

Female Sterilisation

This information sheet may be available in different formats. It is a brief outline of this problem and is not intended to replace verbal communication with medical or nursing staff.

NB: Before considering sterilisation, both you and your partner should be absolutely certain you do not want any more children as this is a permanent method of contraception.

What is Female Sterilisation?

Usually this procedure is carried out laparoscopically; it is a minor operation in which the fallopian tubes (the tubes that carry the sperm to the egg) are blocked off surgically. When the operation is complete, intercourse can be enjoyed without fear of pregnancy.

What is a laparoscopic procedure?

This is when a telescope is passed through your belly button. Another instrument is then passed through a small cut along your bikini line. Sterilisation usually involves placing clips onto your fallopian tubes. There will be stitches in the small cuts from this procedure.

What are the risks involved?

Although the risks of damage to other internal organs such as bowel or bladder are minimal, it should be recognised that this does happen occasionally.

Excessive bleeding following laparoscopy can occur, the risk of this is slight and you will be observed on return to the ward to ensure there isn't any bleeding. Any surgical procedure carries the risk of infection to the wound site, though this is rare you will be given advice on discharge about caring for your wound.

Risk of Failure

It is recognised that this procedure is a permanent method of contraception, however, there is some risk of failure, less than 1.0 %. That is one in a hundred chance of the operation failing.

Will I need to continue with contraception after surgery?

It is advisable to continue with your contraception until your next period, as this will allow you to finish the course if you are on the pill. In addition it allows time for internal swelling to settle, and to ensure an egg was not released just before the operation.

What alternatives do I have?

There are many other methods of contraception available, which do not require surgery. Please discuss this with your GP or at a Well Woman Clinic. A Contraception and Reproductive Health Services Clinic is held at Liverpool Women's Hospital each Wednesday evening from 5.30 – 7.00pm and Friday morning from 9.30 – 11.00 am, an appointment is not necessary. The family planning nurse or doctor would be happy to discuss alternate methods of contraception with you.

Contraceptive Advice is also available from the
Brook Advisory Centre
81 London Road
Liverpool
Merseyside
L3 8JA
Tel: 0151 207 4000

Or by telephoning the National Contact Number Tel: 0800 018 5023

Alternately your partner may consider methods of contraception available to him e.g. Condoms or a Vasectomy, which involves surgery as a day case, this too can be discussed with your GP

Will I still have periods?

Yes, until such time as you start the menopause naturally you will continue to have periods. Women who have been on the pill prior to the surgery may find their periods slightly heavier.

When can I have sex again?

Whenever you feel comfortable to resume normal sexual activity. Remember to use contraception until your next period.

What is the pain like following sterilisation?

It is considered that the pain following sterilisation is mild, simple pain relief such as paracetamol is advised. Sometimes women complain of pain at the tip of the shoulders and behind the breast bone, this is due to gas trapped at the time of the procedure. Early mobilisation and paracetamol should help, if not seek further advice from your GP or by contacting the number at the end of this leaflet.

How do I look after my wound?

Keep the wound clean by having daily baths, dry the area thoroughly. Dissolvable stitches are used but it may take up to 14 days for these to dissolve. Staff will speak to you about this before you are discharged home.

When can I go back to work and resume normal activity?

We would advise you to have 2 – 3 days off work following this surgery, but you will know if you are fit enough to return to work after this time, if not see your own GP for a sick note. Household chores and driving can be resumed within 3 days.

Is there anything else I should know?

It is very important that you consider your actions carefully before agreeing to sterilisation as it is a permanent procedure and reversal is not always possible and carries a low success rate.

Advantages of female sterilisation

- Sterilisation does not interfere with the act of intercourse.
- There is nothing to remember like taking tablets.
- It is extremely unlikely that you will ever get pregnant again.

Disadvantages of female sterilisation

- Difficult to reverse if you change your mind.
- Complications involved related to surgical procedures and anaesthetic.
- Although rare, there is a risk of failure.

Retained tissue

Any tissue taken at the time of your operation will be sent for examination and your Consultant will be informed of the result. Following investigation the tissue will be disposed of in accordance with health and safety.

Don't forget there is always someone to talk to if you have any concerns following this procedure. If at any time you need advice contact, Emergency Room at Liverpool Women's Hospital on 0151 702 4583 or Ward 4 at Aintree Centre for Women's Health on 0151 529 3433.

For further information visit <http://www.2womenshealth.co.uk/>

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