



ALL ABOUT STERILIZATION



What is sterilization?

People who do not want (more) children can have surgery to prevent future pregnancies. This has been called “having your tubes tied,” “tubal ligation,” “sterilization,” and/or “salpingectomy.” Birth control surgery is convenient, highly effective, hormone-free, and not reversible. This method is permanent. If you may want to become pregnant in the future, choose another method.



How does sterilization work?

When a person’s ovaries release an egg, it passes through the fallopian tubes to the uterus. If sperm and egg meet in the fallopian tubes, the egg is “fertilized.” If a fertilized egg attaches to the uterus, the person becomes pregnant.

During sterilization surgery, the fallopian tubes are cut out or blocked so the egg cannot meet sperm. This prevents pregnancy.



Can a sterilization procedure be undone or reversed?

Sterilization should be considered permanent. It is very difficult and expensive to become pregnant after sterilization. Even if an operation can be done to reconnect the fallopian tubes, you may still not be able to get pregnant.

Pregnancy may also be possible through in-vitro fertilization (IVF) or similar procedures, but they are expensive, may not be covered by insurance, and may not work.



It is estimated that 1 out of every 5 people later regrets having sterilization surgery. Before choosing surgery, think about other long-term birth control options like an intrauterine device (IUD) or an arm implant. These can be safer, sometimes work better, and can be hormone-free, especially if you are young or have not had children.



How is sterilization done?

The operation is done under anesthesia in a surgery center, or hospital. The choices for anesthesia include:

- » **General anesthesia:** You need a breathing tube and do not feel anything until you wake up.
- » **Spinal or epidural anesthesia:** The doctor injects medicine near your spinal cord to make your body numb from the waist down for a few hours.

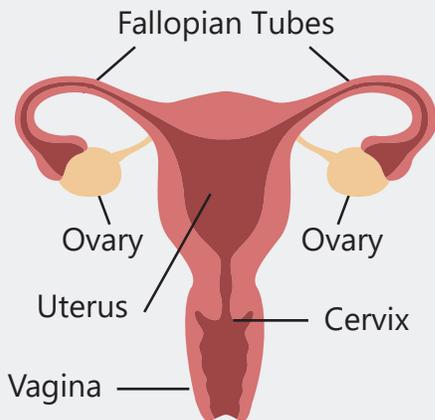
After you get the anesthesia, there are several ways a doctor can reach your fallopian tubes:

- » **Laparoscopy:** The doctor makes small cuts in the skin of your belly. A thin metal tube is put into your belly with a light called a

laparoscope to see inside your abdomen and reach your fallopian tubes.

- » **Mini-laparotomy:** The doctor reaches the fallopian tubes through a two-inch cut in the skin, just above the pubic hairline.
- » **During Cesarean section** (operation to deliver a baby): The doctor reaches the fallopian tubes through the same cut that was used to deliver the baby.

Female Reproductive Anatomy



In a sterilization surgery, the fallopian tubes are cut or blocked. This stops the egg from meeting sperm and prevents pregnancy.

How much does sterilization cost?

All forms of birth control, including sterilization and vasectomy, are free with Family PACT.

Is sterilization the same as hysterectomy?

No. Sterilization procedures block or remove the fallopian tubes. A hysterectomy is a surgery in which the uterus is removed for health reasons such as heavy bleeding or cancer. After hysterectomy, pregnancy is not possible, but this is not usually done as a form of birth control surgery.

Which type of sterilization procedure would be best for me?

Talk with your health care provider about the different types of operations and anesthesia so you can decide which procedure would be best for you.

What are the risks involved in sterilization?

Any operation carries some risk and can cause health problems.

Minor problems may include soreness near the skin cut, cramps, nausea, vomiting, and soreness in the shoulders, neck, or throat.

Serious health problems are rare. They may include bleeding, infection, injury to the intestines or bladder, and heart or breathing problems from the anesthesia.

If you ever think you might be pregnant after sterilization, contact your provider right away. Ectopic pregnancy can occur if a fertilized egg implants outside the uterus.



When can I have the sterilization procedure?

The operation can be done:

- » At any time you are not pregnant.
- » In the hospital after having a baby.
- » During a Cesarean section.
- » Thirty days after you signed a consent form.

What should I expect after the sterilization procedure?

Usually, patients go home from the hospital on the same day they have surgery. Most people have pain and need to take it easy for a few days or weeks. Some people have chronic pelvic pain after sterilization surgery. Your health care provider will give you instructions for follow-up care.

Sterilization has **NOT** been shown to cause cancer, heart disease, or other unhealthy conditions or health problems.

Sterilization will **NOT**:

- » Protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- » Change the amount of female hormone called estrogen in your body.
- » Change your sex drive or desire. Some people may enjoy sex more because they do not have to worry about getting pregnant.
- » Stop your periods or cause menopause.
- » Cause weight gain.
- » Cause skin or breast changes.



When can I start having sex again after sterilization?

You can start having sex as soon as you feel comfortable.



How soon will I be able to stop using other birth control?

After the surgery, you can stop using other types of birth control.



How well does sterilization work?

Sterilization is a very effective way to prevent pregnancy, but it is not the most effective form of birth control. Unintended pregnancy can happen for up to 3 out of every 100 sexually active women within one year after surgery.



Will sterilization protect me from STIs and HIV?

No. Sterilization will **NOT** protect you from STIs like chlamydia, gonorrhea, genital warts, herpes, syphilis, or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). To protect yourself, you should use an external or internal condom every time you have sex, even if you have had sterilization surgery.



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Are there any forms to fill out?

You must sign a consent form at least 30 days before the procedure. You do not need permission from your partner or anyone else, and you may change your mind any time before the operation.



To be covered by Medi-Cal or Family PACT, you must be at least 21 years old, mentally competent, and able to understand the consent process.



What are other highly effective ways to prevent pregnancy?

Vasectomy is a procedure in which the tubes that carry sperm to the penis are cut. Vasectomy is safer, simpler, and less expensive than female sterilization.

Contraceptive arm implants and IUDs are also highly effective, can be hormone-free, and can be safely used for many years. When you stop using an IUD or implant, you are then able to get pregnant.



Who is a good candidate for sterilization?

Sterilization may be a good choice if:

- » You do not want any (more) children.
- » You cannot or do not want to use another form of birth control method.
- » Pregnancy would be dangerous to your health or a baby's health.
- » You have a medical problem that you do not want to pass on.

Talk to your health care provider to make sure it is the right choice for you.