

# Vasectomy! Everything you would want to know but too afraid to ask....



## What is vasectomy?

Vasectomy is the common name for male sterilisation – a permanent method of contraception. It is a simple surgical procedure which closes off the sperm-carrying tubes (vas deferens) in the scrotum to stop sperm from getting into the semen

After the procedure, sperm produced in the testicles can no longer to mix with semen, and so the semen gradually becomes free of sperm.

Vasectomy does not usually require a general anaesthetic, and a highly trained doctor can perform the procedure in less than 30 minutes. There are many places you can have vasectomy performed in Australia; and it is not usually necessary to go to hospital as it is a simple office based procedure for most men.

Intravenous sedation is preferred by many though the procedure can be performed under local anaesthetic. Please allow for longer for recovery time (approx 2 hrs) if you are undergoing conscious IV sedation. You will need to check if the provider offers sedation, or not.

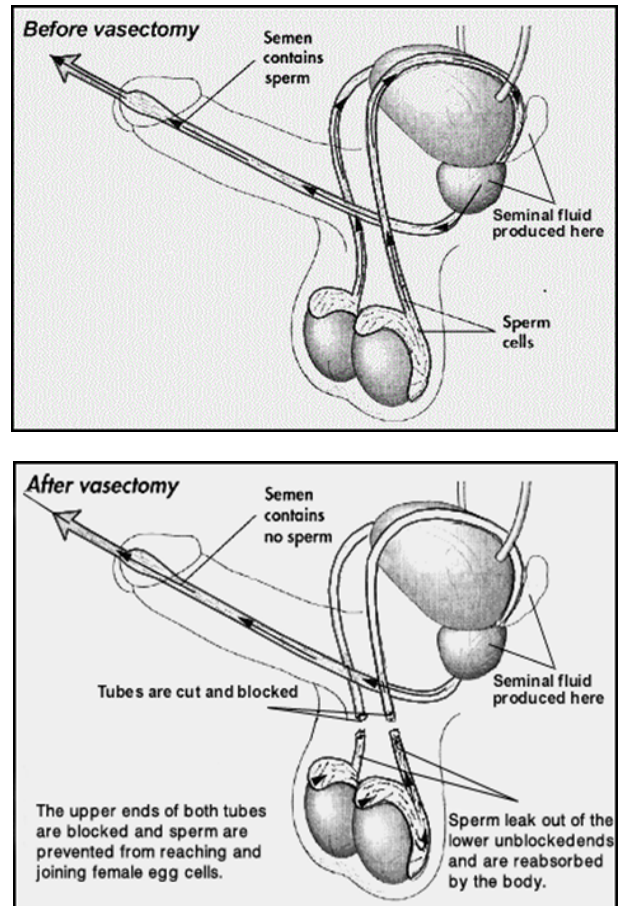
## How is the procedure carried out?

A local anaesthetic injection numbs the area and a very small hole (approx. 3mm) is made in the front of the scrotum. Through this opening, each vas deferens (tube) is cut and sealed off (see diagram). Once this heals you will have a very small scar on the scrotum which will become invisible soon after the procedure.

## How effective is vasectomy?

Vasectomy is one of the most reliable methods of contraception. The failure rate is much less than 1%. Sometimes the sperm-carrying tubes can re-join, however this risk decreases rapidly as healing proceeds. Don't rely on the vasectomy procedure as a form of contraception until you have produced a semen sample and "been given the all clear"( this will be at least 3 months after the procedure )

## "Open Ended Vasectomy"



## Does it hurt?

Each person is different and we cannot guarantee you will feel no discomfort. Generally speaking, the injection of local anaesthetic brings brief discomfort but it starts working straight away and will numb the area. You may then have some sensation of pulling or pinching during the procedure, but this should not be painful.

You can opt to have IV sedation, if your doctor provides this, ( when you probably won't feel anything or remember anything at all.) This is a brief, light "twilight sedation". You can also opt for inhaled anaesthetic using a "green whistle" (pentrox) which provides excellent pain relief without intravenous sedation.

You may feel some slight discomfort after the vasectomy but ordinary painkillers and a cold pack will help and any soreness shouldn't last very long.

### [Do I need my partner's consent to have a vasectomy?](#)

Only you can decide whether or not to have a vasectomy. If you are in a relationship however, we would always advise that you discuss such an important decision with your partner.

### [Is my medical history important?](#)

Any man can have a vasectomy, but we do need to know about any previous surgery on your testicles or about any procedures for hernia repair. Scar tissue from these procedures or obesity can make a vasectomy more complicated, and if so, you may not be suitable to have a vasectomy as an office based procedure. Please also tell us of any other significant conditions such as chest or heart problems or other serious illness. It shouldn't affect your procedure, but it's important for your safety that we are aware of such conditions. You should not be taking blood thinning medication or aspirin when you have a vasectomy due to the risk of bleeding.

### [Are there any alternatives to vasectomy?](#)

There are still very few methods of contraception for men – either vasectomy or condoms. However, there is a permanent procedure for women –female sterilisation. Female sterilisation is usually carried out by “tubal ligation” (having her tubes tied) which requires hospital admission and general anaesthetic. There are also other very effective long-term (but not permanent) alternatives your partner could use. These include intrauterine devices (IUDs), contraceptive implants or injections.

If you have doubts about whether or not you will want to have children in the future, you should consider another form, of reversible contraception, or freezing sperm, though this can be expensive.

### [Is vasectomy reversible?](#)

Vasectomy should be considered a permanent form of contraception. Successful reversal of a vasectomy may be possible in 50-80% of cases. Reversal is also generally very expensive (over \$6000), particularly if you do not have private health insurance. It is also possible to father children after a vasectomy using an IVF technique called “ICSI”.

### [How much does it cost?](#)

The cost of a vasectomy varies. If you have a Medicare card, some of the cost will be covered by Medicare.

You should talk to your local provider about out of pocket costs.

### [How do I prepare for my procedure?](#)

In order to prepare for your vasectomy, please follow these important instructions:

- do not take aspirin or any other medication designed to “thin the blood”, for one week before your procedure. If you need to use aspirin or blood thinning medication for a medical condition, and have been advised not to stop, then please make an appointment with your vasectomy doctor to discuss your circumstances.
- do not drink alcohol 24 hours before your procedure.
- you must shower the evening before, and again on the day of your procedure.
- wear firm fitting underwear on the day of your procedure. (ie: do not wear boxer shorts)
- Trim hair over entire pubic area with nail scissors. Please shave the scrotum completely and upper thigh, so there is NO HAIR whatsoever on scrotum.

If you choose to undergo IV sedation you must not eat anything (including lollies or gum) for 6 hours prior to your appointment. You may drink water only, up to 2 hours before your appointment.

Please make arrangements to be driven home. Even for men undergoing vasectomy under local anaesthetic, we recommend that you do NOT drive on the day after your procedure.

### [What can I expect from a typical appointment?](#)

Most men will attend the vasectomy doctor to have an assessment prior to booking in for the procedure. This normally takes about 30 minutes, and will include an examination.

On the day of the vasectomy you will have a pre-operative consultation with the vasectomy doctor again to answer final questions and sign the consent form.

The vasectomy procedure itself takes about 20-30 minutes.

### [Does the vasectomy work straight away?](#)

No, you won't be sterile right away. There will be some sperm left in the upper part of the vas deferens, beyond the vasectomy site. These sperm are gradually cleared after ejaculation over some weeks. You should aim to ejaculate 3-4 times per

week after the first few days, for about 3 months before submitting your semen for analysis.

You will need to use another method of contraception during this time, and until we inform you that your semen is free of sperm. Men who have had a vasectomy can still potentially impregnate their partner until all sperm have disappeared. After 3 months, you will supply a semen sample to the lab, which is checked under a microscope to see if there are sperm. This test is very important. It can take time and frequency of ejaculation to clear the tubes of sperm completely, so we may have to ask for a second sample if the first one is not yet clear.

When you have given a semen sample which has no sperm present, you will be informed that your vasectomy has been a success. Note that frequent ejaculations help to clear the sperm from your tubes faster. It is important to note that even once you've been given clearance, there is still a small chance of late failure. This will be explained during your preoperative consult.

### What are the risks?

Every surgical procedure and anaesthesia has some associated risks. Vasectomy is a very low risk procedure but there is a risk that complications may occur. The common risks include:

- **Bruising** and / or **mild swelling** is quite common in the first week and will subside over 1-2 weeks.
- **Bleeding: Superficial** - Bleeding from the area where the tiny incision was made. This usually resolves with squeezing the skin and pressure. **Deep- Haematomas** are a larger deeper collection of blood in the scrotum which results from over-exertion and a blood vessel bleeding internally. This can be as large as a grapefruit and can take up to 3 months to resolve. It is therefore important that you don't do too much too quickly after the procedure in order to allow healing to occur .
- **Infection**: infection can occur after the vasectomy in 1% or less of men. It may present as a tender, swollen, or red area in the scrotum and / or fever. It generally requires antibiotics.
- **Sperm Granuloma**. This is a small inflammatory area which can occur as a result of sperm being released from the end of the tube which has been cut. It usually resolves over time.
- **Congestion**: A sense of pressure caused by sperm in the testes and epididymis may cause some discomfort for some 2 to 12 weeks after your vasectomy. Congestion resolves itself in time and regular

ejaculation and simple anti inflammatory medication such as ibuprofen can help. You are encouraged to ejaculate regularly, around 3 times per week after vasectomy.

- **Post vasectomy Pain Syndrome**: Less than 1% of men may develop an ongoing scrotal pain usually unilateral. Discomfort or pain may be felt in the scrotum, back and/ or lower abdomen. This usually responds to anti-inflammatory medication (and antibiotics if necessary) and resolves spontaneously. Very occasionally additional surgery is required.
- **Failure**: Re-joining of the tubes sometimes occurs within the first 2-3 months and is picked up by the 3 month sperm test. Late failure after 3 months is extremely rare.

### How much time will I need to take off?

You will be at the centre for about 2 hours (or three if you have iv sedation) but it's a good idea to take things easy for a day or two. You might want to take a couple of days off work. If your work is very physical you will need to take a week off and then light duties for one week.

### How will vasectomy affect my body?

Your testicles will continue to produce sperm but, because the sperm can't get through the tubes any more, they simply get reabsorbed into the body. Vasectomy does not affect your male hormones, nor does it affect ejaculation. The only difference when you ejaculate is that there will be no sperm in the fluid (sperm only make up about 3% of semen volume). Vasectomy will not affect your erection, your sex drive or any other aspect of your "maleness". This is because testosterone is still produced in the normal way and is not affected by having a vasectomy.

### Will having a vasectomy affect my sex life?

With no change to your hormones, ejaculation or orgasm, there's no reason why having a vasectomy should have a negative impact on your sex life. In fact, many couples find vasectomy improves their sex life, enjoying greater sexual freedom once they no longer have to worry about an unplanned pregnancy. You will have erections as normal.

After your vasectomy you can resume usual sexual activity 5-7 days later. Most men start with gentle masturbation after a few days.

It is a good idea to ejaculate 3-4 times a week after the vasectomy procedure. This helps reduce the build up of congestion and allows your body to accommodate the new arrangement.

### **Does vasectomy increase the risk of cancer?**

There is no conclusive evidence linking vasectomy to cancer of the prostate or testicles. However we advise all men, whether or not they have had a vasectomy, to have regular health screenings. It's also important to get into the habit of regularly checking your own testicles for lumps or anything new.

### **Will vasectomy protect me from STIs?**

No. Vasectomy cannot protect you against HIV or sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Condoms are the best protection against STIs if you are sexually active and have casual partners.

### **When can I play sport again?**

You can do gentle exercise such as limited walking in the first week. You should avoid physical strenuous sports for at least two weeks (no cycling for 3 weeks) and contact sport 4 weeks. Keep the wound area clean and dry for 1 week after vasectomy.