

Generation of women 'at risk of infertility epidemic'

Freeze your eggs, TV doctors urge singletons who want a baby

Amy Iggulden

BRITISH women are facing an epidemic of "social infertility" according to a TV doctor who says she belongs to a new generation who want a baby but cannot find a partner.

Dr Zoe Williams, the GP on *This Morning*, urged women to consider freezing their eggs as she revealed she may use a sperm donor to conceive.

Dr Williams, 38, who appears on ITV with Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby, has frozen her own eggs. She told the *Evening Standard*: "Never before have we seen so many single women in their thirties and early forties who want to be a parent but haven't met a suitable partner. I'm the first wave of a whole generation of women at risk of reaching an age where our fertility has declined to such an extent we can't get pregnant.

"But we will have the knowledge that there was something we could have potentially done about it. We're going to see thousands upon thousands of women suf-

fering social infertility — it's about to reach epidemic proportions."

Social infertility is a new term coined to describe women who cannot conceive because they have not met the right partner. Dr Williams, who lives in Wandsworth, has six eggs in storage and is planning another round of egg freezing early next year, which could involve seeking a sperm donor and pursuing pregnancy as a single parent.

She is on a "personal mission" to raise the profile of egg freezing after realising she should have undergone the process much earlier. Fertility declines after 35 and pregnancy success rates with "self-donated" frozen eggs are currently only 18 per cent. Doctors say this is because women are not freezing eggs early enough, when at their healthiest.

Science author and broadcaster Dr Emily Grossman pointed out that frozen egg success rates for women up to the age of 35 are now 40 per cent per cycle. Dr Grossman, 40, from north-west London, who froze her eggs two years ago, said: "We need to remove the shame and stigma. It should not be seen as an admission of failure."

Professor Adam Balen, chairman of the Fertility Education Initiative, said: "Women need better support to develop careers and relationships so that they don't find themselves in fertility clinics at an age when they may have left it too late.

"Egg freezing may act as an insurance policy for some but may also give false reassurance, as it doesn't guarantee a baby for everyone and also eggs can only be frozen for social reasons for a maximum of 10 years."



On a mission: Dr Zoe Williams and Dr Emily Grossman