

So, You Are Thinking About a Vasectomy . . .

Vasectomy Information for Patients

What is a vasectomy?

Vasectomy is a simple, safe form of permanent birth control. It is a gentle, office-based procedure that takes 10-15 minutes to complete. Vasectomy works by blocking the tubes (vas deferens) that carry sperm from the testes. This prevents sperm from entering the semen.

How is it done?

During a vasectomy, we reach the vas tubes through a single, tiny skin opening in the scrotum. We divide and seal each tube using heat (cauterization) and a tiny clip. This prevents the passage of sperm. You will not notice a change the amount of semen. (Most semen is made in glands above the tubes.)

Does it hurt?

Your vasectomy will be pain free...or almost. Most people say that it is better than going to the dentist or getting blood drawn!

You will have little or no pain during the vasectomy. The doctor uses a spray applicator or very fine needle (the size of a hair) for local anesthesia. This numbs the skin and area around the tubes. General anesthesia is not needed. The vasectomy site does NOT touch the testes or penis.

How long does it take?

It takes about 10-15 minutes.

What is the difference between “no scalpel” and classic vasectomy?

No-scalpel vasectomy does *not* use a scalpel. It uses special small tools to reach the vas tubes by making one small opening in the scrotum without cutting. Because this opening is so small, stitches are not needed. This is different from the “classic” vasectomy that makes two larger openings on the scrotum and sometimes needs stitches. The chance of complications (infection and bleeding) is lower with the “no scalpel” technique. Recovery is faster. The no scalpel vasectomy is as effective as classic vasectomy for birth control.

No-needle and no-scalpel vasectomy techniques are the most advanced medical methods available.

How well does it work?

Vasectomy is **highly effective** (it fails less than 1 time in 2000). But it can take up to 3 months to start working. Your semen must be checked after vasectomy to make sure there is no more sperm in it. Until then, you must use birth control to prevent pregnancy. Most people have no more sperm in their semen the first time it is tested. Sometimes it takes more than one test before the semen is clear of sperm.

Vasectomy is permanent

Vasectomy is for life. After vasectomy, you can no longer get a person pregnant. If you may want children someday, vasectomy is not a good choice. A surgical procedure does exist to reverse vasectomy; but this operation, "vasovasostomy," costs a lot and does not always work. On average, only half of couples that try having children after reversal do have a child. We do not do reversals. For information about this, we can refer you to a urologist who does reversals.

What are the risks?

Vasectomy is a very safe, low-risk procedure, but with any surgery some complications can occur. Mild bruising is the most common reaction. We recommend wearing tight underpants or a jock strap for the first few days after the vasectomy to lower your chances of bleeding.

Other rare complications include: infection (very rare and can be treated with antibiotics), a painful bump on the vas (sperm granuloma), and bleeding into the scrotum causing a collection of blood (scrotal hematoma). Several weeks after the procedure some people have pain in the testes that lasts a few days (about 5%). This resolves with ibuprofen or naproxen. Chronic pain is very rare (about 0.1-1%).

Pregnancy after vasectomy is rare.

After care:

Relax with your feet up on the day of your vasectomy. If you choose, you can return to work or light activity the following day. There may be some soreness for a night or two after the procedure. A cold compress and/or pain pills can help. Wearing tight underpants or a jock strap can decrease pain with movement.

Vasectomy does *not* cause health problems. Vasectomy does *not* affect hormones. After vasectomy, sexual function does not change. Sensations, erections, and ejaculations will be the same except that the semen no longer contains sperm.

Vasectomy does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Please use condoms.

Frequently Asked Questions:

Does vasectomy change your sex drive?

Most people have no change in sex drive. Some people note an INCREASED sex drive after vasectomy.

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Will I notice any change in my semen?

No. The amount of sperm in semen is so small that people do not notice any change. More than 95% of the semen is made in the glands above the vas tubes, the prostate and seminal vesicles, with only a small portion of the total volume being made in the testes. After a vasectomy the only way to tell the difference in the semen is with a microscopic semen analysis.

Vasectomy does not prevent ejaculation. You will not notice a difference in your semen, or cum.

What happens to the sperm after a vasectomy?

Your body reabsorbs the sperm cells. Our bodies are very good at recycling old or unused cells. For example, we make red blood cells every day and our bodies do not become overloaded with excess blood. Our bodies simply reabsorb the older blood cells, and recycle their proteins and parts. In the same way, the body absorbs the sperm produced by the testes after the vasectomy.

What is the recovery like?

Most people feel some soreness for a night or two after the procedure and then feel fine. We suggest wearing tight underpants or a jock strap for the first few days after the vasectomy to decrease your pain and bleeding. Avoid any vigorous activity, including sports and sex, for the first 3-7 days after your vasectomy.

Why do I have to wait 3 months to get my semen checked?

You are not “clear” until a semen check shows that your semen no longer contains sperm. The semen check is an important part of vasectomy, but bringing the sample in too soon can give you a scare. Sperm can hide in the prostate and seminal vesicles for 2-3 months, so early on a sperm count could be positive even though the vas tubes were successfully sealed. Waiting allows the hidden sperm to be flushed out. There is a very rare chance that the tubes can grow back together after a vasectomy. After three months, the semen analysis should show if this happened. You can collect the sample at home. For most people, the semen check is a simple, last step in the process.

Will I feel comfortable with a female physician?

We all see male patients. We aim to protect your safety and comfort. We treat all patients with respect.