

# VASECTOMY

The No-Scalpel Method

## Ligations

Western Canada Vasectomy Centre

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Dr. Popowich is a graduate of the University of Calgary Faculty of Medicine. He completed his residency training in Family Medicine in 1983. He has practiced Family Medicine for over seventeen years before switching his focus to the surgical subspecialties - exclusively as of January, 2001. He has always maintained a surgical interest, having been a regular assistant in the operating room and a long standing member of the cardiac surgery team in Calgary.

Dr. Popowich has many years of experience in performing vasectomies, first by the traditional method and later by the newer No Scalpel Technique. It is this No Scalpel method that is currently used. To date, he has performed well over 12,000 of these procedures. Dr. Popowich

has also taught many instructional courses on this procedure. These courses have been at the local, provincial and international level in conjunction with major medical meetings.

His referral base consists of over four hundred family physicians and surgical specialists who regularly refer men for vasectomy. As of 2007, Dr. Popowich has given up his hospital practice to work exclusively in his vasectomy practice.

## What Is Vasectomy?

A vasectomy is a minor operation that is designed as a permanent method of birth control. The doctor is able to cut and block off the small tubes which carry sperm from the testicles to the seminal vesicles which produce the major portion of the ejaculate. Once successful, the man is sterile and can no longer father children.

## Making The Decision To Undergo Vasectomy

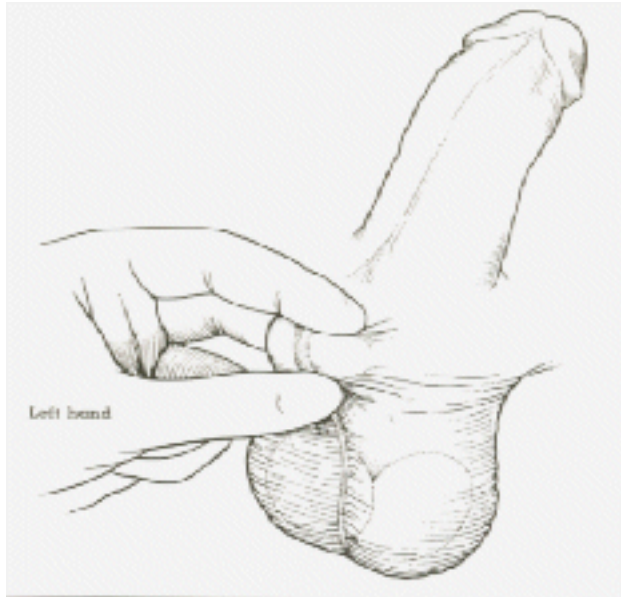
Vasectomy must always be considered as a permanent and irreversible procedure. Having stated that, it is technically possible to reverse the procedure, but this is a much more involved operation with lower success rates and no guarantee that the reversal will work. Again, consider vasectomy to be permanent.

It is also important to remember that a vasectomy does not work immediately. There is a period of time required after vasectomy before the semen contains no more sperm. For most men, this period averages 4 months. Until you have had a follow-up sperm count which shows no sperm at all, you should continue with another form of birth control.

One must also remember that vasectomy does not always work. There is a failure rate to this procedure, no matter who performs it or what technique is used. The usual failure, if there is such a thing, happens less than 1% of the time. In this case, the man's sperm count decreases but does not quite reach zero before it then begins to increase. If two successive sperm counts show an increase in numbers of active sperm, then the procedure has likely failed and should be repeated.

The more uncommon failure is the late failure, which happens in about 1:5,000 to 1:10,000 times. In these men, who have had a completely negative sperm count after vasectomy, the body will somehow manage to again produce semen containing active sperm. This could occur years after the original vasectomy. Why this happens we do not know and to whom it happens we cannot predict, yet we know that, statistically, it will happen with that frequency. Unfortunately, the way that these failures are detected is with an unexpected pregnancy.

## How is a Vasectomy Done?



A vasectomy is performed in the doctor's office under a local anesthetic. The doctor may first have to shave a small area of skin on the front part of the scrotum to prevent hair from entering the surgical site. The skin is then cleansed with an antibacterial solution to reduce the chance of infection.

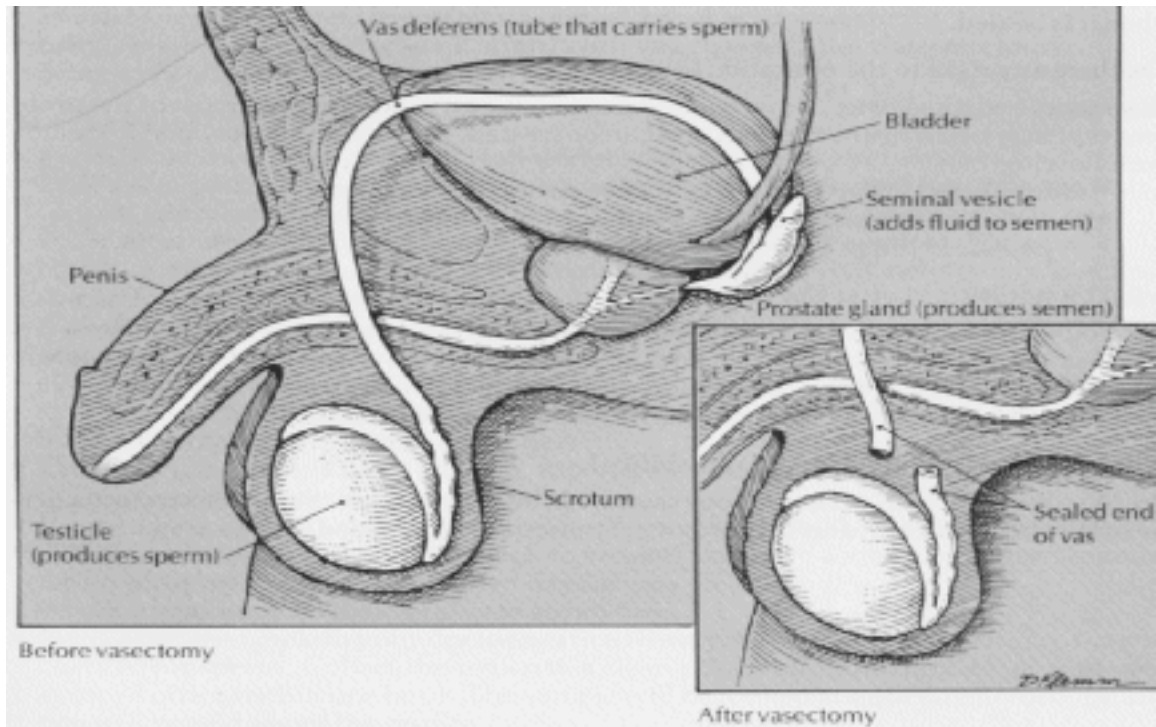
The doctor then feels for the vas deferens in the scrotum, locates it and brings it close to the surface of the skin in the midline. Some local anesthetic is then injected first into the skin and then around the vas itself. This anesthetic takes effect very quickly so that any discomfort is minimal. Once the area is numb, a special instrument is used to

make a small opening in the scrotum. A loop of the vas deferens is then lifted out through this small opening, is clamped in two spots, and a portion of the tube removed. The cut ends are then sealed with cautery and are tied off with suture material. Where possible, a layer of tissue is also placed between the two free ends of the vas before the vas is returned to the scrotum. Exactly the same procedure is then performed on the vas deferens coming from the other testicle, using the same puncture site as for the first side. In unusual cases this may not be easily done and a second puncture site may be necessary.

At the conclusion of the procedure, the area is again cleansed, the skin edges come together, usually without the need for sutures, and the wound is dressed with a small gauze pad. A snug fitting pair of jockey style shorts will keep the dressing in place without the need for adhesive tape.

After the vasectomy you should go home to bed and lie flat. Apply ice packs intermittently to the scrotum for the remainder of the day and rest as much as possible over the next 48 hours. Most men are then able to return to office type work, but you should avoid heavy lifting and sporting activities for about 5 to 7 days. Showering is allowed on the next day, but you should avoid soaking in a tub or bath for about a week. Anti-inflammatories such as Ibuprofen should be taken regularly for the first 7 days after the procedure.

The procedure itself takes only about 20 to 25 minutes and is usually performed at the end of the work week. Thursdays and Fridays are regular operating days, along with the occasional Wednesday.



## What Complications Can Occur?

Complications of vasectomy are few and when they occur are usually mild. Most, if not all, complications relate to bleeding so it is important to follow your doctor's instructions in order to minimize bleeding. A small amount of oozing from the operative site is quite common. This can be stopped with direct pressure by pinching the skin edges together for 3 minutes.

Bleeding into the scrotum may result in a hematoma, or collection of blood inside the scrotum. This may lead to increased pain after the procedure, an increased risk of infection, and a prolonged recovery time. If you suspect this is happening, or if your scrotum enlarges in the first few hours after your procedure, you should go to the emergency room at the hospital to have this checked.

Infection may also occur, often related to internal bleeding, and may occur seven to ten days after the procedure. If you notice an increase in pain, together with a red, hot, or very tender scrotum, with or without discharge from the puncture site, you should contact your doctor as antibiotics may be necessary.

Epididymitis is an inflammatory response in which the tissue around the testicle(s) may become inflamed, making one or both testicles extra sensitive to pressure and quite tender. Treatment with regular doses of anti-inflammatory medication, such as

ibuprofen, for a few days will usually resolve this problem. Occasionally, a short course of antibiotics is required as well.

Sperm granuloma formation can also occur. This is a tender nodule in the scrotum at the site where the vas has been interrupted and where the body is working to reabsorb the sperm that are trapped at that point. Usually no treatment is required and this nodule shrinks and disappears with time. Very rarely, surgery may be necessary to remove this area.

Rarely, some men will experience discomfort long after the procedure, relating to irritation of a nerve running along the vas deferens. This, too, is usually self-limited and diminishes with time. For extremely bothersome cases, referral to a urologist for surgical removal of this neuroma is required.

Allergic reactions to the prep solutions or medications are unusual and are rarely life-threatening. If treatment is necessary, your doctor will recommend or administer the appropriate medication.

Please don't hesitate to call the office if you have any questions or concerns.

## What To Do Before Vasectomy

Once you and your partner are comfortable with your decision to proceed with vasectomy and have booked your procedure time, some instructions are important for you to follow:

- Avoid any products containing aspirin (A.S.A.) for two weeks before the procedure. These include such things as some over-the-counter cough and cold remedies and antacid preparations. Aspirin acts as a blood thinner and could lead to increased risk of bleeding after the procedure.
- Avoid other anti-inflammatories for one to two days before the procedure. These drugs have a similar effect to aspirin but are shorter acting.
- Wash the scrotal area with an antibacterial skin wash such as Tersaseptic on both the night before and the day of the procedure. This reduces the number of bacteria on the skin and lowers your risk of infection. There is no need to shave the area before coming in.
- Eat your usual meal before the procedure. If you come in without having eaten, you may be more prone to experience some queasiness or nausea.
- If you are extremely anxious about the procedure, ask your referring doctor for a prescription for a minor tranquilizer to take before the procedure. Most men do not require any sedation before the procedure.
- If you have an extreme fear of needles, you may apply a topical anesthetic cream such as EMLA to the operative site 1–2 hours before the procedure.
- Bring two clean snug fitting pairs of underwear (jockey briefs style) with you to act as a scrotal support after the procedure. This will hold the dressing in place and support the scrotum to minimize discomfort and swelling. A cold pack fits nicely between the two pairs of shorts.
- Arrange for someone to drive you home. The anesthetic may begin to wear off on your drive home and it is best if you are not behind the wheel when this happens. When the freezing wears off, you will experience a heavy, aching sensation in the groin.

## After Your Vasectomy

- The most important thing to remember is to go home to bed and lie flat immediately after vasectomy. This reduces the blood pressure in the tiny vessels in the scrotum and lessens any tendency to bleed and helps to reduce swelling.
- Keep an ice pack on the scrotum intermittently for the first few hours, again to shrink blood vessels and reduce swelling.
- Take Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, etc.) 400 mg three times daily for the first seven days after your procedure.
- Limit your activity for the first two days. This will reduce any swelling, discomfort and bleeding.
- Avoid strenuous activity such as heavy lifting and sports for five to seven days. After this time, your comfort level can dictate your activity.
- Wear your athletic support or snug fitting shorts for at least 24 hours and as long as it feels comfortable.
- You may shower on the day after the procedure and may continue using the antibacterial skin wash. Do not soak in a tub or go swimming until the incision is healed
- You may return to office type work in 48-72 hours or as your comfort level dictates.
- A prescription for pain medication will be provided before you leave the office. If you require additional medication or if the medication provided is ineffective, let your doctor know as you may need to be seen again.
- Bring a follow-up semen sample to the laboratory as instructed by your doctor approximately four months after the procedure. The doctor will inform you when the results are available, usually in about six or seven days from when the sample was delivered to the lab.

**Remember: the procedure has not worked until your sperm count is zero!**

## Our Appointments

Having come from a family practice background, Dr. Popowich is well aware of the difficulty and frustration is organizing appointments with specialists. In our clinic, we have set aside the majority of your appointments for men who have been referred by another physician. With such a referral, we do our utmost to offer you a surgical date within 4 weeks of first contact with our office.

For men who do not have a doctors referral, the wait time for surgery may be longer, but we can usually accommodate most men within 8-10 weeks if you require a Friday appointment.

Men who are able to come in on a Thursday or who can can come on short notice, the wait time is often less.

## Our Staff

Tammy is our full-time office manager and she will likely be your first contact with our office. She has years of experience in medical practice and is extremely well versed in all aspects of vasectomy care -- both pre an post op. She will be able to respond to any of your concerns but is able to contact Dr. Popowich at any time if there is any uncertainty.

Nicky is our part-time office manager and has had years of experience in our practice. She, too, will have no difficulty in responding to your concerns.

## Common Questions

### ***Is vasectomy reversible?***

Technically, yes, but with varying success. A general anesthetic is required and a skilled and experienced urologist will do the procedure. Success rates may be as high as 70% but do tend to drop off with increasing time since your vasectomy.

### ***Will I still ejaculate?***

Yes. Only the sperm component of the seminal fluid is eliminated. The remaining 98% of seminal fluid is unchanged so that you will not likely notice any change in the volume of the ejaculate.

### ***Do I need to continue to have sperm levels checked?***

This is usually not necessary because of the extremely low chance of a late failure as was described earlier. However, if you require ongoing reassurance, you may be able to arrange for periodic testing of the semen through your regular physician.

### ***What happens to the sperm?***

Your testicles continue to produce sperm which move down the vas to the point at which it has been tied off. This stretches the vas enough to trigger a response by the body in which white blood cells are sent in to investigate and eventually break down the sperm. The broken down products can then be reabsorbed and used for other purposes by the body.

### ***Should I shave the area ahead of time?***

Usually not. Wound infection studies show that the less time from the shave to the opening of the skin results in lower infection rates. Your doctor will shave the area before the operation if it is required.

### ***When can I have intercourse afterwards?***

Try to wait at least 7-10 days to allow some healing to take place. You may have some pain with intercourse initially but this should quickly disappear if it happens at all. Men who ejaculate within the first few days after surgery are more likely to end up in the small group of failures.

### ***What about the Laser Vasectomy?***

Currently there is no laser vasectomy and if there were it would be unlikely to provide any advantage because a small hole in the skin is still required. Many men hear “no scalpel” vasectomy and assume this means laser.

### ***Is there a charge for the procedure?***

Alberta Health Care does cover the cost of the vasectomy operation but there are certain services that Alberta Health does not insure. At our facility we recognize the value of your time and do our utmost to see that your follow-up care does not

inconvenience you unnecessarily or make you miss time from work. We charge an all inclusive fee that covers initial dose of medication, dressings, cold-pack, telephone prescriptions, etc. If necessary we also assist by, arranging laboratory testing, phoning you with your laboratory results, patient counseling, as well as numerous enhanced services until you test "clear". The uninsured services portion of the procedure is \$200.00. This is payable by cash or debit only at the time of your visit. We are unfortunately no longer in a position to be able to accept cheques.

***How long will my appointment take?***

We value your time and do our utmost to run on schedule, or even ahead of schedule. Please plan on arriving 15 minutes ahead of your surgery time.

***What is your cancellation policy?***

If you must cancel your surgery, please give as much notice as possible so that we may offer your spot to someone who is on our cancellation list. If you do not advise us of your inability to make it to your appointment with at least 48 hours notice, you will be billed a cancellation fee of \$100.00. Failing this, you will not be given another appointment without a valid credit card number authorizing us to charge the entire uninsured fee component of \$200.00 to your account.

***Can I drive myself to and from my appointment?***

We recommend that you make arrangements for someone else to drive you home, particularly if your drive home is more than 15 minutes.

***Where do I park?***

There is on-street parking directly in front of our building.

***Can I bring my family to my appointment?***

Our clinic is relatively small and does not have stairs to reach our office. We prefer that you make arrangements for a babysitter for your children rather than to bring them along with you to our office.

***What is your office setup?***

Our office is located in a heritage building on 14th Street between 26th and 27th Avenues. There is on-street parking directly in front of the building. We are located on the second floor and do have a comfortable, homey sitting area. We do as that you not bring your children with you on the day of your surgery but that you make arrangements for childcare for them. This will create a much more relaxing environment for you, your doctor and for any other men who may overlap with the time of your appointment.

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