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for professional women

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IN THE OFFICE  
CAN I FREEZE  
**MY EGGS?**

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FEBRUARY/MARCH 2006

**MARTY  
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ON THE BUSINESS OF

**DISASTER**



# can I freeze my eggs?

BY MARY ANNE DUNKIN

*New technology makes it possible to push the snooze button on the biological clock.*

**GROWING UP, TINA CARSON** dreamed of having a husband and children. But in her 20s – a time when friends began to marry and start families – college, then graduate school, then a burgeoning career caused her to put her dreams on hold.

By her 30s, she was ready to have a family but lacked the right man to share in that dream. In 2004, when Carson heard of a new procedure being performed at the Florida Institute for Reproductive Medicine, she decided to take a bold step and freeze her eggs.

## Freezing for the Future

Carson, a healthcare consultant for a major West Coast medical center, is one of a growing number of women – now reaching the thousands – using the new technology of egg freezing (technically referred to as cryopreservation) as an insurance policy against future age- or illness-related infertility.

As many as 150 fertility centers around the world advertise that they will freeze eggs today to preserve for later, says Kevin Winslow, M.D., director of the Jacksonville-based Florida Insti-

tute for Reproductive Medicine, one of the largest such centers, where 18 of Carson's eggs are now frozen and waiting for her return with Mr. Right.

Women using the service fall into two basic categories: young women facing

medical treatments (usually for cancer) that will damage their eggs or send them into early menopause; and professional women – mostly in their late 30s to early 40s (when eggs are more likely to with-



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MIMI MANGRUM



stand freezing and thawing) – who think they might want to have children but have no immediate plans for a family. Rather than shift their focus from career to motherhood before they're ready, become single mothers through sperm donation or forgo hope of having children, they are choosing to have eggs retrieved and saved until they are ready for children.

Career-focused women like Carson are pleased to have this new option, though they may not be talking about it at the office. "My job is important to me," says Carson, who admits the egg retrieval process presented some challenges on the job. "At work, I want to be known as a competent manager, not a poster child for egg freezing." She was able to make her in-town doctor visits first thing in the morning, on the way to work, eliminating the need to explain absences to her co-workers and staff.

Aside from the actual freezing part of the procedure, the process is virtually identical to in vitro fertilization, which infertile couples have used for more than two decades. First, injected drugs are used to regulate the woman's menstrual cycle and stimulate egg production. Frequent blood tests and ultrasounds then

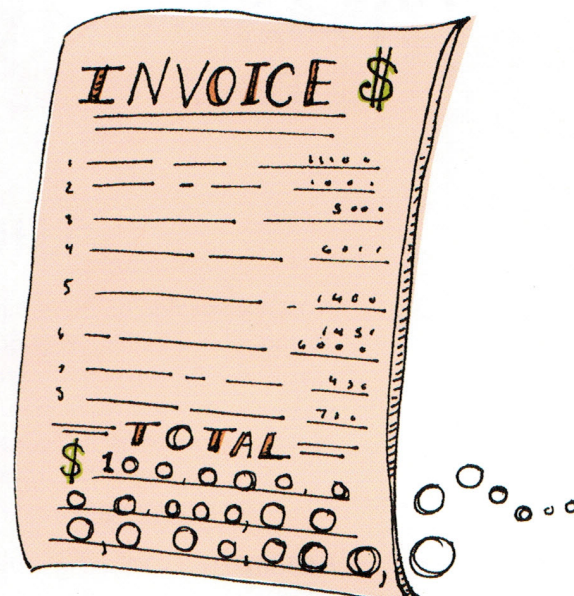
monitor the status of her growing eggs until, finally, an outpatient surgical procedure removes the eggs one at a time and places them in a dish.

The subsequent freezing procedure is what makes this new. The technology has become possible just recently due to the development of better cryoprotectants, or "antifreeze," says Jeffrey Steinberg, M.D., director of the Fertility Institutes, with offices in Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Guadalajara, Mexico.

Although men have been able to freeze sperm for future use, or donation, for years, technology to freeze eggs has progressed much more slowly. The reason has to do with the egg's size and makeup, Steinberg says. "The egg is the largest cell in the body; it has a lot of water in it," he explains. "The problem with water when you are freezing something is ice. Traditionally we have had to put so much chemical into the egg to prevent ice formation that we were killing the egg."

Egg freezing is generally reserved for women in their mid- to late 30s, who typically still produce enough healthy eggs to withstand freezing and thawing. But the technology also benefits older would-be mothers in a different way.

Women in their 40s may be able to



have children using frozen eggs from younger donors, Dr. Winslow says.

Fertility centers can get donor eggs for their patients in one of two ways: by paying donors to go through the process, or by giving a discount to women freezing eggs for their own use if they agree to donate some as well.

### No Small Investment

While egg freezing is offering many women a new chance at motherhood, it's not easy or a sure thing.

For Carson, the whole process – from the start of drugs to regulate the menstrual cycle to the retrieval of her eggs – took about a month and a half. Beginning the process first meant finding a reproductive endocrinologist (fertility specialist) to prescribe her medications. Carson then had to learn to inject those medications herself. Her local doctor monitored her egg development through blood tests and ultrasounds and reported the results every other day to Winslow in Florida.

The process culminated with egg retrieval in Jacksonville, which Carson was able to explain away at work as an eight-day vacation. The financial cost of her treatment: approximately \$10,000, excluding lodging and transportation.

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# ARE YOU ready to freeze your eggs?

## THINGS TO CONSIDER

**AGE.** Depending on the facility you choose, the upper cutoff for the procedure ranges between ages 38 and 42. For women in good health, “a 33- or 34-year-old would be the youngest I would consider,” says Kevin Winslow, M.D., director of the Florida Institute for Reproductive Medicine in Jacksonville. Once a woman passes her late 30s, her chance of success with the procedure decreases. She will likely produce fewer eggs, her eggs may no longer be healthy enough to survive freezing and thawing, and her aging eggs (whether frozen or not) carry an increased risk of genetic defects. For women in their 40s, frozen donor eggs are probably a better option.

**HORMONE LEVEL.** Age isn’t the only predictor of egg production and ultimate success. A serum follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) level of 7.1 mIU/ml (a measure of ovarian health and capacity to produce viable eggs) on cycle day three has been associated with the greatest chance of success. The higher the FSH level beyond that, the less likely the procedure is to be successful.

**FINANCIAL RESOURCES.** With prices at many facilities in the \$10,000 range per cycle (often not including the drugs, which may be thousands more) and the fact that many women undergo more than one cycle of treatment to retrieve a sufficient number of eggs, the procedure isn’t for anyone on a tight budget. Also consider that the price of retrieval may not include storage of the eggs, and it won’t cover the eventual thawing and fertilization of the eggs (several thousands more).

**LOCATION.** Finding a fertility center with a proven track record may require travel and time away from work. You should check with individual facilities for their success rates.

**STRESS LEVEL.** Having your eggs frozen requires a physical, emotional and financial commitment that may or may not have an eventual payoff. Can you handle the stress? Some fertility centers offer counseling and support groups. If yours doesn’t, or if the center you’re considering is too far from home, you may want to pursue counseling on your own.

**RESOURCES.** Check with the following fertility centers and resources for more information:

»» Florida Institute for Reproductive Medicine »» [firmjax.com](http://firmjax.com)

»» University of Southern California Fertility Clinic »» [uscivf.org](http://uscivf.org)

»» Resolve, the National Infertility Association »» [resolve.org](http://resolve.org)

»» The Fertility Institutes »» [fertility-docs.com](http://fertility-docs.com)

»» Fertile Hope »» [fertilehope.org](http://fertilehope.org)

»» Extend Fertility »» [extendfertility.com](http://extendfertility.com)

Today, she’s planning to do it all again. Because not all eggs survive the thawing and many of those that do either don’t fertilize or don’t become babies, doctors recommend retrieving as many eggs as possible. And Carson may want to save more eggs so she can have a second child.

“At my age, I never considered that I would have the option of a second child,” she says. “It is kind of nice. I’m going to freeze another cycle of eggs, and after that I’m done.”

But even so, for Carson, freezing eggs doesn’t ensure a family. “If I wanted to

be a single mother, I would have gotten a sperm donation,” she says. “But I want that perfect American dream – the husband, the house with the white picket fence. I want all of that, and I am willing to hold out for that.”

Today, with so few children born from



Y MARGARITA OCHOA-MAYA, M.D.

# UCLA study proves Pritikin Program kills cancer cells.

**"THIS IS THE FIRST STUDY TO MY** knowledge to show that lifestyle changes can induce apoptosis, or cell death, in breast cancer cells," said James Barnard, Ph.D., professor of physiological science at UCLA and lead investigator of a study presented this year at the International Research Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Cancer in Washington, D.C.

## Inside The Study

Barnard and UCLA colleagues studied 26 women who attended a 13-day program of diet and exercise at the Pritikin Longevity Center & Spa in Aventura, Florida. The researchers collected blood serum from the women on day 1 ("entry" samples) and day 13 ("exit" samples) of their stay at Pritikin. In laboratories at UCLA, the women's blood serums were placed in three sets of culture dishes, each containing a different line of breast cancer cells.

The rate of tumor cell growth in all three types of breast cancer decreased greatly in dishes with "exit" blood compared to dishes with "entry" blood. Adopting the Pritikin Program slowed the growth of breast cancer cells by 19%.

The researchers also noted a 20 to 30% increase in tumor cell death (apoptosis) in the "exit" samples compared to the "entry" samples.

## What It Means

"These results suggest a significant reduction in the risk for breast cancer," commented Dr. Barnard. "This is exciting research because it shows that women can

have been telling people about Pritikin for years. More than 100 studies in peer-reviewed medical journals have documented the extraordinary success of the thousands of Pritikin guests studied":

Program at the Pritikin Longevity Center & Spa, renowned for weight loss & prevention/treatment of heart disease, also kills breast cancer cells, a new study shows.

make changes in a very short period of time that can have a dramatic impact on their health – in this case, on the growth and death of breast cancer cells."

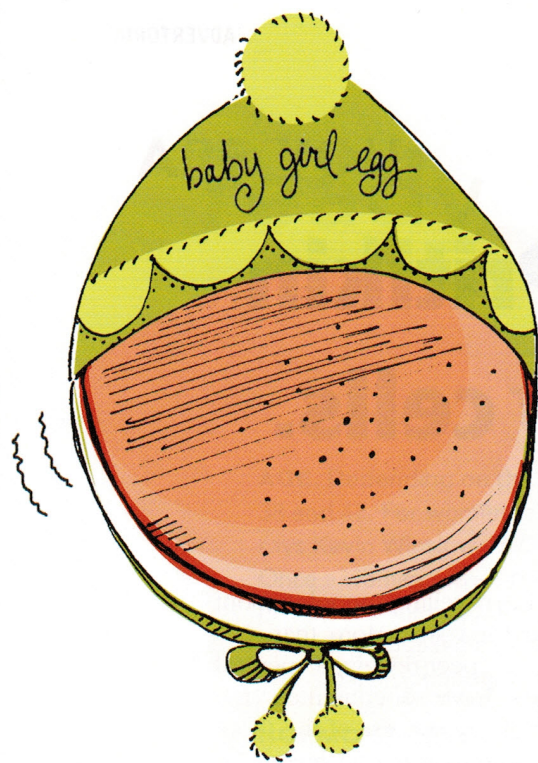
## Other Health Benefits

The Pritikin Program is also effective in helping tackle other lifestyle diseases. Many attend Pritikin's upscale resort on Turnberry Isle, Florida, for weight loss that is not only healthful but significant and lasting. Dr. Barnard added, "UCLA colleagues and I

- ❖ Weight loss averaged 12 pounds;
- ❖ 83% of hypertensives left drug-free;
- ❖ 70% of diabetics left drug-free;
- ❖ Risk factors for heart disease and breast, prostate, and colon cancer were greatly reduced.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ON PRITIKIN'S STUDIES AND HEALTH RESULTS, VISIT [WWW.PRITIKIN.COM](http://WWW.PRITIKIN.COM) OR CALL (800) 327-4914**

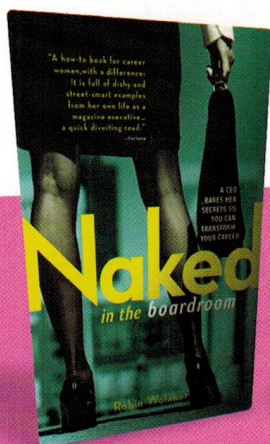




The egg freezing procedure is what makes this new. The technology has become possible just recently due to the development of better “antifreeze

frozen eggs (fewer than 150 worldwide), it's difficult to predict the long-term implications of egg freezing. “Until there have been thousands of babies born and those children have been followed through adolescence, this should be considered research,” Winslow says.

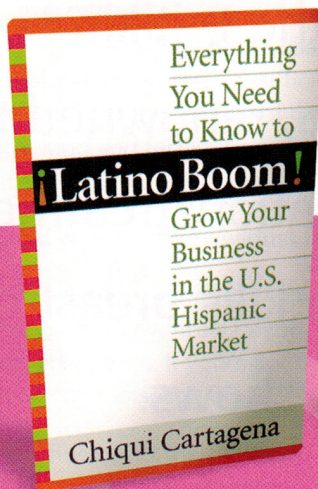
But for now, Carson is hopeful. “I just think I am doing what I can within my power, and if in the end I don't find someone, or we don't fertilize the egg, or it doesn't take or I miscarry, I will know in my heart that I have done everything that I could.”



### Naked in the Boardroom

Robin Wolaner's guidebook for corporate women, *Naked in the Boardroom: A CEO Bares Her Secrets So You Can Transform Your Career* (Fireside, 2005), hits shelves in paperback in early 2006. From secretary to CEO, Wolaner shares the lessons she learned from her climb up the corporate ladder. Among the 80 “Naked Truths” she offers: “If you've had management responsibility and have never fired anyone, you probably should be a candidate for the ax. It comes with the territory.” Another: “When you've made a mistake you are most vulnerable to making a second in your eagerness to recover.” Wolaner shares her perspective not only on management, but also on motherhood: “You can't time your baby's conception. This will prepare you for giving up control, which is a [positive] side effect of parenthood.”

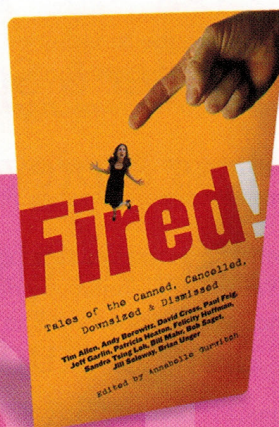
CHRISTINA LIVINGSTON



### Latino Boom!

America's largest minority group, Latinos, spent \$686 billion in 2004 and is projected to spend \$992 billion in 2009. Still, most companies fail to effectively reach these important consumers. In *Latino Boom! Everything You Need to Know to Grow Your Business in the U.S. Hispanic Market* (Ballantine Books, 2005), author Chiqui Cartagena lists 10 mistakes to avoid, including: Do not make assumptions that Latinos are poor, uneducated and unwilling to communicate in English; do not enter the Latino market without making a commitment; don't be fooled by the surname when hiring Latino experts; and don't assume you know who is a Latino celebrity. *Latino Boom!* advises marketers to focus on diversity. “Stop thinking about everything in terms of black and white,” because “in the end, isn't green the only color that really matters in business?”

TAYLOR MALLORY



### Fired

When comedienne Annabelle Gurwitch, host of *TB Dinner and a Movie*, was fired by her idol, Woody Allen (who said, “You look retarded”), she didn't get mad; she got inspired. For *Fired!* (Touchstone, Mar 2006), Gurwitch solicited the help of her funny friends whose tales of dismissal eased her pain. Felicity Huffman learned from a newspaper review that she'd be replaced in a Neil Simon play. Being canned from morning show freed Bob Saget to accept the role he'd been offered on *Full House*. And when Tim Allen turned down a club manager position fearing it would interfere with college, the new manager fired him for being “too popular.” Gurwitch and friends prove that getting fired can be a blessing in disguise.

TAYLOR MALLO

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