

# sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

**wildfact** The first recorded vasectomy was performed on a dog in 1823.

## Q How effective are vasectomies? Are they dangerous?

A. Vasectomies are a permanent method of male birth control that prevent the release of sperm into the semen by sealing off the vas deferens. Men still ejaculate and their sex drive is unaffected – they just don't have the ability to father a child since, without sperm, fertilization can't take place. Following a vasectomy, a man will have his semen tested to ensure his sperm count is down to zero, which usually takes about 10-20 ejaculations.

Vasectomies are over 99.8% effective in preventing pregnancy. That means that only 1-2 women out of 1,000 will have an unplanned pregnancy one year after her partner's vasectomy. The procedure itself is also very safe. Though unusual, complications can include infection, bleeding, inflammation, or in rare cases, the recanalization of the vas deferens which allows sperm to once again flow freely, and with it, the potential for pregnancy.

Legally, men over 18 can get a vasectomy, though physicians will counsel patients and may even refuse to perform the procedure

based on a man's age. Time has a way of changing our views, after all. While the prospect of a permanent "fix" may hold considerable appeal to a guy in his early 20's with no plans for children, that perspective may change over time. And although surgically reconnecting the vas deferens later on is possible, reversing a vasectomy is difficult, expensive, and carries no guarantees. For these reasons, even good candidates for a vasectomy may be required to undergo a waiting period to think things through after their initial doctor's visit.

Vasectomies offer a highly effective form of birth control that is typically covered by most health insurance plans. But those advantages must also be weighed against other considerations, including its permanence and the fact that it offers no protection against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Estimates vary, but about 9% of males have undergone a vasectomy here in the U.S. New Zealand leads the world in this particular category – over 40% of *Kiwi* men have had the procedure.

Source: [webmd.com](http://webmd.com)



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Have a question? Send it to [sextalk@email.arizona.edu](mailto:sextalk@email.arizona.edu)

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