Endometrial Scratch Information

Aim
To explain what an endometrial scratch involves, why it may help and, when it is performed and how.

Why might it help?
Research has suggested that minor local injury to the endometrium (womb lining) before a treatment cycle, may improve embryo implantation and therefore pregnancy rates from IVF/ICSI in the month after. Early evidence confirmed this in woman having a hysteroscopy (looking inside the womb with a camera), but more recently “Endometrial Scratchng” has also been shown to be of benefit and avoids the need for a surgical procedure and possible anaesthetic.

We are uncertain as to how this improves outcome but there are many theories. The healing response to this minor injury may improve the immune environment in the uterus or may better allow the womb lining to stay at the correct stage of development when the embryo is implanted. It may also positively affect certain genes important for implantation within the womb.

Who should have it?
There is no good evidence of benefit in all women having treatment. In those who have had previous cycle failures where the cause isn’t clearly poor embryo quality an endometrial scratch may be considered. There is strong evidence of benefit in those with 2 previous failed embryo transfers (Nastri et al, 2016). It may considered in other circumstances as the mechanism of action may still (in theory) confer benefit but you should be aware that evidence at present does not indicate benefit in these circumstances.

When is it done?
It should be done in the week prior to your period after which will be starting stimulation drugs. These is no evidence of any benefit once bleeding has started and beyond that it may do more harm then good by disturbing the womb lining in the run up to embryo transfer.

Could this affect the chances of getting pregnant naturally in that month?
In most women where a scratch is being performed, the chances of natural conception is very small and often couples will be on the contraceptive pill which will also make pregnancy unlikely. However, in the unlikely event of a fertilised egg naturally having implanted that could lead to a pregnancy the scratch may stop this occurring. We ideally recommend avoiding unprotected intercourse from your period to a scratch.

How is it done?
It is very similar to an embryo transfer procedure which you would have previously have had. However, in contrast to the transfer (where we do not want to disturb the lining) we will be gently moving the instrument within the uterus for a few seconds.

You should come with a partially full bladder. If no recent Chlamydia result you will need prophylactic Antibiotics.

How do I book?
Please call the nurses or liaise with your doctor who will book it for you at the appropriate time of your cycle. It is performed daily at either 09.15, 16.00, 16.15 or 16.30.