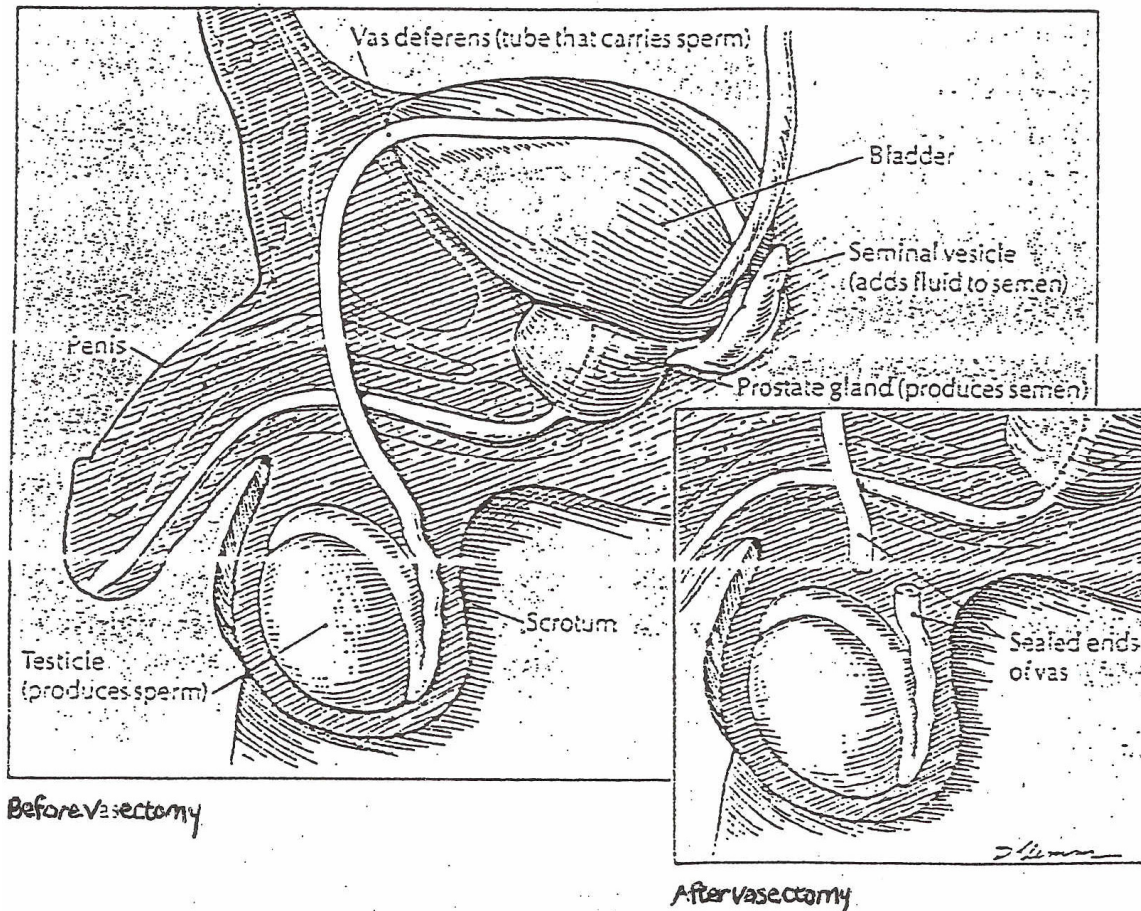


What is a vasectomy?

A vasectomy is a minor operation done in your doctor's office that makes a man permanently sterile. The doctor cuts and removes part of two tiny tubes in the scrotum called the vas deferens. After the tubes are cut, sperm produced in the testicles can no longer travel through those tubes to mix with the semen. After the surgery, you won't be able to get a woman pregnant.



How is a vasectomy done?

A vasectomy is performed in your doctor's office. Medication can be given through your vein to decrease anxiety and reduce pain. Sedation can be used if requested but is not required. A local painkiller is also used to make your scrotum numb. Your doctor will then make one or two small openings in the front of the scrotum. Through these small openings your doctor gently lifts out each vas deferens and cuts it, removes a short segment, and seals the ends of the tubes. This procedure usually takes 30-45 minutes and causes little pain.

After the vasectomy, you should rest for 48 – 72 hours. Most men can return to work on the third day. You will have a small scar on the scrotum, which will be nearly invisible after it has healed.

How reliable is a vasectomy?

Vasectomy is one of the most reliable ways of preventing pregnancy. Only about 1-2 vasectomies in 1000 doesn't work.¹ This procedure is considered a permanent form of birth control.

A vasectomy is permanent. What if I change my mind?

Surgery to reconnect the tubes doesn't always work and is very expensive. You shouldn't have a vasectomy unless you are sure you will not want to have children in the future.

Are there any risks to the procedure?

Vasectomy is less invasive than a tubal ligation and costs much less. Contrary to what you may have heard, a vasectomy does not make you more likely to have prostate cancer or other prostate problems. But like any surgery, vasectomy has some risks. However most men have no problems, and most problems that do occur are not serious and can be easily treated. Problems that may occur include:

- Swelling or bruising of the scrotum
- Minor infection around the opening made on the front of the scrotum
- A tender pea-sized lump deep in the scrotum

Will I be sterile right away?

No. You will **not** be sterile right away. You must use a back-up method for birth control until your doctor tells you that your semen is free of sperm (usually about 8-12 weeks.) A semen test will show if there are sperm in your semen, and this test is usually performed 2-3 months after your procedure.

Will I have a normal sex life after a vasectomy?

Yes. A vasectomy will not change your sexual ability or pleasure. Your sex drive and your ability to have an erection and an ejaculation will not change. In fact, some couples report a better sex life after a vasectomy because they don't have to worry about an unwanted pregnancy.

¹ Trussell J (2004). The essentials of contraception: Efficacy, safety, and personal considerations. In RA Hatcher et al., eds., Contraceptive Technology, 18th ed., pp. 221–252. New York: Ardent Media.

Instructions to follow before and after your vasectomy

You and your partner should read these instructions carefully. The two of you should discuss any concerns about the vasectomy and talk about them with your doctor. Remember, vasectomy should be thought of as permanent.

Before your vasectomy:

- Don't take blood thinners such as aspirin for two weeks before your surgery.
- Many doctors prefer that you shave the front of the scrotum before you come in for your procedure.
- Do shower the evening before and again on the day of your vasectomy.
- Bring an athletic supporter or tight fitting jockey type undershorts or briefs. Often two pairs of underwear worn together can help hold an ice pack in place after the procedure.
- Arrange someone to drive you home.

After your vasectomy:

- Keep the incision clean and dry. You might notice some minor oozing which will stop in 1-2 days.
- Keep an ice pack on your scrotum as much as possible for the first 8 hours, and then intermittently for the next 2 days.
- Stay off your feet as much as possible for the first 2 days.
- Don't take baths for the first 24-48 hours. You can shower at any time. Pat the scrotum dry with a towel.
- After the local anesthesia wears off, there may be mild discomfort which varies from person to person. This may be treated with application of ice and mild pain medication.
- Black and blue discoloration and swelling is common. This usually causes no discomfort and resolves within a week.
- If suture material was used to close the skin, it will dissolve within a couple weeks and doesn't need to be removed.
- If no suture material was used to close the skin, the skin edges will stick together and heal.
- Usual daily activities can be resumed 48-72 hours after a vasectomy unless vigorous physical activity or exercise is involved. All activities, including sexual relations, may be resumed 1 week after the procedure.
- Do not ejaculate for one week after the vasectomy. The first few ejaculations may cause a dull ache in the testicles but this gradually disappears. Remember that **YOU MUST USE BIRTH CONTROL**.
- After 2-3 months and 20 ejaculations your semen will be checked for sperm. Sometimes two separate samples obtained a few weeks apart are checked to ensure that no sperm is in your semen.

