
Get the facts about... Sterilization

Choosing birth control...

There are two ways to enjoy sex without getting pregnant... sex other than vaginal intercourse or vaginal intercourse with birth control. The use of birth control is an individual and private matter. It affects your body, relationships and lifestyle. There is no perfect choice in birth control. Get the facts you need and talk to people you trust. Choose a method that's right for you.

Always use latex condoms along with your birth control method to lower your chances of getting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) including Human Immunodeficiency Virus or HIV – the virus that causes AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

Why choose sterilization?

It is a permanent and very effective method of birth control. Once you are sterilized you won't have to worry about birth control or an unplanned pregnancy.

If the operation is done by an experienced doctor there is very little risk to sterilization.

Sterilization does not affect your ability to have or enjoy sex.

What is sterilization?

It is an operation that is done by a doctor.

The procedure for women is called tubal ligation, and for men it is called vasectomy.

It is a permanent method of birth control and should be considered irreversible.

Does it protect me from STDs and HIV?

If you decide to be sterilized you will still have to use latex condoms to reduce your risk of getting an STD or HIV.

How does sterilization work?

Women...

In a tubal ligation, the Fallopian tubes (which carry eggs from the ovaries to the uterus) are blocked so that eggs released from the ovaries will not meet sperm. Tubal ligation is over 99.6% effective.

Men...

In a vasectomy, the vas deferens (the tubes that carry sperm from the testicles to the penis) are cut and tied. Sperm made in the testicles can't get into the semen ("come"). The vasectomy is 99.9% effective.

How is sterilization done?

Women...

- Tubal ligation is done in a hospital.
- The anesthetic you get will be either local (freezing) or general (so that you are unconscious).
- The doctor makes a small incision (cut) in the abdomen so the Fallopian tubes can be reached.
- Each tube is closed with a clamp or cut and blocked.
- The abdominal incision may be stitched with absorbable stitches.

Men...

- A vasectomy can be done in a doctor's office or in a hospital's out-patient department.
- The anesthetic you get will be local (freezing).
- The doctor makes a small cut(s) in your scrotum (bag of skin that holds the testicles) to reach the vas deferens.
- The doctor then cuts the vas deferens and ties the ends.
- The incisions made to the scrotum are usually so small that one stitch or no stitches will be used. In the "no scalpel" surgery the skin is pierced (not cut) so that you won't need stitches.

How long will it take me to get back to normal?

Women...

Tubal ligation is major surgery. You'll have to rest for about two days. Plan to take it easy for about a week. Even after a week you may still need to avoid strenuous exercise and lifting.

Men...

Vasectomy is a minor procedure. Plan to take it easy for a couple of days. Don't do any strenuous exercise or heavy lifting for a week.

Does sterilization work right away?

Women... Yes.

Men... No. There will be sperm in the vas deferens that was made before you had the vasectomy. You'll still be able to get your partner pregnant until all that sperm has left your body. After 10 to 15 ejaculations you will have to collect a semen sample in a clean bottle and take it to your doctor's office or a laboratory. You'll do this again four weeks later. Use another method of birth control until two tests show that there is no sperm in your ejaculate ("come").

When can I have sex again? Will anything be different?

Women...

Your doctor will let you know how long to wait until you can have vaginal intercourse again — it will be about one week after the operation and when you feel

comfortable. The feeling of orgasm will be the same as before the tubal ligation. You may enjoy sex more because you're not worried about pregnancy.

Men...

Your doctor will let you know when you can have intercourse again — it will be about two or three days after the operation and when you feel comfortable. The only thing that's different is there are no sperm in the fluid that comes out of your penis. The *amount* of fluid and the feeling of orgasm will be the same as before the vasectomy. You may enjoy sex more because you're not worried about pregnancy.

Do I have to pay for sterilization?

Tubal ligations and vasectomies done in a hospital are completely covered by the provincial health care plan. If your doctor does the vasectomy in the office, you'll have to pay a fee to cover the cost of the supplies he or she uses.

What are the advantages of sterilization?

- Sterilization is a very effective method of birth control.
- You don't have to think about birth control when you have sex.
- For men, it can be done in a doctor's office.
- For women, it works right away.

What are the disadvantages of sterilization?

- You need to have surgery.
- There are some risks with surgery, especially for women.
- There is a risk of infection.
- It does not work right away for men.
- It does not protect you from STDs.
- Reversals often don't work. The cost of the surgery to reverse sterilization is not covered by the provincial health care plan.

Where can I get more information about sterilization?

You can get information from your public health nurse, community health clinic or doctor. You can also call the *Facts of Life Line* to talk about birth control, sexuality, relationships, STDs or pregnancy options. **Call 947-9222 in Winnipeg or toll-free in Manitoba at 1-800-432-1957.**

