



What is a vasectomy?

Permanent contraception is called sterilisation. When a man is sterilised, the operation is called a vasectomy. When you ejaculate (come) the fluid or semen from your penis contains sperm. Sperm are made in your testicles (balls) and travel up your vas deferens (tubes) to mix with your semen. These are the tubes that are cut and tied when you have a vasectomy.

After a vasectomy there are no sperm in your semen. Your testicles still make sperm which are absorbed by your body.

Where is it done?

A vasectomy is a simple operation, that can be done in some Family Planning centres or doctors surgeries. The Hernia Clinic do them in hospital often in conjunction with another scheduled operation. Your surgeon will explain the operation and answer questions you or your partner may have when you come in for a pre-op consultation.

How is it done?

Traditional method – sometimes you can be awake during the operation, you can ask for a sedative. The surgeon will give you a local anaesthetic so that it will not be painful, some men prefer not to be awake and can have a general anaesthetic.

The tubes feel like two firm narrow cords under the skin in your scrotum. An opening is made in the scrotum and a loop of vas deferens is very gently drawn out through the cuts. A small piece of each tube is removed. Different methods can be used to close the ends of the tubes, they are normally ligated (tied).

Post-op care

You will be given detailed instructions at the time of the operation. You can expect some soreness and bruising for a few days. Plan to stay home and rest. You can probably return to light work after two days, but should avoid heavy lifting or exercise for 7 – 10 days. You can have sexual intercourse after 2 – 3 days if it is comfortable but remember you still need to use contraception.

When is the operation effective?

Your partner will not be protected from pregnancy until two semen samples are sperm free. Your surgeon will arrange the tests which are done 3 months after the vasectomy. Until then you will need to use another method of contraception.

Can it affect my sexuality?

After vasectomy you still have erections and orgasms. You ejaculate about the same amount of semen but it no longer contains sperm. Your hormones and maleness do not change. Your sex drive and ability to have sex do not change. The only change is that you cannot father a child.

If you consider your decision carefully and do not feel pressured by anyone, you are unlikely to regret your choice.

Is the operation always successful?

Vasectomy is a very effective method of contraception. Overall, 1 in 300 may fail. After you have had two negative sperm counts, the chance of failure drops to 1 in 2000.

Is it reversible?

It is not always possible to reverse a vasectomy. Many factors can affect the success rate of a reversal. On average, 50% of reversals result in a pregnancy. Some men produce antibodies to their own sperm after a vasectomy, this may make pregnancy after reversal less likely.

A second option after vasectomy is direct retrieval of sperm from the testicle, then In Vitro Fertilisation to achieve pregnancy. Another option is to freeze some of your sperm so that they can be used later. If this is something you would like to consider, talk it over with your surgeon before your operation.

What are the possible complications?

- Infection is uncommon and is not usually serious
- Internal bleeding may cause swelling and pain
- A painful lump may form in the scrotum where the operation was done
- Rarely, men may experience intermittent long term scrotal pain

Are there any long term health risks?

Research shows no association between vasectomy, heart disease, or cancer of the testicles or prostate.

Why choose vasectomy?

- You don't want any children
- You don't want any more children
- You have decided that you cannot have any more children because of your mental or physical health, age or income
- Vasectomy is a simpler operation than female sterilisation

Have you considered

- If one of your children died, would you want another?
- If your present relationship ended, would you want to have a child with a new partner?

Consent

It is recommended that you discuss sterilisation fully with your partner. This is because you are both affected by the decision. However, it is not a legal requirement for your partner to give consent. You can choose a vasectomy if you have no partner or no children.

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