

# Our Story



## Why I Chose IVF By Jennifer Beckwith

I was 19 when I found out the significance of my HHT. I had joined the Royal Australian Navy in 2004, when I fainted while marching to dinner. This led to a hospital visit, which resulted in a medical discharge, ruining my dreams and confidence for a very long time.

The only silver lining I found was I finally understood why I could not keep up with my peers during exercise, academics and other activities because of exhaustion.

Like all other HHT sufferers I get daily nosebleeds, which lead to loss of blood, fainting, fatigue and anemia. Then more serious health issues may occur like internal bleeding, heart failure and other nasties.

I would never wish this upon anyone, especially my children. So this brings me to the current point in my life, now 30-years-old, where I had to decide whether to have children or not.

After years of putting off pregnancy, I started noticing programs and news articles about the advances made in IVF. I realized there was a chance I could have children without them inheriting my HHT gene. I inquired further with my genetics doctor and she confirmed this can be done. I was ecstatic.

**Step 1:** Discussions with the fertility center and their genetics doctor to learn about how PGD (Preimplantation Genetic Diagnosis) works. This is where we learned the University of Monash would need blood samples from my partner and I as well as our parents to develop the DNA test that will be used on the embryos after collection.



[Jennifer Beckwith](#) Here's hoping they didn't get it... I'm 30 and only a few years ago did I realise how bad it can be.... So I'm lucky I hadn't done the family thing as yet. But it's good to let everyone know there is a choice there for the future and maybe we can cull HHT slowly



**Step 2:** Getting the blood samples and having the blood samples sent away. It took Monash University two to three weeks to develop the HHT test.

**Step 3:** My partner Robert had the sperm collection.



**Step 4:** Egg collection. This is where I had to have a hormone injection daily to produce as many eggs as possible. The average egg collection is around eight eggs. I produced 21 eggs. I'm sure the hormone dosage was raised due to the circumstances. I ended up with mild hyper-stimulation because of how many eggs my body produced in such a short time. This caused bloating and discomfort for a few weeks.

**Step 5:** Sperm and eggs are put into a dish to be fertilized and we ended up with seven embryos. These embryos have been harvested to day three and will now be sampled to find out which embryos have HHT and which ones do not. After they are harvested to day five, they will be frozen until we receive confirmation.

**Step 6:** Have the embryos that do not have the HHT implanted for pregnancy. We haven't reached this point yet, but my fingers are crossed and I have high hopes.

All in all, this process can be quite draining, emotional and expensive, but the relief of knowing the HHT gene stops with me is a feeling I cannot describe. I hope other women with HHT or other life threatening genetic disorders will also consider IVF as an option.