

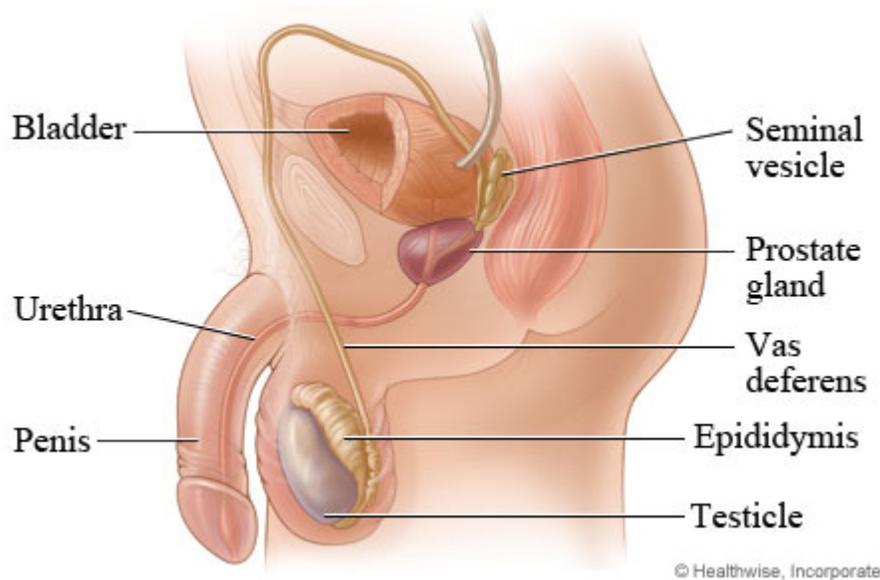


The Facts about Vasectomy

What is a Vasectomy?

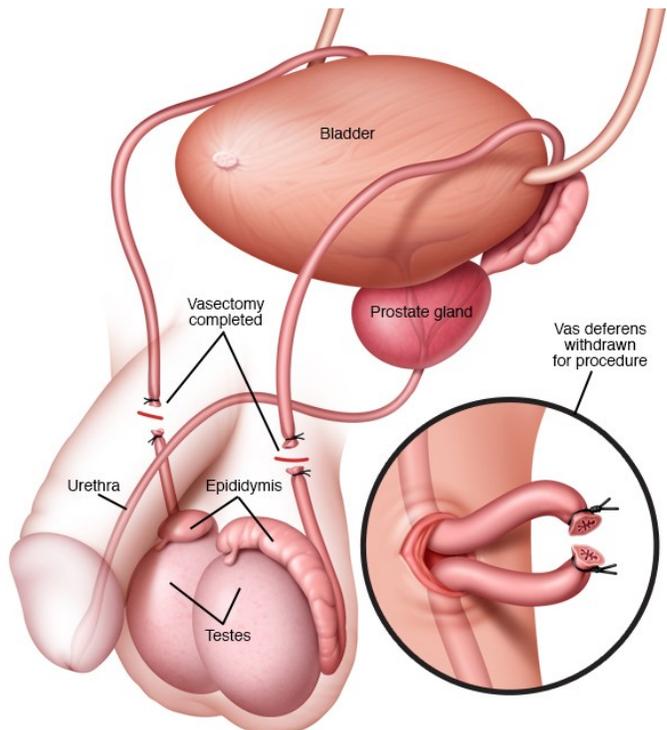
A Vasectomy is a surgical procedure that renders a man sterile. What you may not know are the specifics of the procedure and the period that follows. This literature is designed to give you a better understanding of both-before the procedure takes place.

To begin with, you should have some basic knowledge of the anatomy and physiology of the male reproductive system as shown in to the right. During intercourse, sperm cells travel from the testicles through the vas deferentia, become part of the seminal fluid (which is produced by the seminal vesicles and the prostate gland), and are ejaculated through the penis. When the surgeon performs a vasectomy, he cuts through the vas deferens (plural is vasa defrentia) extending from each testicle. The surgeon will then remove a small segment of the vas deferens and ties off the two remaining ends, shown below. The objective of the procedure is to make it impossible for sperm to become part of the seminal fluid. Since conception cannot take place in the absence of sperm; a vasectomy results in permanent male sterilization.



Will I be sterile as soon as the operation is over?

No. Contrary to what many people believe, you may not be sterile immediately after the operation. This is because there are some sperm residing above the area where the vas deferens is cut during the procedure, shown to the Right. Until all of these sperm cells have been ejaculated, you will still be fertile. In general, it takes between 12-20 ejaculations following a vasectomy for sperm to disappear. Most physicians who perform vasectomies require that their patients bring a sample of seminal fluid to the office about 6 weeks after the procedure or after about 20 ejaculations have taken place. The physician will



examine the seminal fluid under a microscope to be sure that no sperm are present. Only when this has been confirmed, can you be sure that procedure has been a success.

Are the effects of the procedure permanent?

Yes. For all intents and purposes, once the surgery has been declared successful, you will be permanently sterile. The chances of the two cut ends of the vas deferens spontaneously rejoining are extremely rare. Probably no more than 1/10th or 1% (1 in 1000). For this reason, it is most important that you are completely sure that you want no more children before you consent to have the vasectomy performed.

How will the procedure affect my sex life?

Although the vasectomy will make you sterile, it will have no affect whatsoever on your potency-that is, your ability to have sexual intercourse. In fact, many couples find that their sex life improves after the vasectomy because they no longer have to worry about the surprise of an unwanted pregnancy.

Will I still ejaculate in the normal manner?

Yes. Most of the seminal fluid that the male ejaculates during intercourse is produced by the seminal vesicles and the prostate gland. Only a small amount of the seminal fluid consists of sperm. Therefore, after a vasectomy, ejaculation will take place in the same way as it did before. The only difference is that there will be less fluid ejaculated, and this difference is barely noticeable.

I've heard that the vasectomy can be performed in the physicians' office. Is this true?

This is a matter to be discussed with your physician, and you should follow their recommendation. Although the procedure is relatively uncomplicated and can be performed with minimal difficulty in the physician's office, many physicians find it more convenient to perform the vasectomy in a hospital setting.

Is a vasectomy painful?

As with any procedure, no matter how minor, there will be some discomfort associated with it. However, with proper anesthesia, this discomfort will be kept to a minimum. Your physician will discuss the type of anesthesia to be used. As a rule, local anesthesia and some supplemental sedation are all that is required. In some cases, general anesthesia may be needed, but this is a matter to be left to the discretion of your physician.

Are there any complications associated with a vasectomy?

The problems that occur after the procedure are usually quite minor. There will be some pain and tenderness in the area where the surgery is performed. There may also be some swelling and discoloration (black and blue marks). Your physician will probably prescribe some medication to keep the post procedure discomfort a minimum. As with any surgery, the possibility of an infection is always present. However, this is usually quite rare following a vasectomy. In a very small percentage of patients, a blood vessel inside the scrotum continues to bleed after the operation. If this happens, the scrotum will swell and become very tender. Should you experience this problem, contact your physician. They may have to reopen the scrotum to tie off the "bleeder." This could require a return visit to the hospital/office and the administration of general anesthesia.

Are there any long term complications?

As far as medical science can determine at this time, there are no long term complications associated with vasectomy. Aside from sterilization, the only other known long term side effect of the operation is that there may be a slight scar on each side of the scrotum where the incision was made.

How soon after the procedure can I have sexual intercourse?

You resume your normal sexual activity as soon as you feel well enough to do so. This will probably be within a few days of the surgery. Remember, however, that you may not be sterile until sometime after the procedure, and therefore you should continue to use some form of birth control until your doctor confirms that all sperm have disappeared from your semen.

Is there anything special I should do before the surgery?

Once you have decided to have the surgery, you should discuss it with your physician. They may recommend the following: on the evening before the procedure takes place, shave the area around your penis and testicles. An electric razor is not recommended for this purpose, as it probably will not do an adequate job. After shaving, be sure to shower to wash away any loose hairs. Your physician may also ask you to purchase an athletic supporter or a scrotal supporter before the operation takes place. He will probably require that you purchase one that does not have leg straps. Although it is not essential, he may suggest that you have someone accompany you to the office or hospital on the day of the procedure so that you can be driven home after the procedure is completed.

What about after the operation. What must I do?

Once again, this is up to your physician. Many physicians will suggest the following:

- Wear the athletic supporter “Jock Strap” for the first 24 hours after the procedure. After that you only need to wear it if it makes you more comfortable. PLEASE BRING YOUR SUPPORTER WITH YOU ON THE DAY OF SURGERY.
- Do not engage in any strenuous physical activity for the first day. Work your way back to your normal routine over a period of about one week.
- It is recommended that patients use sitz baths (this is soaking for 30 minutes in a warm tub of water) twice a day to assist in the healing process. However, do not use a sitz bath for the first 24 hours after the operation.
- You may shower on the day after surgery, just be sure to wash the scrotal areas gently, and rinse with warm water. When you dry the scrotum, do so by blotting the water with a soft towel.
- If your physician uses stitches to close the incisions, they will dissolve themselves and you will not have to return to have them removed.
- There may be a slight discharge from either or both of the incision sites. This need not concern you. Simply place a sponge or gauze pad over the incision, replacing it on as needed, until the wound is completely healed. You may still shower.
- IF there is a usual amount of pain, a large swelling in the scrotum, or continuing bleeding, please contact our office.
- Please call the office before bringing your specimen to ensure that a physician will be available to evaluate it.

One final word:

Discuss any questions you have about the procedure with your physician before the vasectomy takes place. Follow all of their instructions completely. Be as certain as you possibly can be that you want no more children before you consent to the surgery.