

Watching a PowerPoint presentation in a fertility centre isn't my idea of Saturday morning fun. But work calls: I'm writing a book aimed at single, childless women in their forties who might still want a baby.

A pang of emotions hits as I push the door of The London Women's Clinic. But I'm not just here for work. I am single. I am childless. I have just turned 42. And I think I might still want a baby.

How have I ended up here, living in the 'baby gap' – that period of uncertainty that hits childless women in our thirties and extends into our forties? My reasons, like those of so many other women, are complex. For years, I put work first and didn't think about my diminishing egg count. I then spent time sorting through emotional baggage from my past that had led me into doomed relationships or sabotaged the good ones. More recently, I just hadn't met any suitable, willing men.

Ultimately, I had always thought that motherhood would simply work out. But I wanted a loving partner and family rather than an instant baby, which is why the part of the seminar on going it alone using donor sperm didn't appeal to me. That desire for a family unit also meant I wasn't ready to look at solo adoption or co-parenting – at least not yet.

## Frozen assets

My ears pricked up when the talk turned to egg freezing. Previously, I'd assumed I was too old and dismissed the concept – I'm a traditionalist at heart and preferred to put my faith in nature, rather than resort to the latest advance in reproductive science. But lately, I'd begun to wonder. My sums no longer added up: by the time I had met someone and settled down with him, I would be at least 43. And I'd come across women in my age bracket who'd got some emotional relief from banking their eggs.

Crucially, the technology now comes with a new seal of approval. In October 2012, the American Society For Reproductive Medicine decided egg freezing produces



acceptable pregnancy rates and should no longer be considered 'experimental'. At the same time, US government health researchers openly advocated egg freezing as an 'insurance policy' for women turning 30.

And stories of egg freezing are everywhere. British actress Anna Friel, 36, told *Easy Living* that all her friends were freezing their eggs, while Sofia Vergara, the 40-year-old TV star of *Modern Family*, said she was putting her eggs on ice. I've even heard of Olympians and CEOs who underwent the procedure in anticipation of the time when they were ready to take a break from their careers.

The cost of egg freezing starts from £3,000 (excluding storage fees), so for a 42-year-old non-celebrity on a limited budget, can it really still be worth a shot? If I wanted to have a family, I would need to wait until I had a partner to fertilise