

FINDING THE RIGHT SURROGATE: A Guide for Intended Parents



Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Understanding Surrogacy	3
Why Surrogacy?	4
An Ancient Practice	4
From Artificial Insemination to IVF	5
Types of Surrogacy.....	6
Chapter 2: Finding a Surrogate	7
Who Needs a Surrogate?	8
How to Find a Surrogate	9
What Makes a Good Surrogate?	9
Should You Use Surrogate Agencies?	11
Chapter 3: Changing Lives, One Cycle at a Time	13
Why They Do It	14
Why We Do It	15
What You Can Do Next	15

CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTANDING SURROGACY



A surrogate is another word for substitute. When it comes to childbirth, surrogates are women who agree to become pregnant on behalf of someone else, whether that be a couple or an individual. In other words, surrogacy is a form of assisted reproduction.

Why Surrogacy?

Why would a hopeful parent or parents choose to have a baby through another individual? There are many reasons, but the most common scenario involves infertility. Say a husband and wife want a child but can't get pregnant. They've tried for years. They've undergone IVF procedures. Perhaps they've even thought of adoption, but state laws are too restrictive. They get bogged down in red tape and unreasonable demands. It seems hopeless.

After doing a little research and exploring their options, they realize they can find a surrogate who will carry their baby during the nine months of pregnancy. Perhaps they'll ask a close friend or family member to fill in during the birthing process. More often, they'll rely on a professional surrogate agency, which can guide them through the process and pair them with a healthy, trustworthy woman who agrees to act as the "gestational carrier" (another name for surrogate).

As soon as the surrogate delivers the baby, the couple assumes full legal custody and takes on all parental responsibilities, even though they did not physically give birth to the child. In other words, surrogacy makes parenthood possible, even when biological obstacles stand in the way.

An Ancient Practice

Surrogacy has been standard practice for thousands of years. Although modern technology and medical progress have revolutionized the methods by which people conceive children through a surrogate, the custom itself has an ancient pedigree, dating back thousands of years.

One of the most widely-known stories about surrogacy is recorded in the Book of Genesis. According to the text, Sarah and Abraham were unable to conceive a child. As a result, Sarah demanded that her servant Hagar sleep with her husband and bear a child on her behalf. Hagar could hardly refuse, even if she had wanted to, since she was little better than a slave in the eyes of society.

Fortunately, a lot has changed since biblical days. Social attitudes have evolved. These days, women volunteer to carry someone else's baby out of a heartfelt desire to help others realize their dreams of parenthood, not because they must comply with oppressive social demands.

Modern surrogates also enter into a legal contract with the expectant parents, which protects both parties from broken promises and unforeseen circumstances. In short, modern surrogacy involves altruism, respect, and responsibility, rather than exploitation and manipulation as was often the case in days past.¹

From Artificial Insemination to IVF

Technological advancements have also pushed reproductive medicine forward, opening up doors that no one could have imagined just a few hundred years ago. The first real breakthrough came with the development of artificial insemination in the late 19th century, which made it possible to conceive a child without sexual intimacy.

The ability to implant a woman with a man's sperm was a major leap forward when it came to surrogacy, but it didn't solve all the problems related to assisted reproduction. The biggest shortcoming? Only the father could claim kinship with the child. Before the 20th century, if a mother needed a surrogate, it meant she would have no biological connection with the baby she hoped to call her own.

It wasn't until the 1970s that doctors were able to perfect the process of in vitro fertilization (IVF), whereby doctors remove a woman's egg from her body and fertilize it with a donor's sperm in a laboratory. When IVF is used in conjunction with surrogacy, it allows a woman to keep her position as the biological mother, even if she can't carry the pregnancy herself.

In other words, IVF-assisted surrogacy, or gestational surrogacy, levels the playing field. Now both men and women are given the chance to have a baby through a surrogate without losing the natural link that biological parents have with their children.

LEARN THE LINGO

Surrogate: A woman, usually between the ages of 25 and 35, who carries a baby on behalf of another individual or a couple.

Intended Parent: Someone who wants to have a child, but who cannot carry a pregnancy to term for whatever reason.

Egg Donor: A woman who donates her eggs so that an intended parent can have a child through a surrogate.

Sperm Donor: A man who donates his sperm so that an intended parent can conceive a child through a surrogate.

Traditional Surrogacy: A procedure whereby a surrogate is artificially inseminated with a man's sperm.

Gestational Surrogacy: A procedure whereby a surrogate is implanted with an egg that has already undergone in vitro fertilization.

Fertility Clinic: The organization that collects donor gametes and carries out IVF.

Surrogacy Agency: A professional agency that pairs intended parents with healthy surrogates and guides them through every step of the assisted pregnancy process.

Types of Surrogacy

Because of the progress made by medical researchers, there is now more than one way to carry out a surrogate pregnancy. These days, people who want to conceive through a substitute have at least two options: traditional surrogacy and gestational surrogacy.

Traditional surrogacy refers to the age-old practice described in the story of Sarah and Abraham, although nowadays it involves artificially inseminating the surrogate with the intended father's sperm, or with another donor's sperm if necessary. By modern standards, it's a relatively simple undertaking that requires only minimally invasive techniques.

On the other hand, traditional surrogacy tends to involve thornier legal and ethical issues than gestational surrogacy. That's because the surrogate is technically the biological mother of the baby, although she agrees to hand over custody of the child to the intended parent or parents as soon as the delivery is complete.

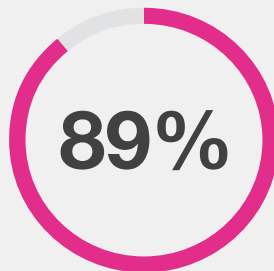
Gestational surrogacy involves in vitro fertilization, or IVF. The first step is to collect eggs from either the mother or from a donor. The next step takes place in a lab, where the egg is fertilized with semen from the father or from a donor. Finally, doctors inseminate the gestational carrier (another name for the surrogate) with the fertilized egg. In this case, the carrier is the "birth mother," but not the "biological" mother.

Gestational surrogacy is more complicated and time-consuming than traditional surrogacy. If the first attempt at implantation fails, the process can be delayed for months. Nevertheless, it has become the most popular surrogacy option within the United States because it allows both parents to have a biological relationship to their child, making it more legally straightforward.

Gestational Surrogacy: A Growing Trend



In 1999, the CDC recorded only **727 gestational surrogacy cycles** in the United States. By 2013, there were **3,432 deliveries**, a nearly fourfold spike in less than two decades.²



In the four years between 2004 and 2008, the number of babies born to gestational carriers increased by **89%**, from 738 to 1,400 infants.³



Between 1998 and 2013, gestational carriers gave birth to over **18,000 infants** in over **13,000 deliveries**.

CHAPTER TWO

FINDING A SURROGATE

Who Needs a Surrogate?

Popular misconceptions aside, surrogacy is not a fringe phenomenon. Although only a small percentage will actually go through with a surrogate pregnancy, it appeals to a wide cross-section of society—older people who still want to be parents, single men and women who want to have children, same-sex partners, couples who struggle with infertility, and mothers who suffer from health problems.

Why do so many people seek out surrogates? The most common reasons include:



Infertility. Women who have had cancer, hysterectomies, uterine problems, unexplained infertility issues, or even multiple miscarriages may need the help of another woman to carry out a successful pregnancy. The same goes for post-menopausal women.

The options available to women depend on the root causes of their infertility. Those who can't produce eggs, for whatever reason, must resort to traditional surrogacy. Gestational surrogacy is ideal for women who have no uterus, either because of a hysterectomy or because of a congenital condition, but who still have ovaries capable of producing viable eggs.



Chronic Illness. Serious diseases can take a toll on the human body, making it difficult to bear the strains of pregnancy. Take the case of a woman with severe heart disease or diabetes. In many cases, she puts herself and her baby in danger by going through with a pregnancy.

Intended mothers who have communicable diseases such as HIV may also consider surrogacy in order to minimize the chances of complications, as will people who don't want to pass genetic diseases onto their children. In either scenario, a gestational surrogate may be the only way to avoid the perils of a high-risk pregnancy.



Single Parenting. Single mothers who can't conceive may turn to surrogates, but they aren't the only ones. A growing number of straight, single men are also opting for surrogacy in the hopes of becoming fathers.⁴ Just as women aren't letting their single status get in the way of starting a family, many men have decided to conceive biological children using an egg donor and a surrogate.



Same-Sex Unions. In recent years, society has become more accepting of non-traditional arrangements. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the case of same-sex unions. A surrogate is the best hope for gay couples, particularly gay men, who want to raise a child they can call their own.⁵

Whatever their reasons, intended parents go in search of a surrogate when they need help conceiving or carrying a baby to full term, and many exhaust all other options before asking someone else to step in and act as the birth mother.

How to Find a Surrogate

Settling on a surrogate is the most difficult part of the process. The stakes are high. You're making decisions not only for yourself and for your partner, but also for a child that has yet to be born. Any pregnancy is fraught with emotions, but when you're dealing with multiple parties and non-traditional arrangements, the pitfalls multiply.

Some ask a close friend or relative to fill in as the birth mother, but for many hopeful parents, that's not an option. The question then becomes, how do you find a gestational surrogate if no one within your inner circle can or will carry the baby for you?

You have two choices: find a surrogate on your own or have a dedicated surrogacy agency find one for you. Both are valid options. That being said, intended parents should consider a few things before jumping into the surrogacy process.

What Makes a Good Surrogate?

Physical Health: You should always look at a candidate's medical records before agreeing to choose them as your surrogate.

Mental Wellbeing: Potential surrogates should undergo a psychosocial exam to ensure that they're mentally fit to be birth mothers.

Reliability: Does your potential surrogate make good lifestyle choices? Does she drink or use drugs?

Trustworthiness: Can you trust your surrogate to follow through on her promises and honor the terms of the contract?

Motives: Is your surrogate motivated by money or by altruism? Does she empathize with your plight and understand your needs?

Experience: Women who have already gone through with at least one pregnancy make some of the best candidates, particularly if they already have kids of their own.

Before you decide on a course of action, make sure you're making an informed decision. That means doing your research, considering all your options, weighing the pros and cons, and understanding your own needs.

Common Reasons for Surrogacy

- Female Infertility
- Cancer
- Multiple Miscarriages
- Chronic or Serious Illness
- Genetic Conditions
- Age
- LGBT Individuals and Couples
- Personal Choice

Surrogacy Timeline⁶

Week 1

Fill out the Initial Intended Parent Application. Submit the Preliminary Fee Schedule and a deposit of \$2,000.

Week 2

The intended parent or parents should schedule a physical exam.

Weeks 3 through 5

Find a potential surrogate.

Week 6

Meet and interview the potential surrogate.

Week 7

Finalize the surrogate decision and sign contract.

Weeks 8 through 9

Sign legal contracts and retain an attorney.

Week 10

Fund the escrow account.

Week 11

Prepare to cycle by completing tests, gathering documents, and making travel arrangements.

Week 12

Start the cycle!

Week 52

Take your new baby home!



Should You Use Surrogacy Agencies?

How do you find someone who meets all the relevant criteria? When it comes down to it, most intended parents choose to contact a surrogacy agency. But why? What can an agency do for you that you can't do for yourself? What are the benefits of going it alone, and what advantages do you get when you work with a professional service? Here are some of the most striking benefits provided by a surrogacy agency.

They can help you sort through the complexity. Surrogacy involves intricate legal issues and complicated medical procedures. It's not easy to wade through the morass, particularly if it's your first time going through the surrogacy process. That's where an agency can help—by guiding both parties, hopeful parents and surrogates, through the maze and helping them overcome the many stumbling blocks along the way.

They can bridge the trust gap. When you contract with a surrogate, you're putting a lot of faith in them. You want to know that they'll take care of their bodies during the pregnancy, that they don't have any undisclosed medical or psychological conditions, and that they'll carry through with their agreement without raising a legal fuss. When you find a surrogate on your own, you must do all the work of verifying their trustworthiness.

On the other hand, a surrogacy agency has more than enough resources to do thorough background checks for you. Indeed, the best services vet each surrogate carefully. They not only conduct standard background checks, but conduct interviews, gather medical records, and provide psychosocial screenings that are designed to catch potential problems before they cause harm.

They can help you avoid conflicts and awkward situations. When you work with an agency, you can choose to elect your own surrogate, or let them suggest candidates for you. It's an important decision to make, and a professional service gives you the benefit of choice.

Having a family member or close friend who is willing to be a surrogate can be a blessing. It can also be a burden. If everything goes smoothly, then both parties experience nothing but joy. If complications occur or disagreements arise, the consequences can be even more devastating when you're dealing with a loved one. At the worst, it can ruin longstanding relationships.

Because of the nature of surrogacy, it's often best to choose someone who is reliable and trustworthy, yet unrelated. That gives you peace of mind, while putting enough distance between you and the surrogate to prevent the worst conflicts. In the rare case that something does go awry with the pregnancy, there will be less emotional turmoil if your relationship is more professional than personal.

You can't put a price on a healthy, happy baby. When you choose surrogacy, you're dealing with a baby, your baby. You hold the future of another human being in your hands. Surrogacy agencies may cost a bit more money in the short term, but they give you something invaluable in return: peace of mind.

And it's not just a feel-good sentiment either. With years, sometimes decades of experience, agencies know how to find healthy and dependable surrogates, how to manage medical and legal complexities, and how to guide intended parents through the ups and downs of the assisted reproduction cycle.

It's cheaper than a legal fight. These days, it's rare for either party to pull out of the deal after agreeing to the arrangement, but it does happen. In order to avoid last-minute withdraws or complications, intended parents and surrogates should make all their arrangements through a legitimate, licensed and experienced surrogate finder agency.

At the very least, a surrogacy agency costs less than a protracted legal fight, which can occur if both parties aren't on the same page when it comes to the details of the arrangement. Although agencies don't offer foolproof solutions, they do add another layer of protection by providing advice and legal documents.



SURROGACY BY STATE

California has by far the most estimated births from surrogacy, followed closely by New Jersey. Florida comes in a distant third, with less than three times the estimated number of babies born by surrogacy as California.³

CHAPTER THREE

CHANGING LIVES, ONE
CYCLE AT A TIME



Surrogates offer hope. They give the gift of life, joy, and parenthood. They help people of all walks of life achieve what might otherwise be impossible—realizing their dream of starting a family. In other words, you can't put a price on what surrogates do.

So why does surrogacy cost money? It's simple. Surrogates deserve compensation for what they do. Pregnancies can be difficult—physically, emotionally, psychologically. Carrying a baby, even your own baby, takes time, fortitude, and commitment. It can be exhausting.

The surrogate must undergo multiple medical procedures, schedule checkups, monitor her health around the clock, endure uncomfortable and sometimes painful physical changes, not to mention deliver a baby, an arduous and sometimes dangerous process. In the meantime, she must fill out forms and subject herself to background checks and interviews.

In other words, surrogacy is hard work. It's a small fee for such a time-intensive, physically grueling, and psychologically challenging activity.

Why They Do It

So why do they do it? Why would anyone put themselves through such an ordeal just to deliver a baby on behalf of someone else?

While a small minority see nothing but dollar signs, the rest have a desire to help other people start families. Indeed, the vast majority of surrogates commit to the process because they care, because they want to give something back to the world, because they want to help other people share in the joys of family life.

The trick for intended parents is finding the right individuals, those surrogates who understand the value of their contribution while acting out of the goodness of their heart. For that, they need a dedicated surrogacy agency.



Why We Do It

Families are the backbone of society. They offer comfort, love, and stability. Ask any parent, and they'll tell you that their children are the most precious parts of their lives. They know that children bring joy, meaning, and fulfillment to life.

No one should be denied that opportunity. That's why we do what we do—to extend the circle of family life and help more people enjoy the blessings of children.

What You Can Do Next

If you think surrogacy might be the right option, then consider scheduling a free, confidential consultation with one of our experts. We'll help you make an informed decision and work with you to craft an individualized surrogacy plan.

Schedule now to receive a FREE consultation.

3 Sisters Surrogacy. Matching Intended Parents With Gestational Surrogates.



Sources

1. <https://www.economist.com/news/leaders/21721914-restrictive-rules-are-neither-surrogates-interests-nor-babys-carrying-child>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/art/key-findings/gestational-carriers.html>
3. <http://www.councilforresponsiblegenetics.org/pagedocuments/kaevej0a1m.pdf>
4. <http://abcnews.go.com/US/straight-single-men-wanting-kids-turn-surrogacy/story?id=16520916>
5. <https://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a45722/gay-parents-surrogacy/>
6. <https://www.3sistersurrogacy.com/intended-parents-overview/>