
▶ **What is sterilization and how does it work?**

Sterilization is a permanent, surgical method of contraception.

For women – tubal sterilization (ligation) usually happens in the hospital. The fallopian tubes, which carry the egg from the ovaries to the uterus, are closed off so that sperm cannot reach the egg and pregnancy cannot occur.

For men – a vasectomy can be done in a specialist's (urologist) office or in day surgery at a hospital. The operation blocks the sperm duct and stops the sperm from entering the ejaculate during sex.

Neither operation removes any organs. Your hormone levels remain the same.

▶ **How is a tubal sterilization done?**

There are three options available. Talk with your health care provider about the best method for you:

- **Laparoscopy** – your tummy is filled with carbon dioxide so that the doctor can see your organs. A small slit is made near your belly button and an instrument is inserted to find the fallopian tubes. The doctor ties, clips or burns the tubes to block them off. Sometimes an instrument goes through a small slit above your pubic bone to do this. This procedure takes 20-30 minutes. The recovery time is several days.

Mini-Laparotomy – often done after childbirth. A cut is made and the doctor finds the tubes and ties, clips or burns them to block them off. No gas is used. The recovery time is several days to two weeks.

Transcervical Approach – a method which can be done in an office setting. The surgeon goes through your cervix and uterus and places a device into the fallopian tubes. Over a three-month period

tissue grows over the device and causes the tubes to block. There is no chance of reversing this procedure.

▶ **How is a vasectomy done?**

There are two methods that you can talk with your health care provider about to decide the best method for you.

- **Incisional Method** – local anaesthetic is used and a small incision is made on each side of the scrotum. The vas deferens (tube that carries sperm) is tied, clipped or burned on each side and the incisions are closed with stitches.
- **No-Scalpel Method** – local anaesthetic is used, an instrument punctures the skin and the vas deferens is tied, clipped or burned. No sutures are needed as the skin has not been cut.

▶ **How effective is sterilization?**

- For both men and women the procedures are over 99 per cent effective.
- After a vasectomy, sperm may continue to be present in the tubes for about two to three months or 10 to 30 ejaculations. Use a backup method such as condoms, during this time.
- Sterilization does not protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs). You need to use condoms every time you have sex to protect yourself from STIs.

▶ **When might you consider sterilization?**

Sterilization is a permanent method. You might choose this if:

- You want to enjoy having sex without worrying about pregnancy and you don't want to have a child in the future.
- You and your partner agree that your family is complete and you don't want more children.

- You and your partner have concerns about the side effects of other birth control methods.
- You or your partner's health would be at risk with a future pregnancy.

▶ **What are the risks of sterilization?**

For women - tubal sterilization risks depend on which method is used and whether anaesthetic is used or not.

Risks may include:

- anaesthetic difficulties
- wound infection
- urinary complications

Women are at risk for ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy in fallopian tube- which requires emergency medical treatment) post operatively.

For men – minimal risk – possibly infection

▶ **How will I feel after the procedure?**

For women - you may feel tired and have some discomfort. You may also experience:

- shoulder pain
- lower abdominal pain or cramps
- nausea and light headedness

For men - you may experience slight discomfort. You may also experience:

- swelling
- bruising

▶ **Can sterilization be reversed if I change my mind afterwards?**

- Some people regret having sterilization done. This is more likely when the procedure has been done at a young age, or soon after childbirth, an abortion or the loss of a child. Having small children or experiencing stress in

your relationship at the time of sterilization can increase the chance of feeling regret.

- A tubal sterilization can sometimes be reversed. This operation involves risk and is not guaranteed to be successful. It is not covered by your health card. You should never have sterilization done with the idea of reversing it.
- A vasectomy can be reversed, but it is not guaranteed and is not covered by your health card.

▶ ***Who can you talk to if you have more questions?***

If you have concerns or questions, call and ask for Sexual Health, or visit the health unit website below.



**simcoe
muskoka**
DISTRICT HEALTH UNIT

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www.simcoemuskokahealth.org

▶ ***References:***

www.sexualityandu.ca

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