



Spire Healthcare

Treatment summary

Vasectomy operation

What is a vasectomy?

A vasectomy is an operation to cut and seal off the tubes (called the vasa deferentia) that carry sperm from the testicles to the penis. Having a vasectomy means you will not be able to father any more children. A vasectomy is a permanent method of contraception that is sometimes called male sterilisation.

Another permanent method of contraception is female sterilisation (tubal occlusion). However, female sterilisation is associated with more risks and a higher chance of failure (i.e. pregnancy) than vasectomy.

A vasectomy will not affect your sex drive, testosterone (male hormone) levels or erections. You may produce slightly less fluid when you ejaculate, but this isn't usually noticeable. The only difference is that the fluid will not contain sperm. Your body will still produce sperm, but they can't travel to your penis and are naturally re-absorbed.

Although there is an operation to reverse a vasectomy, it is not always successful. (For more information, please see the separate Spire Healthcare Treatment Summary Sheet, Vasectomy reversal operation). So you need to be absolutely sure that you do not want any more children before deciding to have a vasectomy.

The procedure is usually done under local anaesthesia, which means that you will be awake, but the area will be completely numb. Vasectomy is rarely done under general anaesthesia (where you are asleep for the procedure).

Vasectomy is routinely performed as a day-case, without an overnight stay in hospital. Your surgeon will explain the benefits of having a vasectomy and discuss the associated risks and alternatives to the procedure.

About the operation

You will usually walk to the operating theatre. Once you are lying comfortably on the operating table, you will be given injections of local anaesthetic under the skin on both sides of your scrotum. This may sting briefly but the area will quickly go numb.

Once the anaesthetic has taken effect your surgeon will locate the tubes through the skin and make small cuts (less than 1cm) in both sides of the scrotum. Each exposed tube is cut, a small section is removed and the cut ends are sealed or tied. The cuts in the skin are closed using dissolvable stitches or adhesive strips.

The operation usually takes 15 to 30 minutes. The sections of the tubes that were removed may be analysed in a lab to confirm they are vasa deferentia.

After a vasectomy, your scrotum will be a bit sore and bruised.

Vasectomy is a commonly performed and generally safe procedure. For many men, the benefits in terms of permanent birth control are greater than any disadvantages. However, all surgery carries an element of risk.

The main possible complications of any surgery include excessive bleeding during or soon after the operation, infection, or an unexpected reaction to the anaesthetic.

It is possible for sperm to leak out of the cut tubes and collect in surrounding tissues. If this happens, hard lumps called sperm granulomas can form. Sperm granulomas are not harmful, and can be treated with anti-inflammatory drugs. Occasionally sperm granulomas are painful and need to be removed.

Some men develop a full feeling in their testicles. This is caused by the epididymis (sperm sacks near the surface of each testicle) filling with stored sperm. This usually goes away after a few weeks.

A small proportion of men (up to six in every 100) have long-term testicular pain. This may be due to pinched nerves or scarring, and may require further surgery.

Vasectomy is a very reliable method of contraception. But even when the sperm checks show that it has been successful, there is still a very small risk (about one in 2000) that your partner could become pregnant. This risk is lower than other methods of contraception.

The chance of complications depends on the exact type of operation that you are having and other factors such as your general health. Ask your surgeon to explain how any risks apply to you.

Despite questions about vasectomy being linked to cancer or heart disease, research shows that the operation does not increase your risk of developing these conditions.

To find out more about having a vasectomy in a Spire Healthcare hospital, please contact your local Spire hospital.



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