

Fact Sheet

Permanent Birth Control for Men- Vasectomy

What is a vasectomy?

A vasectomy is an operation where the doctor cuts or blocks the tube in a man's testicles that carries the sperm. Vasectomy is a permanent method of birth control. This means that once you have the surgery, you must not expect to be able to get a woman pregnant in the future.

How does a vasectomy work?

Vasectomy works by preventing the sperm from reaching a woman's egg and fertilizing it. In surgery the vas deferens (a tube in the testicles) is cut or blocked. After a vasectomy sperm are still made by the testicles, but are not able to get into the fluid that leaves a man's body during ejaculation (semen). A man can still have an erection and can still ejaculate. The only thing that changes is that no pregnancy can happen because the sperm cannot reach the egg to fertilize it.

What are the types of vasectomy?

There are two types of vasectomy. In the first, a small cut is made in each testicle. The tube that carries the sperm is cut and the ends are burned or tied to make sure that no sperm enters the fluid that comes out during ejaculation. This is repeated in the other testicle. Stitches close the cuts on each testicle.

The second type is called a "no scalpel" vasectomy. One single small hole is made between the two testicles. Each tube that carries sperm is brought through this hole, then cut and the ends tied or burned. Only a small bandaid is used over this hole. No stitches are needed. Men may heal faster from this type of vasectomy, and may have fewer complications.

After both types of vasectomy, a man must wait at least 3 months and be tested to make sure that there is no sperm in his semen. Until the test shows there is no sperm in his semen, he could still get his sexual partner pregnant, and must use another form of birth control.

How well does a vasectomy work to prevent pregnancy?

Vasectomy works very well to prevent pregnancy. If 100 couples use vasectomy as their birth control method for one year, only one couple might get pregnant. Vasectomy is one of the most effective birth control methods. It works as well to prevent pregnancy as when a woman uses an IUD or an implant.

What do men like about vasectomy?

- Vasectomy is a very effective method of birth control.
- Vasectomy is private (no one needs to know).
- You do not need to interrupt sex with this method.
- Your partner does not need to be involved for this method to work.
- Vasectomy can be used by a couple when the woman cannot or does not want to take hormones or use an IUD.
- You recover quickly from the surgery.
- Vasectomy does not affect a man's erection, ejaculation, hormones, or pleasure during sex.

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- Vasectomy has few long-term side effects and is very safe.
- This method is safer and a little bit more effective than permanent birth control for women.

What do men not like about vasectomy?

- Vasectomy **DOES NOT** protect you from HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).
- To have a vasectomy a man needs surgery, which carries risks.
- Vasectomy does not work to prevent pregnancy right away. You must return to a health care provider three months after the surgery for a test to make sure there is no sperm in your semen. You must use another method of birth control until the test shows no sperm in your semen.
- Vasectomy is permanent. Some men may want a baby in the future and wish that they had not had a vasectomy.
- Some men may want to try to undo a vasectomy. To do this, a man needs surgery. The surgery has risks, is expensive, is not paid for by most health insurance, and does not guarantee that your partner will get pregnant in the future.

What are the possible side effects of a vasectomy?

During or soon after surgery:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Bruising
- Pain

DO NOT have a vasectomy if you are not sure if you want more children.

DO NOT have a vasectomy if you are not able to have surgery because of a medical problem.

Important

You must return to a health care provider three months after a vasectomy for a test to make sure there is no sperm in your semen. In between the vasectomy and this test you must use another method of birth control to prevent pregnancy. If you have unprotected sex before this test, use emergency contraception (EC). EC can prevent pregnancy when used by a woman no later than 5 days after sex without birth control. EC works best to prevent pregnancy if it is used as soon as possible after unprotected sex.

Contact your health care provider if you think you may have a sexually transmitted disease.

- To decrease your risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), use a latex condom every time you have vaginal, anal, or oral sex.
- Emergency contraception (EC) prevents pregnancy when used no later than 3-5 days after unprotected sex. If you need more information about EC, call your health care provider, family planning counselor, or pharmacist.