

# Vasectomy

## What is a vasectomy?

- A vasectomy is a **permanent** form of birth control for a man.
- The tubes that carry the sperm from the testicles into the semen (vas deferens) are cut and sealed (see Figure 1). Without sperm, an egg can't be fertilized and a woman can't get pregnant.

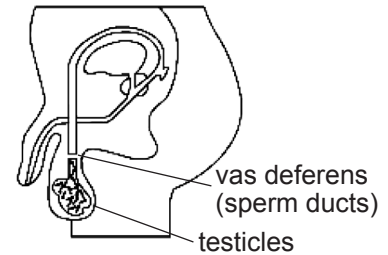


Figure 1

## How well does a vasectomy work?

- 8 to 9 out of 10 women will get pregnant in one year if having intercourse without birth control.
- A vasectomy is more than **99 percent** effective.
- After your procedure, your healthcare provider will tell you when to go for a sperm test to make sure you can't cause a pregnancy. Use another form of birth control (e.g., condoms, abstinence) until your healthcare provider tells you there are no sperm in your semen (cum). Think about getting **emergency contraception** to help prevent pregnancy if your backup method of birth control fails (e.g., condom breaks) or if you have had unprotected sex.
- A vasectomy doesn't protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV.
- Use a condom **every time** you have sex (vaginal, oral, anal) to lower your risk of STIs and HIV.

## How do I get a vasectomy?

A vasectomy is minor surgery done by a doctor. You may need a referral if your doctor doesn't do vasectomies. You can phone and book an appointment without a referral for some doctors that do vasectomies. Your doctor will tell you if you need a referral or not.

## How is a vasectomy done?

A vasectomy takes 15 to 30 minutes. It is normally done while you are awake. Freezing (local anesthetic) is injected in both sides of the sac that holds your testicles (scrotum). One or two tiny cuts (incisions) are made in the scrotum. Each tube is gently pulled through the incision. A small section of each tube is taken out and the cut ends are sealed. Your incisions are closed with stitches, which absorb as your body heals.

## What are the benefits of a vasectomy?

- A vasectomy is a private and permanent form of birth control. No one can tell if you have had a vasectomy. You won't notice a difference when you ejaculate. Sperm makes up less than 10 percent of the fluid that is released.
- A vasectomy doesn't interrupt intercourse.

- There are no long-term effects.
- A vasectomy is done as a day procedure, so you don't need to take a lot of time off work.

A vasectomy will **not** affect:

- your hormones
- your ability to have an erection
- your interest in sex
- the feeling you get while having sex

### **What are the side effects of a vasectomy?**

All surgery has some risks. Rarely, after a vasectomy you might have bleeding, infection, pain, and/or swelling.

### **Did You Know**

- You have the right to make the decision to have sex or not.
- Plan ahead and decide to protect yourself to lower your risk of pregnancy, STIs, and HIV.
- It is important to talk with your partner about how you can protect each other.
- A vasectomy doesn't work right away. It takes 8 weeks or more to get rid of the sperm that is stored in the tubes.
- It is simpler, safer, and less expensive than a tubal ligation.
- A vasectomy is **not** easy to reverse, so you must be sure you don't want to have children before you decide to have one.

### **Websites**

[www.myhealth.alberta.ca](http://www.myhealth.alberta.ca)

[www.sexualityandu.ca](http://www.sexualityandu.ca)

[www.teachingsexualhealth.ca](http://www.teachingsexualhealth.ca)

[www.albertahealthservices.ca](http://www.albertahealthservices.ca) and search for Sexual and Reproductive Health

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link Alberta at 403-943-LINK (5465) in the Calgary area, 780-408-5465 in the Edmonton area, or 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll-free.

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