



## The Olive BRANCH Fertility unit

### PATIENT INFORMATION SERIES

### ENDOMETRIAL SCRATCHING

#### **What is endometrial scratching?**

The lining of the uterus (the endometrium) is gently 'scratched' using a thin catheter (a fine, flexible, sterile, plastic tube), which is passed through the cervix.

Embryo implantation should occur five to six days after natural fertilisation or following embryo transfer, when the embryo embeds into the lining of the uterus to continue its development.

#### **Who may benefit from endometrial scratching?**

**OBF (Olive BRANCH Fertility)** offers endometrial scratching to women who have had more than two IVF ICSI or FET cycles, which resulted in a negative pregnancy test, despite having good quality embryos.

#### **How does scratching help implantation?**

New research and evidence suggests that scratching the uterine lining causes a 'repair reaction' which may increase embryo implantation rates:

- The repair process releases growth factors, hormones and chemicals. The new lining which grows after the procedure is thought to be more receptive to an implanting embryo and so increases the chances of pregnancy
- 'Gene switching' - scientists believe that the genes which are responsible for implantation of embryos are sometimes not 'switched on' during the time when embryos are supposed to implant. Endometrial scratching may 'switch on' the genes that are responsible for preparation of the endometrium for implantation, which increases the chances of pregnancy. More research, is underway to understand exactly how this works.

#### **When is the best time to have the procedure?**

The best time to perform the endometrial scratch is at the '**day 21**' treatment commencement appointment.

**\*If a patients periods are infrequent or irregular, we will advise on the best time for the procedure.**

#### **Preparing for the procedure:**

##### **The patient:-**

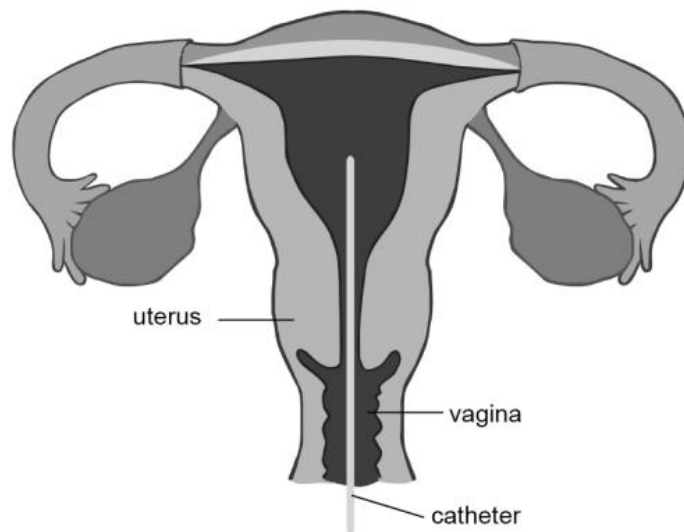
- Will have a routine urine pregnancy test before the procedure. If she is pregnant, the endometrial scratch is not required.
- May eat and drink normally before the procedure
- Does not need to empty her bladder before the procedure
- Should wear comfortable clothing that gives easy access to the lower part of the body
- Should bring a sanitary towel with her for use after the procedure



### How is the procedure performed?

This is not a painful procedure and although the patient may experience some discomfort, no anaesthesia is required. Much of the procedure is similar to an embryo transfer:

- a speculum is gently inserted into the vagina so the cervix can be seen
- the cervix is cleaned with sterile gauze
- a thin flexible catheter is inserted through the opening of the cervix, and the uterine lining is gently 'scratched'. (Inserting and moving the intrauterine catheter up and down may cause mild abdominal cramping similar to period pain.)
- A thin flexible catheter is inserted through vagina and the opening of the cervix, and then moved up and down to gently 'scratch' the uterine lining
- the catheter is withdrawn at the end of the procedure. Some mild bleeding is common after the procedure



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### Endometrial 'Scratching'

#### After the procedure

After the procedure, the patient should:

- wear a sanitary towel (not a tampon)
- be able to drive and resume normal daily activities
- eat and drink normally
- take the antibiotics prescribed (see below)



### **What are the risks?**

There is a small risk that any infection within the cervix may spread to the uterine cavity during the procedure. After the procedure the patient should take the antibiotics prescribed for her, as directed, to minimise this risk.

She should contact the clinic **immediately** if she experiences any of the following symptoms within a few days of the procedure:

- Unexplained fever
- Persistent bleeding or foul-smelling vaginal discharge
- Increasing lower abdominal pain
- Feeling generally unwell

### **Is pain relief needed after the procedure?**

Most women experience either discomfort or mild cramping period-type discomfort during the procedure. If necessary, the OBF clinical team will provide pain relief for the patient before she leaves and afterwards.

### **Success rates**

Endometrial scratching is a new technique at Olive BRANCH Fertility so no meaningful data currently exists yet. But data from clinical trials suggests improvement in treatment outcomes in the group of patients who have previously had multiple failed treatment cycles.

