

First IVM babies born in United Kingdom

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The first babies in the United Kingdom to be conceived by in vitro maturation without fertility drugs -- have been born.

The twins, a boy and a girl, were born Oct. 18 in Oxford and were conceived through the efforts of the Oxford Fertility Unit, a private company whose consultants are Oxford University researchers.

The scientists said IVM is a quicker and cheaper alternative to standard in vitro fertilization since it doesn't involve injecting fertility drugs prior to egg collection. Instead, eggs are collected from the ovaries and allowed to mature in a Petri dish before being fertilized and returned to the womb.

Around 400 IVM babies have been born worldwide, compared with about 2 million IVF babies. IVM's safety is crucial for women with polycystic ovaries, who account for up to 40 percent of all women seeking fertility treatment, the researchers said.

In standard IVF treatment a woman undergoes two weeks of injections of a drug called gonadotrophin to stimulate egg production prior to retrieval. She also must sniff a drug for three weeks before that to suppress egg production. That, said researchers, is a time-consuming, uncomfortable and expensive process.

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