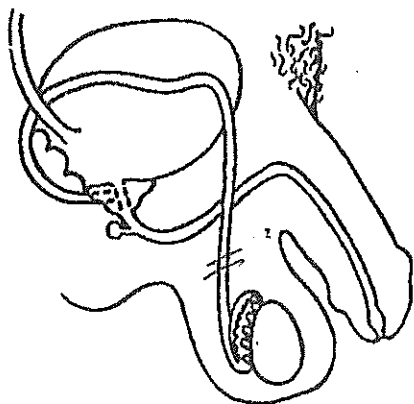


THE PURPOSE OF THE OPERATION

Vasectomy is an operation which permanently prevents the transportation of sperm from each testicle to the urethra (water passage). This is usually achieved by dividing the vas (the tube which carries the sperm).

It is performed on a man to prevent him from fathering further children. That is to say, to render him infertile or sterile. These terms should not be confused with the term impotence which means the inability to have an erection. Vasectomy does not result in impotence.

Before a man has the operation of vasectomy there are a number of things he and his wife (or sexual partner) should fully understand and accept. The following are a number of questions frequently asked by patients. This information may help you to decide if this operation is appropriate for you.



HOW PERMANENT IS THE OPERATION?

It is the intention of the operation that the effects should last forever. For this reason it is important that the man, and his spouse or partner, are absolutely certain that they do not wish to have more children.

It is important that they should consider the possibility of a tragic loss of their spouse, or one or more of their children, or even a further marriage. If there is any likelihood that, under these circumstances, the man may wish to have further children, then it is usually better that he consider using contraception as an alternative to having a vasectomy.

IS THE OPERATION REVERSIBLE?

It is certainly possible to rejoin the cut ends of the vas. Unfortunately this does not always result in the man becoming fertile again. It is for this reason that a man should not have a vasectomy unless he is certain that he does not wish to father any further children.

DOES THE OPERATION WORK IMMEDIATELY?

It takes a variable length of time for all the sperm, remaining on the "outgoing" side of the vasectomy to be cleared. It is extremely important that the man having the vasectomy continue to use contraceptive precautions after the operation and until an examination of his semen demonstrates no sperm to be present. The doctor will inform him when this has occurred and that contraception is no longer necessary.

Experience has shown that the semen is less likely to contain sperm if there have been numerous emissions between the time of operation and the time when testing occurs. Unfortunately, even after a successful operation, it is possible to have occasional sperm in the semen for up to twelve months.

HOW PAINFUL IS THIS GOING TO BE?

The operation can be done under local or general anaesthetic.

Local anaesthetic involves an injection into the skin of the scrotum to "numb" the area. Usually the only pain is the sting of the injection. With a general anaesthetic the patient is asleep and feels no pain.

After the procedure, there is generally an ache for a few days and there may be some minor swelling and/or bruising. The only limitation may be on physically strenuous activity. If the swelling, bruising or pain causes any inconvenience at all, the patient should contact the doctor.

IS THERE ANY CHANCE THE OPERATION WILL NOT WORK?

Every precaution is taken to prevent the cut ends of the vas joining up together spontaneously. Despite this, there is a remote possibility that the ends could rejoin and that the man may then become fertile again. There is no way of anticipating this happening, but it is important that anyone considering a vasectomy should understand that this risk does exist.

WILL THE OPERATION AFFECT MY SEXUAL FUNCTION?

There is absolutely no reason for there to be any change in sexual function or sexual satisfaction. Many scientific studies have been undertaken to look at this possibility but no study has ever demonstrated any change following the operation.

Sexual activity can usually recommence as soon as the ache at the operation site permits.

ARE THERE ANY LONG TERM ILL EFFECTS?

From time to time there have been suggestions that vasectomy can cause a number of problems including premature ageing, and even cancer. All these possibilities have been carefully examined and, based on current scientific data, there is NO EVIDENCE of any long term ill effects following vasectomy.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE SPERM AFTER VASECTOMY?

The testicles stop manufacturing further sperm after vasectomy. They do however continue to produce hormones normally.

CONSENT TO THE OPERATION

It is extremely important that the man intending to have a vasectomy and his wife or sexual partner, understand the issues discussed in this brochure and accept the consequences of the operation, as described. If there is anything you do not understand or if you require additional information please request a further consultation with your doctor to obtain answers to your questions.

Specific comments regarding:

1. Prostate cancer
2. Sperm granulomata
3. Vasectomy syndrome