



THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
HEALTH SCIENCES CENTER

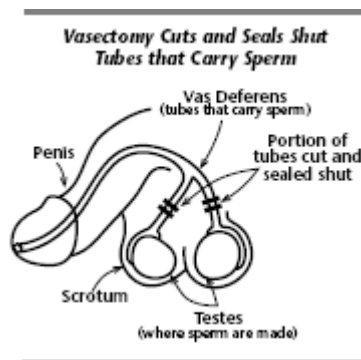
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Questions and Answers About Vasectomy

What is a vasectomy?

Vasectomy is a highly effective type of male birth control that is designed to be permanent. In a vasectomy, a small portion of the tubes that carry sperm (vas deferens) from the testicles is cut and sealed (see illustration). This prevents pregnancy because no sperm can get into the ejaculate (semen) of the man.



What are the benefits of vasectomy?

Vasectomy is safer, simpler, and less expensive than tubal sterilization (getting your tubes tied) for a woman (see comparison figure on side 2). The procedure has never caused a death in the United States and has a less than 1% complication rate. The operation is most commonly done in a doctor's office or clinic using local anesthetic (numbing medicine) and the man can go home afterwards. The time to recovery is usually a few days of rest before resuming normal activities.

Are there different kinds of vasectomies?

Yes, several types of vasectomies are done in the United States. A common type is done by making two small incisions (cuts) in the scrotum to reach the vas deferens tubes. Another approach is called the "no-scalpel" vasectomy. The no-scalpel approach does not make a cut in the skin; it uses a special instrument to make one small puncture. We perform only the no-scalpel technique.

Are there advantages to the no-scalpel vasectomy?

Yes, the technique is less traumatic, causes less pain and swelling and results in a shorter recovery time.

Is vasectomy very painful?

No, vasectomies do not cause much pain. Most men report that they experience the sharp sting of the needle giving the anesthetic and not much more. Most often, an over-the-counter pain medicine is enough to relieve the discomfort. Ice packs can help to limit swelling.

What kinds of complications can occur?

Complications from vasectomy are rare, but include infection and hematoma (collection of blood in the scrotum). Inflammation of one of the structures within the scrotum, the epididymis (epididymitis), can also occur. In some cases, a sperm granuloma, an inflammation from sperm leaking into the tissue, develops. All of these complications usually can be treated easily.

The no-scalpel vasectomy can cause less trauma and pain than traditional vasectomy and has a quick recovery time.

Will vasectomy affect my male hormones or sex life?

Vasectomy does not affect the production of male hormones, nor does it affect a man's ability to get an erection, have sex, or ejaculate. The male hormones made by the testicles are released directly into the blood stream and are not affected by cutting the vas deferens.

Vasectomy does not:

- make a man more feminine
- cause a higher voice
- interfere with the ability to get an erection
- cause lower sex drive
- affect male hormones

How soon after a vasectomy can a couple stop using birth control?

A man will *not* be sterile right after the operation. Sperm will stay in the male reproductive system for about 6 more weeks. Couples need to use another method of birth control for 12 weeks or about 20 ejaculations. Several weeks after a vasectomy, the man will need to have his semen checked to make sure no sperm are left (azoospermia). When the tests show that no sperm are left, the man can have sex without additional birth control.

Is it true that vasectomy can be reversed?

Men should consider vasectomy to be permanent. While surgical techniques can try to make a man fertile again, there is no guarantee. In addition, the reversal process requires a bigger operation and is expensive. In general, reversals are more successful if done within 10 years of the vasectomy.

Are there any long-term complications?

The most recent data suggests vasectomy does not increase man's risk of testicular cancer, prostate cancer or heart disease. Large organizations such as the World Health Organization and the United States National Institute of Health consider vasectomy very safe.

How much does a vasectomy cost?



The total cost of a vasectomy ranges from about \$600 to \$800. Check with your doctor and insurance plan to find out if you have coverage.

How do I know if vasectomy is right for me?

Vasectomy may be a good choice for a man who:

- Is in a long-term relationship where both partners agree they never want another child.
- Knows that even if his relationship ends and he had another partner he still would not want another child.
- Knows that a pregnancy would be a serious health risk to his partner.

Comparisons of Male and Female Sterilization

 Vasectomy	 Tubes Tied
Effectiveness	
Highly effective	Highly effective
Safety	
Safest	Very safe
Location	
Doctor's office or clinic	Hospital or outpatient surgery center
Anesthesia	
Local	Local / General
Typical Cost	
\$600 - \$800	\$3,000
Recovery Time	
2 to 3 days	2 to 3 days
Number Done in U.S. Each Year	
500,000	640,000