

Why I'm proud I've had my eggs frozen at 38, by top scientist

By **Colin Fernandez**
Science Correspondent

A SCIENTIST and broadcaster said she had frozen her eggs 'to sidestep her biological clock' and urged other women in their 30s to consider doing the same.

Dr Emily Grossman said freezing her eggs at 38 has given her a chance of motherhood when she is ready.

Dr Grossman, a television presenter with a degree from Cambridge, revealed her move at the British Science Festival in Brighton yesterday.

She said: 'I strongly believe that all women in their mid to late 30s should be made aware of the risks of waiting too long to try for a family... and, more importantly, that there's no shame in freezing your eggs.'

'I think perhaps some women see egg-freezing as admitting defeat - admitting that they haven't managed to do it the natural way.'

'Thanks to modern science we have the opportunity to take a look at our biological clocks and sidestep them for long enough to give ourselves a chance of motherhood that otherwise might not have been possible.'

Explaining the highly personal decision, she said: 'There's nothing to be ashamed of in freezing your eggs and admitting... you have not had the opportunity to have a child and you want to do something about it.'

'In this country there are so many taboos about admitting or acknowledging that you are or are perceived to be

less than perfect. I want every woman in their mid to late 30s to know she has options.'

Dr Grossman, a panellist on Sky1 science show *Duck Quacks Don't Echo*, is freezing three cycles of eggs. This typically costs around £9,000 to £12,000 depending on the clinic. Dr Grossman has partly paid for the cost of the procedure herself, with the help of her father, who sees it as 'investing in his grandchildren.'

Her mother has also contributed funds. She said she was inspired after attending a talk at the Cheltenham Science Festival two years ago, in which fertility experts Dr Allan Pacey, of the University of Sheffield and Dr Gillian Lockwood, the medical director of Midland Fertility Services, warned how women's fertility dropped from their late 30s and some found it impossible to conceive at all.

Dr Grossman said: 'From the age of about 36 the pressure I felt to have a child began to get really intense, along with the fear that I wouldn't meet the right per-

son in time. While a part of me really wanted to have kids, another part of me didn't feel ready. I was very happy as I was - my career was taking off and I hadn't met anyone I wanted to start a family with yet.'

'I was pretty certain that having kids was something I wanted to do at some point though, and I was scared that it would get too late and I'd lose the opportunity. I considered going it alone myself, and using a sperm donor as some of my single friends have done - but ideally it's not how I want to do it. For me it feels really important to be able to take the time to find the right partner to bring a child into the world with. So when I reached 38, I decided to freeze my eggs.'

While egg-freezing may

'There's no shame in it'

offer another chance at motherhood, it is not guaranteed to work. Some experts and official figures put the chances of having a baby successfully with a frozen egg at as low as 15 per cent. But earlier this year a Daily Mail investigation found some clinics have claimed the success rate is as high as 65 per cent, leading to accusations they are peddling false hope.

Dr Grossman said: 'I'm fully aware that the success rates for IVF from frozen eggs is quite low, so having this done absolutely doesn't replace the urgency to conceive naturally at my age.' She has been told that her chances to have a successful birth are between 20 to 30 per cent and she hopes to conceive naturally - but will have the option of using the frozen eggs if she is unable to. Dr Grossman said: 'This is not an alternative to doing everything you can to starting a family naturally.'

have a partner who does not want to be a parent, take powerful drugs to stimulate their ovaries to produce additional eggs for freezing. Instead of the one egg released naturally every month, often as many as 15 are collected under sedation or anaesthetic. It can cost up to £400 a year to store the eggs, some of which will not survive when they are later thawed to be fertilised later on. Official figures show only around 15 per cent of IVF cycles using frozen eggs are successful. The standard period to store them is for ten years, although some women are given the option to keep them for up to 55 years.

Just 60 babies have been born from frozen eggs since 2001.

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Speaking out: Emily Grossman

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