

Dr Rao - "On the Couch"

Talking about Vasectomy!

Indian Sun: What happens in Vasectomy?

Dr Rao: Vasectomy is a simple day procedure where the vas deferens tube is cut to prevent sperm from fertilizing the egg. The procedure takes just 20 minutes and can be done under either local or general anaesthetic?

Indian Sun: Is there another option to prevent pregnancy?

Dr Rao: Abstinence is the safest option but not very popular! Tubal ligation can be performed in the female partner but it is a much more invasive procedure compared to vasectomy. Usually after delivering 2 or 3 kids the woman feels it is high time the man did his bit too! Apart from these surgical methods, there is the oral contraceptive pill; the hormone implant; intrauterine device; or condoms.

Indian Sun: Can it be reversed?

Dr Rao: Prior to vasectomy I always ask a couple to be 100% sure that they don't want any more children. Though reversal is possible, it is a microsurgery with poor rates of success.

Indian Sun: What are the risks of vasectomy?

Dr Rao: As far as surgical procedures it is a very safe minor operation with very few serious risks. The chances of infection and bleeding are extremely low. Roughly 1 in 5000 cases can fail due to the two ends of the vas miraculously joining up again. We always get a semen analysis done 6-12 weeks after surgery to confirm sterilization. Some men have persistently sore testicles afterwards but this usually settles down with simple measures.

Indian Sun: What about post-operative management?

Dr Rao: After the procedure there is some minor discomfort for 1 or 2 weeks. However most patients get back to work in 2 or 3 days. We recommend avoiding heavy lifting for 1 week and vigorous exercise for 2 weeks. The sutures are all absorbable so nothing needs to be removed. Showering can be done, but the suture line should not be soaped or scrubbed for at least 10 days.

Indian Sun: Have you had any bad experiences with vasectomy?

Dr Rao: There have been no major complications thankfully. In all the cases I have done, there have been only 1 or 2 minor problems. There was one patient who had been to a community based "Vasectomy clinic". He was never examined by the Doctor. The nurse got him up on the couch and prepped everything, then the Doctor walked in. He told the patient, "I can't find the tube, but I will just start cutting!" The patient had the good sense to jump off the table and came seeking a second opinion. It turned out that he had very difficult anatomy and was never suitable for a procedure under local anaesthetic. Yes, every Urologist has had stories like that.

Indian Sun: Anything else to add on vasectomy?

Dr Rao: Like every field of surgery, it is important to have a thorough, unhurried consultation and examination with the surgeon beforehand. The surgery is very straightforward but should be done meticulously. The surgeon should be available to answer any questions or concerns in the initial postoperative period. If these rules are followed, then most often everything falls into place.