

## **UTAH MEN'S HEALTH | Ahead of the Curve**

### **Vasectomy Handout and Post-Operative Patient Care Instructions**

#### **Vasectomy**

A vasectomy is considered a permanent method of birth control. A vasectomy prevents the release of sperm when a man ejaculates. During a vasectomy, the vas deferens from each testicle is clamped, cut, or otherwise sealed. This prevents sperm from mixing with the semen that is ejaculated from the penis. An egg cannot be fertilized when there are no sperm in the semen. The testicles continue to produce sperm, but the sperm are reabsorbed by the body. (This also happens to sperm that are not ejaculated after a while, regardless of whether you have had a vasectomy.) Because the tubes are blocked before the seminal vesicles and prostate, you still ejaculate about the same amount of fluid. It usually takes several months after a vasectomy for all remaining sperm to be ejaculated or reabsorbed.

Electing to have a vasectomy is a big decision. Though surgery to reconnect the vas deferens (vasectomy reversal) is available, it is difficult. Sometimes a doctor can remove sperm from the testicle in men who have had a vasectomy or a reversal that didn't work. The sperm can then be used for in vitro fertilization. Both vasectomy reversal and sperm retrieval can be expensive, may not be covered by insurance, and may not always work. Before signing a consent for vasectomy, it is important to be sure of your decision regarding future paternity.

#### **How a Vasectomy Works**

During the procedure, the two vas deferens are cut and sealed off. This prevents sperm from traveling from the testes to the penis. It is the only change in your reproductive system. The testes will still produce sperm, but since the sperm have nowhere to go, they die and are absorbed by your body. Your semen will not appear different following a vasectomy, as sperm are only a small portion of the ejaculate.

**The cut ends of the vas deferens may be tied, closed with a clip, or sealed by heat (cauterized).**

#### **Before Vasectomy**

A vasectomy is an outpatient procedure. This means you'll go home the same day. It's done in a doctor's office, clinic, or hospital. Your doctor will talk with you about getting ready for surgery. You may be asked to do the following:

- Sign a consent form which gives your doctor permission to do the procedure. It also states that a vasectomy is not guaranteed to make you sterile.
- Don't take aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen for 2 weeks before surgery. These medications can cause bleeding after the procedure. Also, tell your doctor if you take any medications, supplements, or herbal remedies.
- Tell your doctor if you've had any prior scrotal surgery.
- Arrange for an adult family member or friend to give you a ride home after surgery.
- Shower and clean your scrotum the day of surgery. It is important to carefully shave the scrotum prior to the procedure.
- Bring an athletic supporter (jockstrap), compression shorts, or pair of snug cotton briefs to the doctor's office or hospital.
- Eat no more than a light snack before surgery.

### **During a vasectomy**

- Your testicles and scrotum are cleaned with an antiseptic.
- You will be asked to take medication prior to the procedure to relax you. You may not remember much about the procedure.
- Each vas deferens is located by touch.
- A local anesthetic is injected into the area.
- Your doctor makes one or two small openings in your scrotum. The vas deferens are lifted through the incision and are tied, stitched, or sealed. Electrocautery may be used to seal the ends with heat. Scar tissue that develops after the surgery will help to block the tubes.
- The vas deferens is then replaced inside the scrotum and the skin is closed with stitches that dissolve and do not have to be removed.
- The entire procedure should take about 20 to 30 minutes.

### **What to Expect After Surgery/Post-Operative Care Instructions**

- Your scrotum will be numb for 1 to 2 hours after a vasectomy. Apply cold packs to the area and lie on your back as much as possible for the rest of the day. Wearing snug underwear or a jockstrap will help ease discomfort and protect the area.
- For about a week, your scrotum may look bruised and slightly swollen. You may also have a small amount of bloody discharge from the incision. This is normal.
- Stay off your feet as much as possible for the first 2 days. Try to lie flat on a bed or sofa.
- Wear an athletic supporter or snug cotton briefs for support for 2 weeks.
- Reduce swelling by placing an ice pack or bag of frozen peas in a thin towel. Then place the towel on your scrotum.
- Take medications with acetaminophen (such as Tylenol) to relieve any discomfort. Don't use aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen.
- Wait 48 hours before bathing.
- Avoid heavy lifting or exercise for 14 days.
- You may have some swelling and minor pain in your scrotum for several days after the surgery.
- Unless your work is strenuous, you will be able to return to work in 1 or 2 days.

### **Sex After Vasectomy**

A vasectomy shouldn't affect your relationship with your partner. You can resume sexual intercourse as soon as you are comfortable, usually in about a week. **However, you can still get your partner pregnant until your sperm count is zero. You must use another method of birth control until you have a follow-up sperm count test 6 weeks after the vasectomy (or after 10 to 20 ejaculations over a shorter period of time).** Once your sperm count is zero, no other birth control method is necessary. A vasectomy will not interfere with your sex drive, ability to have erections, sensation of orgasm, or ability to ejaculate. You may have occasional mild aching in your testicles during sexual arousal for a few months after the surgery.

## **Risks and Possible Complications of Vasectomy**

Vasectomy is safe. But it does have risks. They include the following:

- **Bleeding** under the skin, which may cause swelling or bruising.
- **Infection** at the site of the incision. In rare instances, an infection develops inside the scrotum.
- **Sperm granuloma.** This is a small, harmless lump. It may form where the vas deferens is sealed off.
- **Sperm buildup (congestion).** This may cause soreness in the testes. Anti-inflammatory medications can provide relief.
- **Epididymitis.** This is inflammation that may cause scrotal aching. It often goes away without treatment. Anti-inflammatory medications can provide relief.
- **Reconnection of the vas deferens.** This can occur in rare cases. It makes you fertile again. This can result in an unwanted pregnancy.
- **Sperm antibodies.** These are a common response of the body to absorbed sperm. The antibodies can make you sterile. This is true even if you later try to reverse your vasectomy.
- **Long-term testicular discomfort.** This may occur after surgery. But it's very rare. Some older studies showed a risk of prostate cancer in men who have had vasectomies. However, many years of research have found no clear evidence that vasectomy is linked to prostate cancer.

**Call your doctor at (801) 587-1454 if you notice any of the following:**

- Increasing pain or swelling in your scrotum
- A large black-and-blue area, or a growing lump
- Fever or chills
- Increasing redness or drainage of the incision
- Trouble urinating