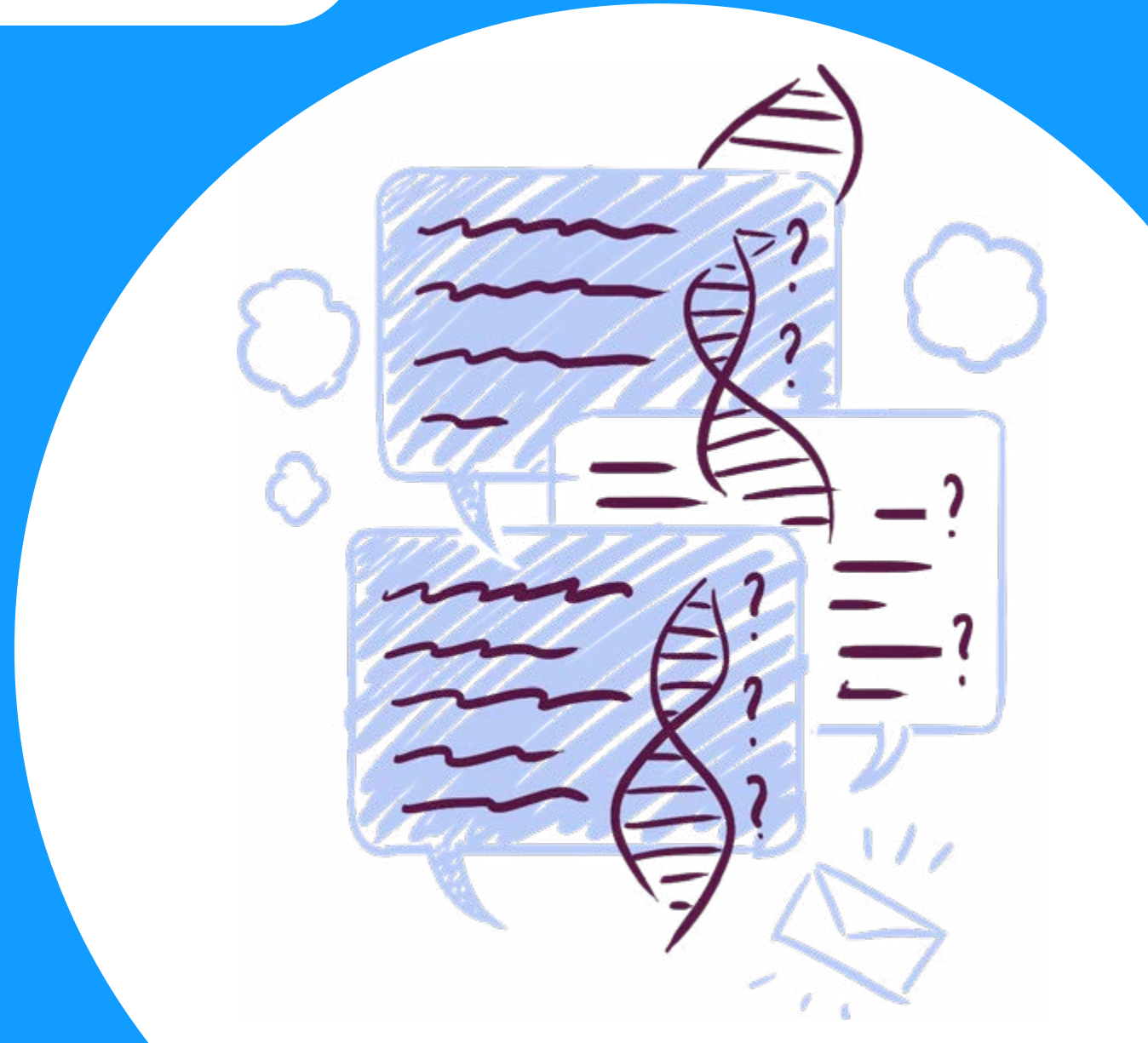


Contact with donor conceived people: Donor FAQs



What is the likelihood I will be contacted?

Lots of factors will determine if a child conceived by donation will reach out to their donor. A really important factor will be how the donor conceived person has processed the information regarding the nature of their conception. You will also need to remember that there is a possibility that the family has not (yet) disclosed to the person that they are donor conceived.

Circumstances will vary from family to family. Each donor conceived person is an individual, but once the first cohorts of donor conceived people with identity release donors turn eighteen (from October 2023), the HFEA will be able to provide information on how many donor-conceived people have requested identifying information.





It is worth noting that even though contact may not happen as soon as the donor conceived person turns 18, it could still happen at any point in the succeeding years. We know from research that key milestones in life – such as becoming a parent - or the experience of health concerns can be a prompt for seeking contact.

You should not expect that every donor conceived person will ask for contact. For example, you may have helped 10 families and receive no contact requests, but others may have helped five families and have multiple requests.

Is the donor conceived person just going to knock on my door?

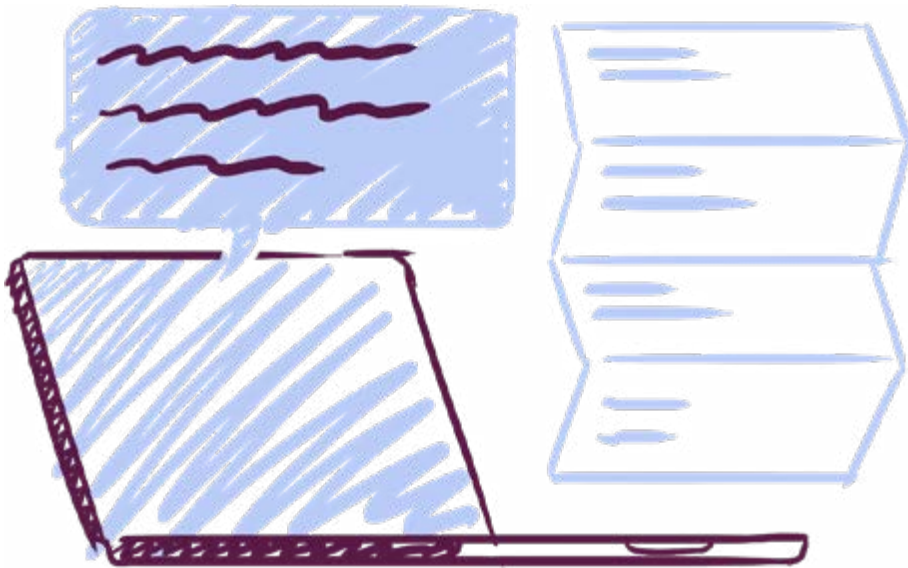
It is really unlikely that a donor conceived person will just knock on someone's door as the first point of contact. Knocks on the door tend only to happen when people have received no response from other attempts to contact their donor.

More commonly people will reach out via social media - check your Facebook Messenger and your direct messages (DMs). Some donor conceived people choose to write a traditional letter, others send an email. Someone might make a phone call - but that is less common.



If contact comes after a request to the HFEA through the 'opening the register' process, the HFEA will write to you to inform you the first time that a request to have identifying information about you has been made. They will send the letter to your last known address - and that will be the address given to the donor conceived person - so you should consider updating your address if you have moved since you made your donation.

If you wish to, you can also provide an email address and phone number to be passed to the donor-conceived individual when you update your address with the HFEA, and specify a preferred method of contact (although by law your postal address must also be given out).



Am I legally obliged to interact?

As a donor you bear no legal responsibility for the donor conceived person, and you are not legally obliged to engage with the donor conceived person.

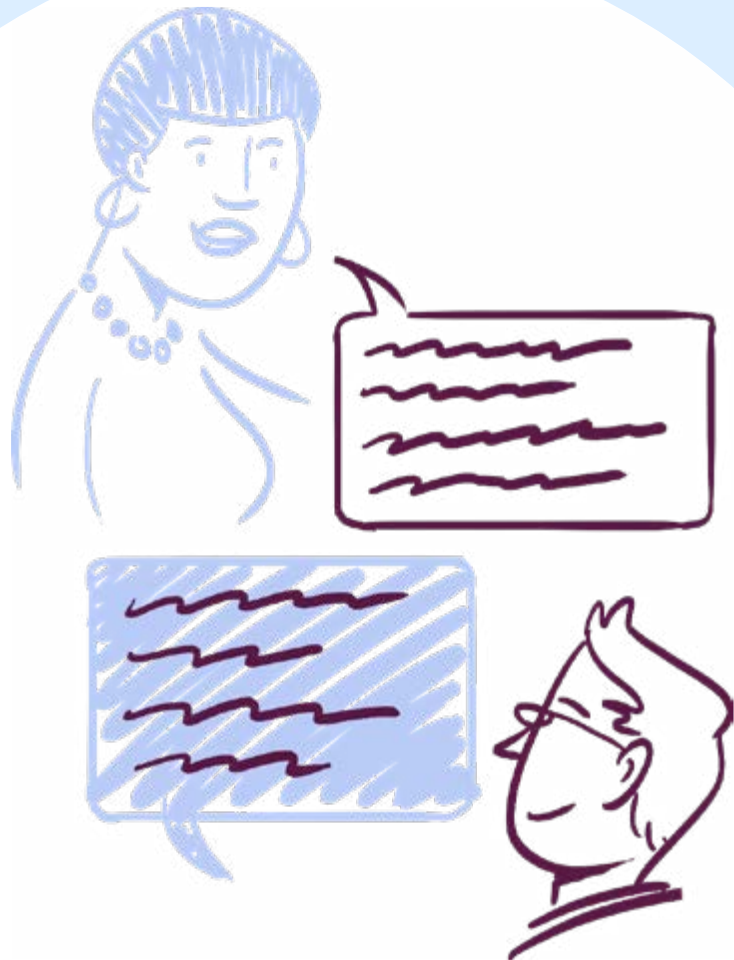
However, if a donor conceived person does reach out, donors are encouraged to interact as this enables the best possible outcome for the donor conceived person. There is support for you and your family to help you navigate the situation - this information is available on the 'Support and intermediary service' page of the [HFEA website](#).

If you decide that you don't want to have any further contact, it would be helpful to be clear and say that to the donor conceived person. This will mean that they know you have received the



message (or, if they have found you via an online DNA testing website or through social media, that they have found the right person). If you just ignore them, it is likely that they will assume you've not received the message and try getting in touch in a different way.

You should be aware that when a donor conceived person turns 18, and for the next few years, they are going through a significant stage of development and change, as they become adults. If they have recently found out that they are donor conceived, they could be feeling vulnerable and be seeking to create a sense of identity and belonging, alongside exploring their donor conceived status.



What's going to happen on the first point of contact?

This will be up to you and the donor conceived person. We would advise that you ease the door open gradually to a level that you are both comfortable with, and proceed with honesty, patience and curiosity from both sides.

A donor conceived person may simply want to meet you, so they can find out more information about you. Some donor conceived people may wish to understand the reasons behind your decision to donate. Others may have questions about your background, your health and a variety of other things. They may want to ask about what they might have inherited from you so they can better understand their own identity and origin story.



If you donated after August 1991, it is likely that they already have the non-identifying information from your profile, and that meeting you will complete the picture for them.

The breadth of possible questions is both infinite and individual!

It is worth keeping in mind that when someone learns they were born as a result of donation, it is possible that this knowledge can de-stabilise them and upset them. It often raises questions for them about who they are. They may feel they need to re-write their past - and they might want to contact you to help make sense of this new knowledge about their genetic identity.

Always consider personal safety when meeting new people and arrange to meet in a public place and let others know where you are going in advance.



Should I inform my immediate family?

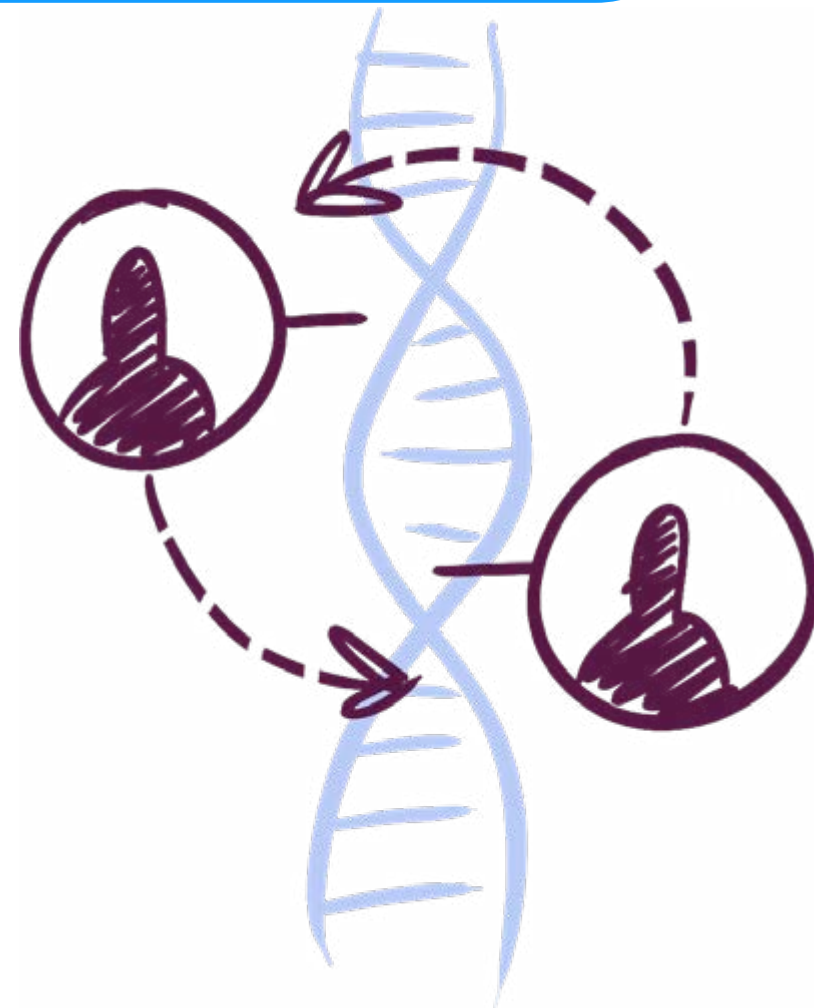
An open dialogue is encouraged. Donor conceived people often place value on contact with their donor's wider family, to get a broader sense of where they come from. Donor conceived people may be curious about genetic grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles or ancestors, especially if they don't have many relations in their day-to-day life.

You should also consider that a donor conceived person might have discovered through an online DNA test that they were donor conceived. If this is the case, they might discover you after 'matching' with another of your relatives. If this happens, your relative may discover that you are a donor through contact with the donor conceived person and you may wish to talk to them about it.



So how can a donor conceived person find me, or 'match' with me through an online commercial DNA testing site

If you or a genetic family member have taken an online DNA test, such as those offered by Ancestry, 23andMe and other companies, it may be possible that a donor conceived person may make a link with you or your family member. If they are able to contact you or your family member depends on your settings on these sites, i.e. if you have allowed your details to be accessible.



If a donor conceived person reaches out to me, what should we call each other?

Donors and donor conceived people often find it difficult to know what terms they should use to refer to people connected to them through donor conception. Typically, where possible, people simply use first names. In other contexts, some donors talk about their 'sperm/egg donor children', 'donor offspring', 'genetic son/daughter'. Some donor conceived people will refer to their donor as 'bio-dad/mum', 'genetic father/mother' or 'biological parent'. Sometimes people use different terms when talking to different people and vocabulary will change over time.



What if I reach out to the clinic where I donated for support and it has closed down?

You can contact the HFEA or Donor Conceived Register for information and support. Please see the further information at the end of this page.



Who to contact for information and support:

HFEA - You can contact the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority:

- for practical advice and support:

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/>

- if you wish to remove your anonymity:

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/donation/donors/remove-your-donor-anonymity/>

- to apply for information (opening the register):

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/donation/donor-conceived-people-and-their-parents/apply-for-information/>

- if you wish to contact the clinic for counselling support or to update contact details:

<https://www.hfea.gov.uk/choose-a-clinic/>

BICA - If you would like to speak to a professional person trained in this area, then the British Infertility Counselling Association (www.bica.net) has a list of counsellors on their website who are specialist in the area of fertility.

Donor Conceived Register: This voluntary contact register, formerly known as UK DonorLink (UKDL), was set up to enable people conceived through donated sperm or eggs, their donors and half-siblings to exchange information and, where desired, to contact each other:

<https://donorconceiveduk.org.uk>

Donor Conception Network: DC Network is a charity offering information, support and community to donor conception families and prospective families:

<https://dcnetwork.org/who-are-we/who-are-dcnetwork>

And finally...

Please see our other leaflets with some stories from donors and donor conceived people. These stories are based on those shared by participants in academic research studies, but names, places and other identifying details have been changed to protect their identity.

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