

# US woman gives birth to baby from world's first frozen donor egg bank

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Wendy and Jared Kennedy find it hard to take their eyes off their new daughter, Avery Lee, born in the early morning hours of Dec. 31 at the University of Kentucky Chandler Medical Center. Avery is special to them for many reasons, but she's also special to the world. The 8 pound, 2 ounce baby girl is apparently the first baby born after being conceived with a frozen donor egg from a commercial egg bank.

Wendy, a 41-year-old nurse at the UK Markey Cancer Center, and Jared found they were unable to conceive on their own. Lab tests revealed that they would need to use a donor egg. The couple learned about a new technology in which women's eggs can be frozen and stored in much the same way as donor sperm, which has been available for infertile couples for decades.

The Kennedy couple turned to the first commercial donor egg bank in the world, Cryo Eggs International, which has offices in Lexington and in Phoenix, Arizona. James Akin, M.D., a voluntary member of the clinical faculty research team at the UK College of Medicine, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Division of Reproductive Endocrinology, is medical director for CEI.

The new technology to successfully freeze women's eggs allows women to select a familial "match," or someone with similar characteristics, from the donor eggs in the bank. The eggs may be shipped anywhere in the world to be thawed, fertilized and transferred as an embryo to the waiting woman who wishes to experience the pregnancy and birth of her

baby. Wendy and Jared chose a donor with a similar ancestral background—German—and who closely resembles Wendy. They also were able to plan when to conceive—something they might not have been able to do with unfrozen eggs harvested from a donor, who would have been required to travel to the same facility as Wendy and the menstrual cycles of the two women coordinated.

Egg donors are tested as required by the FDA for infectious diseases within 30 days of egg collection. The eggs are then frozen and quarantined for six months. After the donor tests negative again for HIV and other infectious diseases, the eggs released.

"She's a little miracle," Wendy said a little more than 24 hours after the birth of their daughter. "I kept looking at her all night telling myself, 'She's really ours.'"

Wendy and Jared said they hope other infertile couples will gain hope by hearing their story.

"We don't want anyone to be as sad as we were. We want to talk about it. We want them to know that there are options available to them," Wendy said.

Source: University of Kentucky

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