure we have answered all of your questions regarding how the matching process works. Our matching process is not done by a computer, but by careful review of family preferences, the number of children you desire, and many other considerations provided to us by both the placing/donor family and the adopting family. **Congratulations! It's time for a match!**



Achieving Matching Success: How the Matching Process Works

Have you ever wondered how embryo placing families and adopting families are matched? For some, the first thought that may come to mind is that of an online dating service, where both parties submit demographic information and a computer algorithm is used to find their perfect match. For others, they may think of an online donor database, where adopting families can sift through profiles of placing families and select whichever profile stands out to them. However, the Snowflakes Embryo Adoption Program has intentionally designed a more personal approach for matching.

When adopting families and placing families are ready to enter the matching phase of the program, they begin by having a phone consultation with a Snowflakes team member. During this call, the team member will discuss with each couple their preferences for a match. Families will review preferences, such as the frequency of future communications they would like to have with the matched family, the stability of the marriage, or faith practices. Of course, finances are considered, as well. Another factor that is considered is the number of children the adopting family would like to give birth to. This helps to match them with a placing family that has a similar number of embryos available for adoption.

From there, the Snowflakes Matching Coordinator reviews all parties' preferences and reads their family profiles (which were written by the family during the application phase of the program) to find commonalities. The Coordinator then selects one adopting family and one placing family that best meets each other's preferences.

Once the Coordinator feels like a possible match has been made, the placing family reviews the adopting family's profile. They are given two weeks to determine if they would like to proceed with the match. If they decline, a second match will be chosen by the Coordinator. If they accept the match, then the adopting family reviews the placing family's profile.

The adopting family receives the placing family's health history going back three generations and is allowed two weeks to accept or decline the match. Should the adopting family decline, another match will be chosen by the Coordinator. If the adopting family accepts the match, the preferred clinic where they will have their Frozen Embryo Transfer (FET) reviews the embryology report and FDA documents and agrees to receive the embryos into the clinic. When the clinic approves of the paperwork provided, the match is declared official and both parties move into the contracts phase.

Matching is heavily dependent upon preferences. We have found that it takes an average of nine months in the program for the placing family to be matched and an average of four months for an adopting family. After experimenting with several matching techniques over the past 20 years, the Snowflakes program has settled on this very successful matching process. Consistent positive feedback from our families regarding the appropriateness of the match that was made confirms the method. Using a highly personal approach for matching enables many families to be content with the first family profile they review. They know the Snowflakes team takes their profile and preferences seriously. Often families exclaim, "After reading our matched family's profile, we knew they would be the perfect choice!"



Considering Embryo Adoption?



- Couples, once in your shoes, now have embryos remaining from IVF
- Some of those families have chosen to donate those embryos to adopting families like yours

Your bundle of joy is waiting for you!
CONTACT US TODAY TO LEARN MORE.



EMBRYO ADOPTION
AWARENESS CENTER

970.663.6799 • www.EmbryoAdoption.org • info@EmbryoAdoption.org

A journey From Two Sides



The Donation Perspective

Lisa and Michael

Michael and I were joyfully married in 2008. Both of us had been married before. I had two children, and Michael had none. We wanted to have children together, but I had a tubal ligation after the birth of my last child. Hindsight is 20/20!

My Ob/Gyn suggested we consider in vitro fertilization, and after consulting with a reproductive specialist we decided to move forward. Our fresh transfer did not result in a pregnancy, but we decided to try again with two of our frozen embryos and experienced success! We welcomed our daughter, Hope, into our family. We had placed our hope in God, where all hope is born, and we were blessed with Hope!

Michael and I decided our family was complete, yet we had 18 embryos remaining in frozen storage and needed to make a decision about them. It took me a few years to emotionally process this decision. We believed the embryos were created to give life and did not want to thaw and discard them or give them to a researcher.

We also did not want to donate our embryos anonymously through our clinic. Instead we learned about the Snowflakes Embryo Adoption Program and began the process of placing our embryos for adoption.

We really appreciated the fact that Snowflakes evaluates all of their adopting families using an adoption home study and conducting criminal background checks. We liked the protections Snowflakes places around the embryos contractually.

As I said, it took a couple years to let go of my selfish nature and come to terms with the fact that someone else would be giving birth to and raising our child. But, it only took me minutes to say yes to the first couple the Snowflakes team matched us with! Sara and Blake were everything we hoped for in an adopting couple.

We began to build a relationship with Sara and Blake. We prayed for successful transfers and after the third transfer – Sara was pregnant! Their son Carson was conceived in September 2010, along with his biological sister, Hope. Hope was born in 2011 and Carson was born seven years later in 2017.

Seeing the way Blake and Sarah look at their baby boy, I feel honored and humbled that God chose us to help them become a family. And, I wondered how I would feel holding him for the first time. I can honestly say that as I looked into his precious little eyes, I could only feel joy for Blake and Sara on the birth of their first child.

Journey continued on next page...



"It only took me minutes to say yes to the first couple the Snowflakes team matched us with! Sara and Blake were everything we hoped for in an adopting couple."

The Adoption Perspective

Sara and Blake



"As white snowflakes fall quietly and thickly on a winter day, answers to prayer will settle down upon you at every step you take, even to your dying day. The story of your life will be the story of prayer and answers to prayer." - Ole Hallesby

My husband Blake is an answered prayer himself, having been diagnosed with cystic fibrosis as a baby. Over the years, Blake has battled this disease and the many health problems that come with CF, but we did not know until after our marriage how his health would set the stage for our future family. We knew that it was unlikely that we would be able to conceive our own baby naturally. Yet, at the same time, we both knew how much we dearly wanted a child of our own.

We considered both IVF and traditional adoption. Then we heard about Snowflakes Embryo Adoption. It truly seemed as if the answer to our prayer was settling down upon our steps. Snowflakes allowed us the physical experience of carrying and delivering a baby (our adopted baby). Even more importantly, it gave the embryos a chance to live and grow.

We applied to the program in 2016, completing the necessary paperwork, education and home study. We officially matched with our placing family early in 2017.

I could write entire book about Lisa and Michael! The Snowflakes adoption process was not difficult, and being matched with this family made our experience even better. From the very first paragraph of their family profile I was certain our prayers had been answered. I messaged our coordinator back within the hour and said "This is the right family!" They gifted us with 18 embryos! We were delighted.

Building our relationship started with emailing and talking on the phone. When we finally met face-to-face, we knew it was a bond that would never break.

Adopting 18 embryos has given us the opportunity to have multiple genetic siblings in our family. Our first pregnancy was achieved after our third frozen embryo transfer. December 2017 is the month we became pregnant. We called Lisa and Michael with the joyful news, knowing they had been praying for our success.

The nine months of pregnancy flew by! Right now, I'm holding my 8lb 3oz, healthy and happy baby boy named Carson Ray.

When Blake and I decided to choose an open adoption, we never knew we would be gaining a whole new family but we did! We have always thanked them for this amazing journey and for giving those precious embryos a chance at life. There are no words with enough meaning or impact to measure the gift they have given us - they have given us a part of themselves.



A photograph of a young man and woman embracing and smiling warmly at each other. The woman is on the left, leaning her head against the man's shoulder. The man is on the right, looking down at her with a smile. They are both wearing dark clothing. The background is blurred, suggesting an outdoor setting.

Building Relationships & the Legal Security of Embryo Adoption

You've been matched with a family – congratulations! Now it's time to make things official.

One of the most important sections of your embryo adoption agreement will be determining a mutual plan for future communications between your families. There are three primary models for communication, with as many variations as there are families: closed, semi-open, and open.

A closed communication preference is exactly what it sounds like. The parties will not be in communication with each other. While you will still receive the health history and possibly a family profile from the placing family, it is possible that neither party will ever learn even the first names of the other party. In this case, the family that placed their embryos for adoption might not want to know transfer results or if a baby was born. While some placing families do want to be made aware if there was a baby born, they might not want any communication from the adopting family or the child(ren). However, some families are open to the child reaching out to them once he or she reaches the age of 18.

A semi-open communication model is commonly used by families who would like a third party to mediate communication. Sometimes this is done using a private third-party app or website to communicate. With a semi-open model, you and your matched family can always agree to expand your communications over time.

An open communication model – our favorite! – means the parties are communicating directly. Most of the time this means sending emails, following each other on social media, calling, sending snail mail, etc. Some families like the visual element of a video chat. Even though many of our families are separated by great geographic distance, some decide to meet face-to-face. In fact, there are families who vacation together!

It is common to start with a semi-open model and switch to a more open communication style as you all get to know each other better. If you do have an open communication preference, that doesn't mean you need to go "all in" and attend each other's family reunions! You will navigate this new relationship as you are comfortable – just like building a new friendship.

Once the parties agree on a communication model, the full embryo adoption agreement is signed and notarized by both families and the agency. Snowflakes requires the adopting family's fertility clinic to sign a Fertility Clinic Acknowledgement, stating that they understand the terms of the embryo adoption agreement, including:

- **Embryos must not be discarded or donated for research under any circumstances.**
- **The number of embryos to be thawed may not exceed the number of embryos the patient is willing to transfer at one time unless otherwise unavoidable due to the number of embryos frozen together in one straw.**
- **The embryos must not be tested using PGD/PGS for gender selection or for any other reason.**

At this time, the placing families also sign embryo release forms with the clinic or facility where the embryos are currently stored so shipping arrangements can be made.

These signed contracts signify a transfer of embryo ownership – passing it from the placing family to the adopting family. Now the adopting family really begins to get excited about their future frozen embryo transfer day!

One last important legality regarding embryo adoption: in the United States, the woman who gives birth to the baby is declared the legal mother on the birth certificate at the hospital and the man to whom she is married is declared the father. There is no legal requirement to finalize an embryo adoption in court.



Traveling First Class: Embryos Arrive Safely

Your contracts have been completed, signed, notarized, and delivered to the agency. The final step before you are allowed to schedule your frozen embryo transfer is the safe shipment of your embryos to your clinic.

Surprising as it may be, even though embryos are shipped overnight, shipping can take one to two months! The shipping phase typically entails a lot of back and forth between your agency and the clinics involved, as they work out dates and wrap up final details.

While you are waiting for the shipment to be scheduled, it is very important to not set a date for a frozen embryo transfer. That should not be done until the embryos have arrived safely at your clinic. This is for your safety as FET preparation involves taking medication. If there were any delays in the shipment (due to weather or any other unforeseen circumstance), we wouldn't want you to have to postpone your transfer after preparing your body.

Once an embryo shipment has been scheduled, your contact at Snowflakes will let you know the date the embryos are due to arrive at your clinic. They will also inform you when they receive confirmation that the embryos have arrived safely.

This waiting period is a great time to take a moment to thank your placing family. During the hustle and bustle of the program, it is easy to forget to reach out in gratitude to your placing family. You can either handwrite your note and send it to the agency who can forward it to them, or you can email it as an attachment.

This is also a great way to get communication started with your placing family! Even if you have a closed adoption agreement with them, it is still nice to write them a thank you note. You can send it to the agency and we will keep it in their file to give to them in the future, if they ever decide to reach out.

Fast forward to that long-awaited day when your embryos arrive at your clinic. You will receive an email from Snowflakes letting you know that the embryos have arrived safely – congratulations!

As you prepare for an embryo transfer, please make sure to keep us informed so we may in turn keep your placing family informed. They will want to know:

- **Date of current (and any future) scheduled transfer**
- **Number of embryos thawed and transferred**
- **Pregnancy test results and expected due date**
- **Babies born (name, gender, and date of birth)**

Thank you for considering embryo adoption as a way to complete your family! Adoption is a life-long journey. Snowflakes will continue to be available to you to answer any questions and provide any support you may need.



Miracles Do Happen

Giving birth to your adopted baby is possible.

The Snowflakes® Embryo Adoption Program has been helping families with the miracle of childbirth for over 20 years.

- » Couples, once in your shoes, now have remaining embryos to gift to another family.
- » Embryo adoption success continues to grow each year as more babies are born into loving families.
- » Families who have chosen to donate embryos through Snowflakes are looking to find a recipient family like you.

Explore ALL of your options. Call today.



snowflakes®
embryo adoption program

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