174432 - Can Women Use Frozen Embryos?

the question

My husband and I have frozen embryos left over from a treatment which resulted in my little boy who is nearly 2. I found out that it is not permissible to keep the frozen embryos. I was wondering whether we will be able to use the leftover embryos to do a treatment which we are looking to do as soon as possible or will we have to destroy the embryos? Please advise me.

Summary of answer

What women have to do is to dispose of the frozen embryos. It is permissible for women to undergo further artificial insemination even if that is costly or difficult, because that harm cannot be compared to the possibility of embryos being mixed up, especially since this length of time has passed.

Detailed answer

Praise be to Allah.

Are test-tube babies allowed in Islam?

Artificial insemination , or what is known as test-tube babies , takes many forms, some of which are permissible and some are prohibited.

The permissible forms include cases in which the sperm is taken from the man and the egg is taken from his wife, and fertilization takes place externally , then the embryo is implanted in the wife’s uterus.

In this case, it is essential to take precautions and look for trustworthy doctors, for fear of tampering, because some doctors may use sperm that does not come from the husband when

they already know that the husband's sperm is not suitable for fertilization; and there are other problems and evil consequences that may occur.

Can women use frozen embryos?

It is not permissible to keep eggs or embryos , and the fertilization of eggs must be limited to the required number so as to avoid having an excess of fertilized eggs. If there is an excess of fertilized eggs, they should be left without any care to die naturally.

That is because keeping embryos or eggs may lead to them being mixed with others as time goes by, either by mistake or deliberately, as has happened in many cases. Some of them may be taken and placed in the uterus of another woman , which leads to confusion of lineages, which is a serious evil that outweighs the interests which the couple may think are served by keeping embryos to save money and use for fertilization later on.

The Islamic Fiqh Council belonging to the Organization of the Islamic Conference has issued a statement on this matter. The text follows:

"1- In the light of what has happened of the possibility of keeping unfertilized eggs to be used later on, when fertilizing eggs it must be limited to the required number for implantation each time, to avoid an excess of fertilized eggs.

2- If there are any extra fertilized eggs – for any reason – they should be left without medical care until they die naturally.

3- It is prohibited to use fertilized eggs in another woman, and sufficient precautions must be taken to prevent using fertilized eggs for an illegitimate pregnancy." (Majallat Majma` Al-Fiqh Al-Islami, issue no. 7, vol. 3, p. 563)

Based on that, what you have to do is dispose of the frozen embryos; it is permissible for you to undergo further artificial insemination even if that is costly or difficult, because that harm cannot be compared to the possibility of embryos being mixed up, especially since this length of time has

passed.

And Allah knows best.