



## The Association of Minimally Invasive Gynecologic Surgeons

*...dedicated to safe, state-of-the-art surgery and health life-styles for women of all ages*

**R. Wayne Whitted MD, MPH**

**Paul A. Pietro MD**

**Marina Santana MMS, PA-C**

8740 N Kendall Dr. Suite 101

Miami, Florida 33176

Phone: 305-596-3744

## Tubal Sterilization: What You Should Know

### What is tubal sterilization?

Tubal sterilization is a type of surgery that helps keep you from getting pregnant. It closes off your fallopian tubes (which carries an egg to your uterus each month). When the tubes are closed, sperm can't reach the egg, so you can't get pregnant.

Sterilization won't make you less feminine. It doesn't cause weight gain or facial hair. It won't decrease your sexual pleasure or cause menopause. It's important to know that sterilization won't protect you against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Always use a condom during each sexual activity to prevent STDs.

### How is sterilization done?

Closing the fallopian tubes for sterilization can be done in several ways. Tubal ligation is when the tubes are closed off by tying and cutting. They also can be closed by sealing (cautery) or by applying clips, clamps or rings. Sometimes, a small piece of the fallopian tube is removed.

### Will sterilization hurt?

You will be given anesthetics before the procedure. The four types are general (makes you sleep), regional (makes you numb from the waist down), local (acts only where applied) and IV sedation (makes you calm). The choice of anesthetic will depend on your health and the type of sterilization being done.

When a local anesthetic is injected or regional anesthesia is given, you may feel brief discomfort. The pain is relieved with pain medicines and sedatives. You'll be awake, but sleepy. You'll feel little or no discomfort during the procedure. General anesthesia is painless, but it can put you at risk of serious problems.

### How will I feel after surgery?

How you feel after the operation depends on your general health, the type of procedure and your tolerance to pain. You may feel tired and have slight stomach or shoulder pain. You may feel dizzy, nauseated, bloated or gassy. Most of these symptoms last 1 to 3 days.

Contact your doctor right away if you:

- Develop a fever.
- Bleed from an incision.
- Have severe stomach pain that won't stop.
- Have fainting spells.

### **How soon can I go back to work after sterilization?**

That depends on your general health, your attitude, your job and the type of sterilization. Recovery is usually complete in a couple of days. You may want to take it easy for 1 week or so. Avoid heavy lifting for about 1 week.

### **Will I still have a period?**

Yes. If you were using birth control pills and your periods were irregular before you started using birth control pills, you should return to irregular patterns after sterilization.

As women get older, their periods change. How often your period occurs, how long it lasts and the amount of bleeding will vary. As you near menopause (usually in your late 40s to 50s), you can expect to have irregular cycles. This happens whether or not you've had a tubal sterilization procedure.

### **How soon can I have sex again?**

Ask your doctor. Don't have sex until you feel comfortable about it. It usually takes about a week after surgery. You'll have to wait at least 4 weeks if a sterilization is done shortly after childbirth.

### **Do I need my husband's or partner's consent to have a tubal sterilization?**

No. However, talking about the operation beforehand is usually best for most relationships.

### **Can sterilization be reversed?**

If you think you might want to reverse the procedure some day, don't have a tubal sterilization. Reversal procedures are complicated, are often not successful, are expensive and are usually not covered by health insurance. Even though tubes sometimes can be rejoined, pregnancy isn't guaranteed. Many women can't try reversals because there's not enough of their fallopian tubes left.

### **Other Organizations**

Planned Parenthood

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org>

800-230-PLAN (800-230-7526)

### **Source**

[Counseling Issues in Tubal Sterilization](http://www.aafp.org/afp/20030315/1287.html) (*American Family Physician* March 15, 2003, <http://www.aafp.org/afp/20030315/1287.html>)