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The Male Reproductive System

Sperm are produced in the testicles. Sperm ducts then carry the sperm to mix with fluids to form semen. The semen passes through the urethra and is ejaculated during sexual intercourse. A vasectomy prevents sperm from mixing with semen by blocking both sperm ducts. Sperm continue to be produced in the testicles. The sperm, however, make it only as far as the new point of blockage in the sperm duct. At this point, the sperm is reabsorbed. As a result, there are no sperm in the semen that is ejaculated at the time of intercourse.

How Will A Vasectomy Affect Me?

The amount of fluid ejaculated decreases only about 5% after a vasectomy. (In terms of sexual performance, vasectomy has no negative effect). Erections and male hormone levels remain the same.

What Are The Benefits of a Vasectomy?

Vasectomy is a permanent means of birth control. You may find that the freedom from fear of reproducing an unwanted child improves the enjoyment of sex for both you and your partner. If you or your partner has a sexually transmitted disease (STD) such as gonorrhea or HIV, a vasectomy will not prevent you from being infected.

Are There Any Complications?

There are no known long-term complications after a vasectomy. About 60-70% of men develop antisperm antibodies in their blood, which is a harmless allergy to your own sperm. There is no evidence that these antibodies have a major effect on other organ systems.

How Long Does It Take?

A vasectomy takes only about 15 minutes. First, a local anesthetic will be applied to the area. You may also be given Valium as a sedative to help you relax. No incision (cuts) or stitches will be needed. A small puncture will be made in the scrotal skin to perform the procedure. The doctor will cut the sperm ducts, removing a small segment. This is done to reduce the possibility of the sperm ducts rejoining.

How Will I Feel After The Procedure?

Most patients have no pain or swelling following the procedure. The most common side effects of vasectomy are minor bleeding (enough to stain the bandage), mild discomfort, and mild swelling in the area of the incision. This should stop within 72 hours. Occasionally, the skin of the scrotum and the base of the penis will turn black and blue. This lasts only for a few days, and will disappear without treatment. The most commonly reported complication is mild discomfort in the testicles. This is a harmless reaction and usually responds to warm soaks and medication. Very rarely, a small blood vessel may bleed into the scrotum and form a clot. A small clot should dissolve over time, but a large one can be painful and usually requires reopening of the scrotum for drainage. This procedure will require hospitalization and usually a general anesthetic.

Will I Miss Any Days at Work?

Most men return to work after 2 days. Some men choose to recuperate over a weekend so they don't miss any work. Your doctor will tell you to avoid strenuous exercise or heavy lifting for the first 3 days after your vasectomy.

Is the Procedure Always Successful?

Semen is sperm-free in almost all men following a vasectomy. Of every 1000 men who have a vasectomy, less than 2 continue to have sperm in their semen. Therefore, the long-term success rate is 99.8%.

When Will I Be Able to Resume Normal Sexual Activity?

You should postpone sexual activity for 72 hours. Unprotected intercourse should not take place until sterility is assured, so continue to use some form of birth control. One specimen will be checked six weeks following the procedure to confirm sterilization.

Will My Masculinity Be Affected?

Vasectomy is not the same thing as castration and sterility does not mean impotence. The hormones that affect masculinity (e.g. growth of facial hair, having a deep voice, sex drive) are still made in the testicles after a vasectomy. These hormones will continue to flow throughout the body in the blood stream.