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VASECTOMY, THE NO-SCALPEL APPROACH

Vasectomy is the process of dividing the vas (the tube that delivers the sperm from the testis to the prostate) in order to prevent conception. It is the most common method of male contraception in this country where about 500,000 vasectomies are done each year. Since vasectomy simply interrupts the delivery of sperm, it does not change the hormonal function of the testis and sexual drive and ability remain the same. Vasectomy is thought to be free of known long-term side effects, and is considered to be the safest and most reliable method of permanent male sterilization.

The technique of the No-scalpel Vasectomy was developed in 1974 by a Chinese physician, Dr. Li Shunqiang, and has been performed on over eight million men in China.

After injecting the scrotal skin and each vas with a local anesthetic, we use a special vas-fixation clamp to encircle and firmly secure the vas without penetrating the skin. One blade of a sharp forceps or clamp is then used to penetrate the scrotal skin. The tips of the forceps are spread; opening the skin much like spreading apart weaves of fabric. The vas is thus exposed and then lifted out and occluded by any of the standard techniques, such as cautery or sutures. The second vas is then brought through the same opening and occluded in a similar fashion. The skin wound contracts to a few millimeters and usually does not require suturing.

Compared to the traditional incisional technique, the No-Scalpel Vasectomy usually takes less time, causes less discomfort and may lower rates of bleeding and infection. Recovery following the procedure is usually complete in two to three days. Hard work or straining (athletic pursuits or heavy lifting) is not recommended for seven days. Most patients should wait to have intercourse for a week after the procedure (You should feel no discomfort).

Common reasons given for having a vasectomy.

1. You want to enjoy sex without worrying about pregnancy.
2. You do not want to have more children than you can care for.
3. Your partner has health problems that might make pregnancy difficult.
4. You do not want to risk passing on hereditary disease or disability.
5. You and your partner don't want to or can't use other kinds of birth control.
6. You want to save your partner from the surgery involved in having her tubes tied and you want to save the expense.

COMMON QUESTIONS ASKED AND ANSWERED ABOUT NO-SCALPEL VASECTOMY

How can I be sure that I want a vasectomy?

You must be absolutely sure that you don't want to father a child under any circumstances. You must talk to your partner and it certainly is a good idea to make this decision together, consider other kinds of birth control and talk to friends or relatives who may have had a vasectomy. Think about how you would feel if your partner had an unplanned pregnancy. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or family counselor.

A vasectomy might not be right for you if you are very young, if your current relationship is not permanent, if you are having a vasectomy just to please your partner and you do not really want it, you are under a lot of stress or you are counting on being able to reverse the procedure at a later time.

How does the vasectomy prevent pregnancy?

Sperm is made in the man's testicles. The sperm then travels from the testicle through a tube called the vas into the body where it enters the prostate gland. In the prostate, the semen is made and here the sperm mixes with the semen. The prostate is connected to the channel in the penis and hence the sperm and semen are ejaculated. In vasectomy, the vas or tube is blocked so that sperm cannot reach the prostate to mix with the semen. Without sperm in the semen a man cannot make his partner pregnant.

What is different about a no-scalpel vasectomy?

No-scalpel vasectomy is different from a conventional vasectomy in the way that we get to the tubes or vas to block them from passing sperm out of the testicle. An improved method of anesthesia helps make the procedure less painful. In a conventional vasectomy, the physician may make one or two small cuts in the skin with a knife, and the doctor would then use sutures or stitches to close these cuts at the end of the procedure. In the no-scalpel vasectomy, instead of making two incisions, the doctor makes only one tiny puncture into the skin with a special instrument. This same instrument is used to gently stretch the skin opening so that the tubes can be reached easily. The tubes are then blocked, using the same methods as conventional vasectomy, but because of the lack of scalpel technique there is very little bleeding and no stitches are needed to close the tiny opening. This opening will heal quickly with little or no scarring. No-scalpel vasectomy was introduced in the United States in 1988 and is now used by many doctors in this country who have mastered the technique.

Reasons for having a no-scalpel vasectomy as compared to conventional vasectomy

1. No incision with a scalpel - only a small puncture with a sharp probe
2. Usually no stitches
3. Usually a faster procedure
4. Usually a faster recovery
5. Usually less chance of bleeding and other complications
6. Usually less discomfort
7. Just as effective as regular vasectomy

Will it hurt?

When the local anesthetic is injected into the skin of the scrotum, you will feel some discomfort, but as soon as it takes effect you should feel no pain or discomfort. Afterwards, you will be sore for a couple of days and may want to take a mild pain killer such as Tylenol, but the discomfort is usually less with the no-scalpel technique because of less trauma or injury to the scrotum and tissues. Also, there are no stitches in most cases. We will provide you with complete instructions about what to do after surgery.

How soon can I get back to work?

You should be able to do routine physical work within 48 hours after your vasectomy, and will be able to do heavy physical labor and exercise within a week.

Will the vasectomy change me sexually?

The only thing that will change is that you will not be able to make your partner pregnant. Your body will continue to produce the same hormones that give you your sex drive and maleness. You will make the same amount of semen. Vasectomy will not change your beard, muscles, sex drive, erections, climaxes or your voice. Some men say that without the worry of accidental pregnancy and the bother of other birth control methods, sex is more relaxed and enjoyable than before.

Will I be sterile right away?

No. After a vasectomy there are some active sperm left in your system. It may take a dozen to two dozen ejaculations to clear the sperm out downstream from where the vasectomy is performed. You and your partner should use other forms of birth control until we have had a chance to check your semen specimens at least twice to make sure that they are free of sperm.

Is the no-scalpel vasectomy safe?

Vasectomy in general is safe and simple. Vasectomy is an operation and all surgery has some risk such as bleeding, infection and pain, but serious problems are unusual. There is always a small chance of the tubes rejoining themselves, and this is the reason that sperm checks are necessary. There have been some controversies in the past about the long-term effects of vasectomy, but to our knowledge there are no long-term risks to vasectomy.

How long will the no-scalpel vasectomy take?

It depends on the surgeon, but on average, the operation lasts between fifteen to thirty minutes.

When can I start having sex again?

As a rule, we suggest waiting a week before having intercourse. Remember, however, that the vasectomy only divides the vas and has no effect on the sperm that are already beyond that point. IT IS IMPORTANT NOT TO HAVE UNPROTECTED INTERCOURSE UNTIL THE ABSENCE OF SPERM FROM THE EJACULATE HAS BEEN CONFIRMED WITH TWO (2) NEGATIVE SPERM CHECKS TWO WEEKS APART.