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Vasectomy

Definition

A **vasectomy** is minor surgery that prevents sperm from entering the penis. Vasectomy is one of the most popular forms of birth control and is more than 99% effective. A vasectomy should be done only if you are sure that you no longer want to father children.

Risks

Vasectomy is a safe procedure with few risks. Occasionally minor complications may occur. These complications include:

- Pain.
- Bleeding.
- Bruising.
- Swelling.

Very rarely **post-vasectomy syndrome** may occur. It causes discomfort and pain in the testicles and scrotum. There are several theories as to why this occurs, but doctors are unsure exactly why it happens. Treatment may include anti-inflammatory medication, or a vasectomy reversal may be attempted.

Recent studies have found no increased risk for prostate cancer in men who have had a vasectomy.

Preparing for Vasectomy

Before your vasectomy the doctor may instruct you to:

- Clean and shave your scrotal area.
- Avoid taking anti-inflammatory medicines like ibuprophen or Aspirin.
- Wear tight-fitting underwear to your vasectomy appointment.
- Bring someone to drive you home after surgery.

Procedure Description

Vasectomy works by preventing sperm from reaching your penis.

Sperm is made inside your testicles. After leaving the testicles, sperm travels to a small gland

called the **epididymis** where it matures. It travels from here to the penis through a small tube called the **vas deferens**. During a vasectomy, the vas deferens (tube) is cut in two, preventing the sperm from mixing with the semen.

At the beginning of any type of vasectomy procedure, your doctor will numb your **scrotum** (the area around your testicles). Your doctor will inject the medication into your scrotum using a very small needle.

After your scrotum is numb, the doctor makes one or two small cuts in the skin of the testicle, finds the vas deferens (tube), gently lifts a small part of it out and cuts it into two. The two ends of the vas deferens are then tied off or **cauterized** (seared to stop bleeding) to close them. They are inserted back in the scrotum, and the incisions are closed with a few stitches.

After Vasectomy

Your vasectomy will take between 15 and 30 minutes. Follow your doctor's instructions for care after vasectomy.

Generally following a vasectomy you may need to:

- Have someone drive you home.
- Apply ice to the area to reduce discomfort and swelling.
- Rest for the next two or three days.
- Wait to resume normal sexual activity for a few days, but you may return to work as soon as the next day.

Follow-up Instructions

Vasectomy is not immediately effective. You need to use alternate birth control for two months or at least twelve ejaculations, whichever comes first.

You will return to your doctor to have a **semen analysis**. This is a test to count the number of sperm in your semen. Once your sperm count is zero, it is safe to discontinue use of additional birth control.

For the first day or two after vasectomy you may experience mild discomfort in your scrotum or abdomen. Over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol or Advil should help.

Immediately following vasectomy, there is a slight risk of bleeding into your scrotum. Contact your doctor if you experience:

- Significant swelling in your scrotum.
- Intense pain.
- Fever.
- Redness in the scrotum.