

# Having a vasectomy under general anaesthetic

## Department of Urology

Information for patients

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### What is a vasectomy?

A vasectomy is a procedure carried out to provide a permanent form of contraception in men. A vasectomy is difficult to reverse, so you need to be sure it is right for you.

The procedure is usually carried out under local anaesthetic, but in some cases it may need to be done under a general anaesthetic (whilst you are asleep).

Your vasectomy will be done under general anaesthetic. The surgeon will make a cut (or cuts) in your ball sack (scrotum), and the tubes that carry the sperm will be identified, cut and sealed.

### What are the possible risks?

As with all procedures, there are risks. These include:

- **Swelling** - caused by bleeding into the scrotum. This swelling will go down once the fluid is absorbed back into the bloodstream.
- **Bruising and bleeding** - the scrotum may become quite bruised and sore. The bruising should start to go down after a few days.
- **Wound infection** - which may need treatment with antibiotics.
- **Failed full sterilisation** - which may need a further procedure to correct.
- **Pain** in your testicles.

**You will have time to discuss all these risks with the doctors and nursing staff before you consent to your procedure.**

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## Are there any alternatives?

Vasectomy is one of several forms of contraception available. Possible alternatives to having a vasectomy are the continued use of another form of contraception, such as condoms, or the oral contraceptive pill (for females). Female sterilisation may also be an option.

## Important information

**Please read the following important information:**

- If you are ill, or cannot keep your appointment for some other reason, please let us know as early as possible. Another patient may benefit from the cancellation of your appointment.
- If you feel worried or nervous and want to talk to someone, please feel free to ring the nurses on the Day Case Unit (Monday to Friday, 10am to 4.30pm).

Leicester General Hospital: 0116 258 4192 (Day Case 1) / 0116 258 8130 (Day Case 2)

Outside these hours contact Urology Emergency Admissions (24 hours a day, 7 days a week):  
**0116 258 4247**

## What happens before my procedure?

You will be seen in a pre-assessment clinic at some point before your procedure, to make sure you are fit for day surgery. At this appointment the nurse will go through your paperwork with you and you will be given information about your procedure.

You will be told about the consent form that you will be asked to sign to give the surgeon permission to carry out your procedure. This appointment is a good time to ask any questions you may have. Please write these down if that will help.

Depending on your general health and your age, we may need to carry out some tests. These will be discussed with you, and may include heart tracing (an electrocardiograph (ECG)), screening swabs for germs/viruses and blood tests.

**If you are taking any medication, please bring it with you.**

## What arrangements do I need to make?

Before you can have your procedure as a day case, you need to plan the following things:

- You must be collected by a responsible adult, who must take you home in a car or taxi after your procedure.
- You must have a responsible adult at home with you for at least 24 hours after your procedure.
- You must have a telephone at home.

You **must not** drive, cycle, operate machinery or drink alcohol for a minimum of 48 hours after your procedure. **Driving after an anaesthetic is a criminal offence, and will affect your insurance cover.**

## **What do I need to do before my procedure?**

### **Read your admission letter carefully.**

- Do not eat or drink anything from the time stated in your letter.
- Do not wear contact lenses.
- Do not wear any jewellery, except for a wedding ring.
- Do not bring any valuables with you into hospital. We cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to personal belongings.
- Do have a bath or shower before you come into hospital.
- Do wear comfortable clothing and supportive underwear to go home in.

### **Expect to wait on the unit before your procedure.**

## **What do I need to bring with me?**

- Your appointment letter. The time you are given to arrive is not the time of your procedure. The surgeon needs to see you before the start of the list, so you may be waiting for your procedure for between 2 and 4 hours.
- Any drugs, medicines or inhalers you are using. Please take your necessary medication before attending; the pre-assessment nurse will advise you when you should take your medication.
- A contact number for your lift home.
- A dressing gown and slippers, if you have them.
- Something to do while you are waiting, such as a book or magazine to read.

## **What will happen while I am on the Day Case Unit?**

- You should come to the Day Case Unit and report to reception. Your details will be checked and you will be directed on to the ward or to the waiting room where a nurse will collect you.
- The nurse will talk to you about your procedure and ask you a few questions.
- You will meet one of the surgical team who will ask you to sign a consent form. If there is anything you are concerned about or do not understand, please ask your surgeon before you sign the form.
- You will also be visited by your anaesthetist; this is the doctor who will look after you while you are asleep.
- The nurse will tell you when to change into your theatre gown, and then take you to the operating theatre.

## **What happens during the procedure?**

- The procedure will take about 30 minutes. It will be done whilst you are asleep.
- Local anaesthetic may be injected into the wounds while you are asleep to keep the ball sac (scrotum) numb for a few hours.
- See below for advice on taking painkillers.

## **What happens after my procedure?**

You will return to the day ward and staff will make sure you are comfortable, and provide you with refreshments. If you have any discomfort or sickness please let the staff know so that they can help you.

You will recover on the ward until your nurse is happy that you are well enough to go home. You will need to eat and drink before you can go home.

As this is a day case procedure patients normally go home on the same day, however very occasionally some patients may need to stay overnight. If your doctor or nurse feels that this is necessary, they will explain to you the reasons for this.

## **Wound care**

Your wound will have dissolvable stitches (they do not need to be removed). Your surgeon may also have put a dressing over the wound, which should not be touched for 48 hours.

You should keep your wound dry for 48 hours, after which you can bath or shower as normal and you can remove the dressing.

After your bath or shower, gently rinse the wound with clean water, but do not rub the wound. Then carefully pat it dry with a clean towel. Wearing close-fitting underwear will help to support the wound.

Always keep the wound clean and dry. Do not be tempted to touch or pick the stitches. The healing process will take between 1 and 2 weeks and your stitches could take up to 4 weeks to dissolve.

Bruising and slight redness around the wound is usual and will not affect the healing. If you notice any increasing redness, swelling or discharge from the wound, you should contact the Day Case Unit for advice.

## **Pain control**

You may have some pain after your procedure. You will need to buy some simple painkillers such as paracetamol. Take them regularly (following the instructions on the packaging) for the first few days.

- Take painkillers when the pain starts. Do not wait for it to get really bad.
- Take painkillers before you go to sleep so you are able to rest.

- If your pain is very bad take the painkillers regularly, (4 times a day) so they keep your pain under control.
- Take painkillers when you wake up, so they are working before you get out of bed.
- Painkillers can cause constipation, so you should drink plenty of water, and eat some high fibre foods such as fruit, vegetables and cereals.
- Everyone is different. Do not be surprised if you are still having some pain for 1 or 2 weeks, this is quite normal.

## When can I return to normal activities?

- **Driving** - you must not drive for at least 48 hours after a general anaesthetic. You will not be covered by your car insurance. Do not drive until you can keep control of your car in an emergency.  
You should contact your insurance company if you are not sure.
- **Work** - the amount of time you need to be off work depends on your job, but will usually be around 3 or 4 days. Please discuss this with your surgeon or nurse.
- **Physical activity** - do not do too much too soon. It is usual to feel some aches and pains for a few days, perhaps up to 2 weeks (avoid strenuous activity, contact sports and heavy lifting for at least 2 weeks).
- **Holidays/ flying** - flying too soon after a procedure can increase the chance of problems, and you may not be covered by your insurance, please discuss this with your insurance company.
- **Sex** - you may resume your normal sexual activity as soon as you feel able, but you must not rely on the vasectomy as contraception until you have provided 1 semen sample, which has no sperm in it. Because of this, you must use another form of contraception until you have received confirmation that your semen sample is clear of sperm (see next section).

## How will I know if the vasectomy has worked?

To check that the procedure has been successful, you will need to provide a semen sample 18 weeks after your vasectomy. This sample will then be tested to make sure it is clear of sperm.

**Please follow the instructions on the “PVSA” sheet which will be given to you before you leave the hospital. This gives you important information about how to produce the specimen sample and where and when to bring it in for testing.**

**Please note:** as it takes a while for your system to become clear of sperm, you are advised to have ejaculated at least 20 times before providing the sample.

You will be given a specimen pot and a microbiology form before you leave the Day Case Unit. **18 weeks** after your vasectomy, produce a specimen of semen directly into the pot. Check that the pot is correctly labelled with your full name, and that the date and time of collection of the specimen are written on the form.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Leicester's Hospitals is a research active trust so you may find research happening on your ward or in your clinic. To find out about the benefits of research and become involved yourself, speak to your clinician or nurse, call 0116 258 8351 or visit [www.leicestersresearch.nhs.uk/patient-and-public-involvement](http://www.leicestersresearch.nhs.uk/patient-and-public-involvement)