

Vasectomy

(Male Sterilization)

'Vasectomy' is the method for male sterilization. Before we learn about male sterilization, it is essential to know about the male reproductive system. The male reproductive system includes the penis and the two testes that lie beneath the penis, inside the scrotum. Sperms are continuously produced in the testes from the time of puberty. These sperms are then stored in the epididymis, a coiled tube that is attached to the testis. During ejaculation, the stored sperms travel from the epididymis through a tube called the vas deferens, and along with the seminal fluid that is secreted by surrounding glands, form the semen. This semen is forcefully ejaculated through the urethral passage of the penis. The seminal fluid helps to carry the sperms.

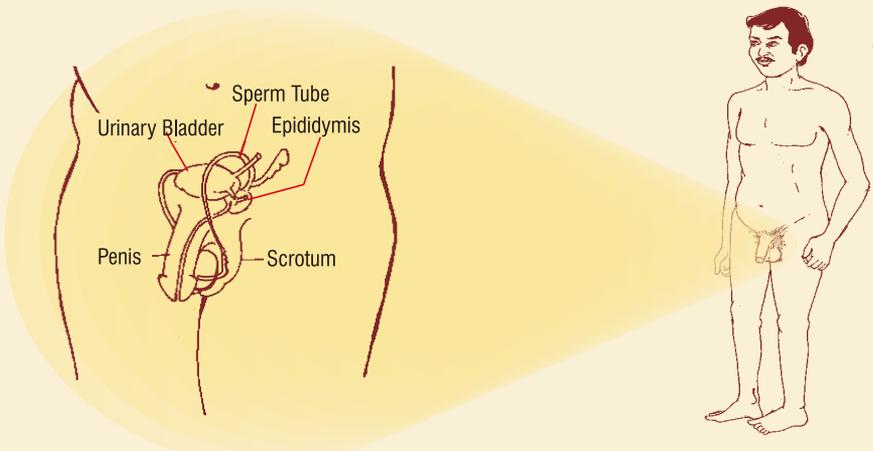
Vasectomy

Vasectomy is the cutting and tying (or sealing) of the vas deferens, the tube that carries the sperms from the epididymis, thus disrupting the passage of sperms into the semen. This is a permanent method and can be used by those who do not desire any more children. This method is much simpler than tubectomy, the female sterilization method. Vasectomy is a surgical procedure that usually lasts less than 20 minutes and is carried out in a health facility. It is performed under local anaesthesia that numbs the site of surgery. It can be performed as an out-patient procedure and does not require overnight stay in the hospital.

'No Scalpel Vasectomy' is a more recent method which makes the procedure simpler and does not involve any cutting or stitching. In India, due to unnecessary fears, very few men come forward to undergo vasectomy. The number of men who undergo vasectomy is declining day by day.

How does it work?

1. Vasectomy can be performed as an out-patient procedure in under twenty minutes in even a lower level health facility.
2. During the No Scalpel Vasectomy procedure, the surgeon first injects a local anaesthetic at the site of the surgery so that the skin is numb and no pain is felt. Then a tiny puncture is made on either side of the scrotum using a special instrument. This is different from the earlier procedure in which incisions used to be made on the scrotal skin. The vas deferens tubes on each side are then lifted out and held through the punctures in the skin. The vas deferens tubes are then cut, and their mouths tied so that they do not join again.
3. Only tiny skin punctures are made in this procedure, so there is no need for stitches. After the tying of both the 'vas' tubes, dressing is applied to the punctured skin. The person can be discharged within an hour of surgery.
4. The vas tubes that carry the sperms from the epididymis are cut and disrupted through this surgical procedure. Therefore, the seminal fluid that is formed elsewhere is ejaculated but does not contain any sperms. Following this procedure, there is no effect on erection or ejaculation of semen, which will continue to happen as before. The only difference is that the ejaculated semen does not contain any sperms and hence cannot get a woman pregnant.



Male Reproductive System

Advantages

- Vasectomy is a simple and easy surgical procedure. Unlike female sterilization, this does not require opening of the abdomen.
- It is possible to go home within an hour of the surgery.
- The surgery does not affect sexual drive or the sexual act. All sexual acts can be engaged in as before.
- Since there is no fear of pregnancy, many report that sexual pleasure is actually increased after the surgery.

Care following vasectomy

- Following vasectomy, one should rest for a day and not lift heavy weights for 2-3 days. Riding a cycle may be avoided for a few days. A supportive underwear needs to be worn for 2-3 days.
- The surgical area should be kept dry and clean till the wound heals.
- It is important to note that even after a vasectomy, sperms that are already present in the vas deferens can still be ejaculated in the semen for up to three months after the procedure. Therefore, pregnancy may occur for up to three months after vasectomy. During this period an additional contraceptive method, for e.g. condoms, needs to be used to prevent pregnancy. Anecdotal reports indicate that many couples may not know about this fact, resulting in pregnancy in the immediate months after a vasectomy, and leading to suspicions of sexual infidelity, marital discord and spousal violence.

Tests to be performed before this surgery

- Does the person have diabetes or hypertension?
- Does the person have heart disease?
- Does the person have any sexually transmitted infection?
- Does the person have any hernia in the scrotum or groin?

If any of these conditions exist, the surgery can be performed only after the condition is addressed.

There is minimal risk of side effects after a vasectomy. The surgery does not affect sexual drive and will not cause impotence. When sexually aroused, erection and ejaculation of semen will continue to happen as before, and one can engage in all sexual acts as before the surgery.

The male sterilization or vasectomy procedure is much simpler than the female sterilization procedure, and has far lesser risks.

As with female sterilization, it is possible to reverse the vasectomy procedure and restore fertility. However, this can be very expensive, and chances of success are limited. Therefore, the decision for vasectomy should be made only if one is certain that one does not desire any further children.

Vasectomy is simpler than female sterilization and does not require overnight stay in hospital.



61, Karumarapakkam Village, Veerapuram (Post).
Thirukazhukundrum (Via) Kanchipuram District,
Tamil Nadu, India - 603109
Telephone: +91 44 27491254, Mobile: +91 98429 19110
Email: ruwsec@vsnl.com, ruwsec.tn@gmail.com
Website: www.ruwsec.org • Facebook: [ruwsec.india](https://www.facebook.com/ruwsec.india)

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