

INFRAFRONTIER-I3 - Cryopreservation training course

Hosted by the Frozen Embryo and Sperm Archive, MRC - Harwell

Rescue protocols to recover sperm frozen using the classical Nakagata method or Ostermeier's method with Monothioglycerol supplemented Cryoprotective Agent

Sperm concentrations in samples frozen using the classical Nakagata method (18% Raffinose, 3% Skimmed milk CPA) or the method published by Ostermeier *et al.*, (2008) (18% Raffinose, 3% Skimmed milk supplemented with 477 μ M monothioglycerol (MTG)) are typically stored in larger volumes of cryoprotective agent than our current samples. The concentration of sperm in these samples is therefore lower than that of samples stored using the gCPA protocol. This protocol provides adjustments to the MBCD + GSH IVF protocol which can be used to optimise results using these legacy samples.

A. Preparation of sperm dispersal dishes

1. On the day before the IVF is due to be performed, pipette 90 μ l TYH + 0.75mM MBCD (see IVF protocol) into the centre of a 35mm Petri Dish (Falcon 351008, Fig.1).

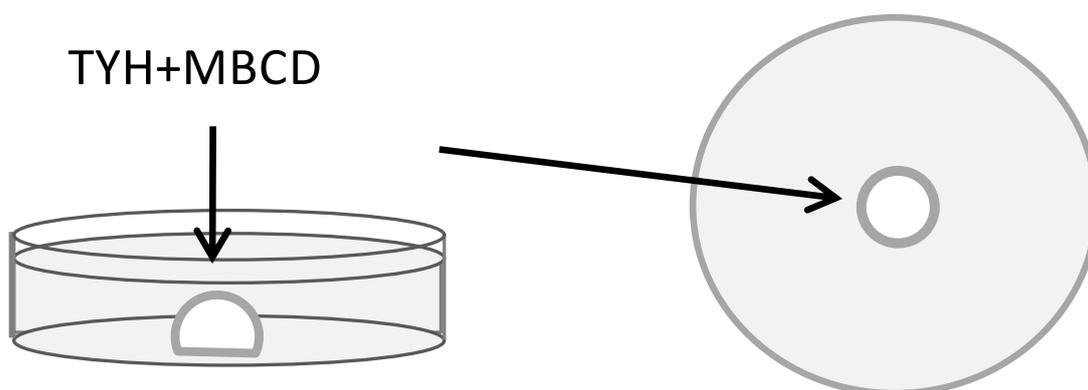


Fig. 1

2. Overlay with mineral oil and equilibrate overnight in the incubator at 37°C, in 5% CO₂ in air.

B. Thawing sperm samples frozen in straws using the Ostermeier, Monothioglycerol method

1. Remove the required straws from the storage tanks and place in a flask of liquid nitrogen.
2. Quickly transfer the straw into a 37°C water bath and leave for 10 minutes.

Note: To ensure warming of the frozen sperm, completely immerse the part of the straw containing the sperm in the water bath. Furthermore, frozen-thawed mouse sperm are sensitive to environmental changes. If the straw is not kept in the water bath long enough (10 minutes), the motility of the cryopreserved sperm will be reduced.

INFRAFRONTIER-I3 - Cryopreservation training course

- Carefully dry the straw with a paper towel (vigorous rubbing can cause friction and increase temperature inside straw).
- Cut the heat-sealed end of the straw, nearest to the sperm. Then cut through the centre of the cotton plug (Fig 2).

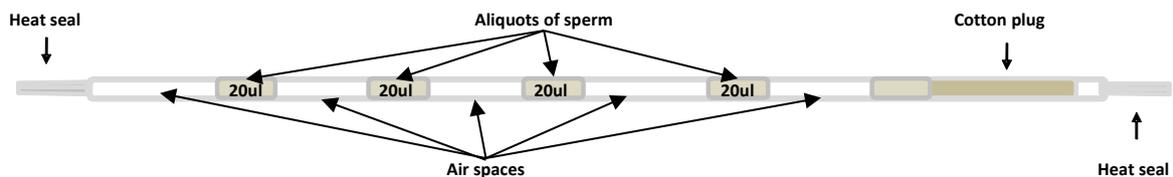


Fig 2.

- Use a metal rod to expel all the sperm suspension into the centre of a 351008 35mm Petri Dish.
- Add 30 μ l sperm suspension from the dish into the centre of the drop of 90 μ l TYH+MBCD pre-incubation medium (Fig 3).

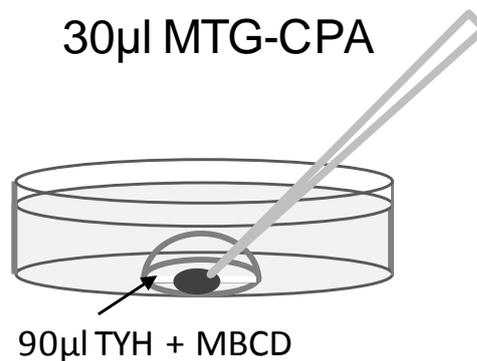


Fig 3.

Note: Do not disturb the dishes containing the frozen/thawed sperm until the sperm are moving rapidly within the medium. If the dishes are disturbed before the sperm starts to move they will not recover full motility.

- Pre-incubate the frozen/thawed sperm in TYH+MBCD medium for 30min at 37°C in the CO₂ incubator.
- Proceed with the IVF, adding 10 μ l sperm to each fertilisation drop as described for frozen/thawed sperm in the standard protocol.

INFRAFRONTIER-I3 - Cryopreservation training course

C. Thawing sperm samples frozen in vials according to the classical Nakagata method

1. Using forceps hold the cryotube in air for 30 seconds. If liquid nitrogen is present in the cryotube, wait for it to evaporate and escape by rolling the cryotube around on the bench.
2. Take special care that the cryotube is not filled with liquid nitrogen before plunging into the water bath (such tubes may explode).
3. Thaw the sperm sample rapidly by placing the vial in a 37°C water bath and keeping it there for 10 minutes.
4. Once thawed, using a wide bore tip, pipette 30µl sperm suspension from the vial into the centre of the drop of 90µl TYH+MBCD pre-incubation medium (see Fig 3, above).
5. Sperm motility will initially appear poor but after ~10 minutes the motility will return to normal levels in ~50% of the spermatozoa.

Note: Do not disturb the dishes containing the frozen/thawed sperm until the sperm are moving rapidly within the medium. If the dishes are disturbed before the sperm starts to move they will not recover full motility.

6. Pre-incubate the frozen/thawed sperm in TYH+MBCD medium for 30min at 37°C in the CO₂ incubator.
7. Proceed with the IVF, adding 10µl sperm to each fertilisation drop as described for frozen/thawed sperm in the standard protocol.