

Having a vasectomy

What is a vasectomy?

Vasectomy is a minor operation to sterilise a man permanently by disconnecting the tubes (the vas deferens) that carry sperms from the testicles to the penis.

The operation is performed through the front of the scrotum using local anaesthetic. This means that you will be awake but pain free during the procedure.

What are the benefits – why should I have a vasectomy?

Vasectomy is a safe and effective form of contraception with a failure rate of less than one in 100. Once successfully done, there will be no need for you or your partner to think about contraception anymore.

Are there any other alternatives?

For a man, vasectomy and condoms are currently the only methods of contraception available.

Unlike condoms, vasectomy does not protect against sexually transmitted infections.

Studies have shown that 1 in 400 men deeply regret having a vasectomy six months after they had the operation.

If you have any doubt about being permanently sterilised you should not consider having a vasectomy.

What are the risks?

Like any other surgical operation, there are some risks associated with vasectomy.

The doctor will explain these during your pre-vasectomy consultation.

Possible complications of vasectomy include:

- **Mild bleeding / bruising / swelling** at the site of the operation (scrotum).

These usually settle eventually without any long-term problems.

An ice pack on the scrotum will help quicker resolution, if you notice any bruising or mild swelling.

To avoid these complications, we would recommend that you take time out to rest after the operation for at least 48hours.

Wearing good supporting underpants for a few days after the operation also helps.

Though uncommon, more severe swelling due to accumulated blood clot (haematoma) can also occur. Most cases eventually resolve spontaneously with ice packs and rest. However, very occasionally, it may be necessary to evacuate the blood clot (haematoma) surgically.

- **Infection of the operation site**

This would normally be noticed about seven to ten days after the operation when redness, pain and some discharge may be noticed at the operation site. Please contact your GP if you notice any of this. Infection occurs in less than one in 100 men and is usually treated with simple antibiotics.

- **Unsuccessful procedure**

For 1 in every 100 patients, the operation is not successful and may need to be repeated. This will be evident when the post-vasectomy semen analysis is performed (usually 16 weeks after the operation).

In addition, there is a very small but present chance (1 in 200) of the sperm carrying tubes (vas deferens) re-joining naturally sometime after the operation. This has been reported to happen even after some years after the operation.

- **Pain:**

The majority of patients do not experience significant pain after the operation. Simple pain killers like Paracetamol or Ibuprofen are often enough for pain control.

A small minority of men (about 1 in 100) can experience long-term pain in the scrotum known as 'post vasectomy pain syndrome'. This can start anytime up to several months after the procedure and can last for several weeks or even months in the worst-case scenario. The cause of this is not fully understood which can make its treatment difficult.

- **Myths:**

Vasectomy does not increase your risk of getting prostate cancer.

Erection and libido are not affected by vasectomy.

What do I need to do before my surgery?

It is important that you attend your pre-operation appointment.

At this appointment, the doctor will assess your suitability for the operation as well as explain the benefits and risks of the procedure.

You will also have a physical examination of the scrotum to ensure that there are no anatomical issues that could affect the operation.

How can I prepare for a vasectomy?

Bath / Shower: You should have a bath or shower just before coming for the operation, paying particular attention to the scrotum, penis and the area between your inner upper thighs to ensure that they are as clean as possible. Do not apply any body lotion, creams or powder afterwards.

Scrotal shaving: We recommend that you shave your scrotal area just before the operation. It is important that you do this on the morning of the operation and not any earlier since doing so may increase the chances of infection.

Underwear: We recommend that you bring along to the operation, a pair of tight underpants. These should be worn from immediately after the procedure, for at least 48hours afterwards. This way, the chances of swelling of the scrotum are minimised.

Medication: If you are on blood thinning medications, these will need to be stopped sometime before the operation. Please discuss this with the doctor at your pre-operation consultation session. It would be all right to continue with any other medications that you take.

Giving my consent (permission)

We want to involve you in all the decisions about your care and treatment. If you decide to go ahead with the procedure, you will be asked to sign a consent form after the procedure, its benefits and risks, have been explained to you.

What happens during the operation?

Will I feel any pain?

Vasectomy is not a painful procedure however, you will feel some stinging pain as the local anaesthetic is injected into the scrotum. The local anaesthetic takes effect within a few seconds of the injections and all you should feel will be some tugging and pulling sensation during the procedure. It may be necessary for the surgeon to top up the local anaesthetic occasionally if needed.

We recommend that you take some simple pain killers like Paracetamol or Ibuprofen after the procedure, to control any post operation pain.

What happens after the procedure?

You should be able to go home within an hour after the operation.

We do not recommend that you drive yourself home. Please arrange for somebody else to drive you home.

What do I need to do after I go home?

Rest:

After the procedure, you should rest at home, reclining with your feet up most of the time, for 24 hours.

Wound care:

The operation wound should be kept dry for 48 hours. Do not have a bath or shower for 48 hours and avoid swimming for one week.

We do not usually put any stitches in the skin operation wound and so there will be none to be removed later.

If you do get any bruising or swelling of the scrotum, apply ice packs (wrapped in cloth to avoid ice burn to your skin) and rest with your feet up. Do this for long periods in the day until things get better.

Physical activities:

Avoid any strenuous activity and heavy lifting for one week and any active contact sport for two weeks.

You can have sex when you feel comfortable but we recommend waiting a couple of days for the wound to heal.

Remember you must use another method of contraception until you are informed that the operation has been successful. This will be after your semen analysis test.

How will I know if the operation has been successful?

You will not be sterile straight away after the operation as there will still be some sperm left in the tubes (vas deferens). For this reason, you will need to provide a semen sample for analysis 16 weeks (4 months) after the operation. This is to check to see whether the semen

is clear of sperms and if so, sterility can be confirmed.

If the semen analysis at 16 weeks is clear of active sperms, you will be given the all clear to proceed with intercourse without contraception.

If however the 16 week sample is not clear of sperms, you will be asked to produce another semen sample one month later for further testing. If that too is not clear of sperms, the operation will then be declared unsuccessful and you will be invited back for a re-do of the operation.

This is a rare occurrence but does happen.

You must continue to use an alternative form of contraception until you have been given the all clear.

When can I return to work?

If you work in an office, you should take at least two to three days off after your operation. If your job involves manual labour, we would recommend that you do not work for a week after your operation.

You should not play any sports for two weeks after the operation.

Your GP can give you a medical certificate (Fit Note) if needed.

Dr. I. Adoki

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