

So when she was 35 and wanted to have a baby, she and her husband went first to a Milwaukee infertility specialist. He analyzed their embryos and implanted only females so she wouldn't bear a child who would face the same fate as her brother.

"I have a good reason for what I'm doing," said the Madison woman, who is expecting in July and declined to be identified. "Why would I want to have a child and know it's going to die at age 20? My parents went through hell."

Situations like this are why doctors at Children's Hospital, Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital and the Medical College of Wisconsin are starting a new program to offer pre-implantation genetic diagnosis, or PGD, to screen embryos before a pregnancy begins. About 50 infertility clinics around the country now offer it.

The Medical College program will screen embryos only for gender-linked genetic diseases - those that predominantly affect males because they have only one X chromosome - and chromosomal abnormalities like those that cause Down syndrome.

But one Milwaukee doctor in private practice, K. Paul Katayama, also is doing it in limited circumstances to help couples select the sex of their baby.

He said he considers doing it "if someone has a certain ethnic background, such as Indian. In their culture, males have to take over."

"American people usually don't care. They want a baby, period," he added.