

Urology Procedure

Vasectomy

1. What is a vasectomy?

A vasectomy is a surgical procedure for male sterilization. It involves cutting or blocking the vas deferens, the tubes that carry sperm from the testicles to the urethra for ejaculation. By disrupting the flow of sperm, a vasectomy renders a man sterile, preventing pregnancy when engaging in sexual intercourse. Vasectomies are considered a permanent method of contraception, although it can sometimes be reversed.

2. What are the advantages of a vasectomy?

- **Highly effective:** Vasectomies are one of the most effective forms of contraception, with a success rate of over 99%. Once the procedure is successful, it provides permanent contraception, eliminating the risk of unintended pregnancies.
- **No hormonal changes:** Unlike many other forms of contraception, such as birth control pills or hormonal injections, vasectomy does not involve altering the body's hormonal balance. This means there are typically no hormonal side effects, such as mood swings or weight gain.
- **Permanent but reversible:** While a vasectomy is considered a permanent form of contraception, it is often reversible through a surgical procedure called vasectomy reversal. However, the success of reversal varies, and it's not always guaranteed. It's essential to consider it as a permanent decision.
- **A quick procedure:** A vasectomy is typically performed in a clinic or doctor's office and may take less than 30 minutes.

3. What are the potential risks?

A vasectomy is generally safe and low risk, but potential complications may include infection, bleeding, hematoma (collection of blood in the scrotum), chronic pain (post-vasectomy pain syndrome), and very rarely, recanalization (reconnection of the vas deferens). As with any surgical procedure, there are inherent risks associated with anesthesia and surgical complications.

Continued overleaf.

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4. What happens after?

After a vasectomy, it is important to follow post-operative instructions::

- Rest and avoid strenuous activities for a few days.
- Use an alternative form of contraception until the absence of sperm in the ejaculate is confirmed. This may take several ejaculations or a few months.
- Attend follow-up appointments to ensure the success of the procedure.
- Expect some discomfort or mild pain, which can be managed with over-the-counter pain relievers and scrotal support.

Vasectomy does not immediately make a man sterile. Sperm can remain in the vas deferens and needs time or several ejaculations to clear. It is essential to use contraception until sterility is confirmed through follow-up testing.

Vasectomy is a reliable and permanent form of contraception, allowing couples to enjoy sexual intimacy without the risk of unplanned pregnancies. While the procedure is generally considered irreversible, some men may explore vasectomy reversal options if their circumstances change.