

What You Need to Know About Vasectomy

Vasectomy, also called sterilization, is a permanent method of birth control for men. It is considered among the safest and most effective forms of contraception.

Who should consider vasectomy?

If you are a woman in a relationship with a man, you will likely be considering contraception options. Most couples who choose vasectomy are married and already have children. Since vasectomy is permanent, you need to be sure you will not want more children. The decision is complex and should not be made when you are stressed. For example, you should postpone the decision if one of you has lost your job, if there has been a death in the family, or if you are having relationship problems.

What if you change your mind?

Some men and their partners experience regret after vasectomy. This is more likely to occur in younger people. While it is possible to reverse the vasectomy, the surgery is expensive and complex and provides no guarantee that pregnancy will occur.

If the permanence of vasectomy is a concern, there are alternatives. You can consider a long-acting, highly effective contraceptive method that is reversible. These include the contraceptive patch, contraceptive implant, and the intrauterine device (IUD). Birth control pills are also popular choices. Like vasectomy, none of these options offers protection against sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV.

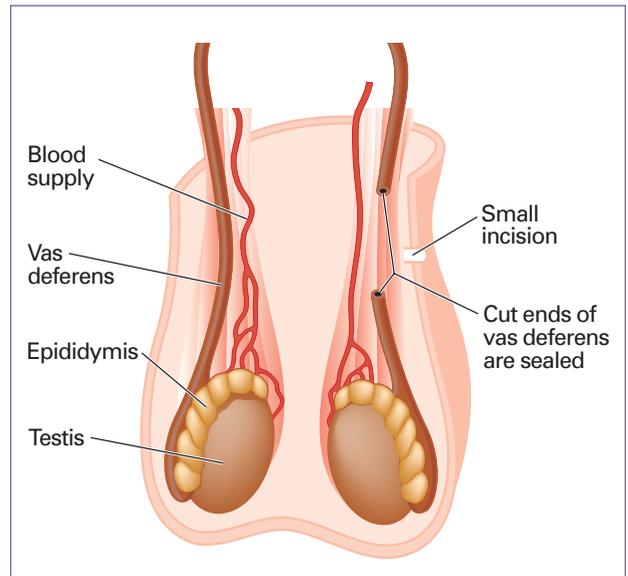
A woman can have a tubal ligation, the permanent sterilization choice for females. But vasectomy is usually safer than this procedure.

Sexuality after vasectomy

The man is able to perform sexually in a normal way after vasectomy. Since sterilization does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases, condoms should be used.

How does vasectomy prevent pregnancy?

Vasectomy prevents the release of the man's sperm during ejaculation (sexual climax). Semen fluid is still ejaculated, but it does not contain sperm after the vasectomy. Since no sperm will be able to fertilize the woman's egg, pregnancy cannot occur.



Although vasectomy is one of the most effective contraceptive methods, pregnancy is possible. The risk of pregnancy after vasectomy is very small, however. Most pregnancies occur during the 3 months after surgery, before the elimination of sperm from the semen has been confirmed.

What happens during the surgery?

Vasectomy is a simple, safe procedure that is done in a doctor's office or in hospital. The procedure is generally performed under local anesthesia in about 30 minutes. The man can go home the same day.

The most up-to-date vasectomy procedure is called a "no-scalpel" technique. This means a special tool is used so that there is less "cutting" of the scrotum. No stitches are needed, there is less pain, and recovery time is shorter. Other surgical methods are also used.

What happens during recovery?

The man will need to rest and apply ice packs to the scrotum. There may be swelling and discomfort for a few days. If there is fever or severe pain, the doctor should be called. Other birth control must still be used for a few months because vasectomy is not effective immediately.