15. When can a man rely on his vasectomy for contraception?

♦ He should wait 3 months before relying on his vasectomy for contraception.

♦ During this period, he should resume sexual activity, but he or his partner will need to use additional contraceptive protection.

♦ Semen analysis, where available, can confirm contraceptive effectiveness after the 3–month waiting period.

Comments

The expert Working Group considered that vasectomy is highly effective when the procedure is properly performed and when the man waits for 3 months after the vasectomy before having unprotected intercourse. The expert Working Group reviewed evidence that a 3–month waiting period after vasectomy will be long enough for most men to be assured of vasectomy effectiveness but noted that semen analysis, where available, is the most reliable means to document vasectomy effectiveness.

The expert Working Group also reviewed evidence that having had 20 ejaculations after vasectomy (in the absence of a 3–month waiting period) is not a reliable determinant of vasectomy effectiveness. The man, however, should resume sexual activity (while using contraceptive protection) during the 3–month waiting period after his vasectomy in order to clear any remaining sperm from his semen.

Systematic review question

How many months or how many ejaculations after vasectomy are required to establish vasectomy success? Level of evidence: I, good, direct.

References from systematic review


56. Linnet L. [Control of vasectomy. A prospective study of the semen of 45 vasectomized patients and experience from control study of 197 patients in whom vasectomy was undertaken employing fascial interposition]. *Ugeskrift for Laeger*, 1977, 139:1708–1714.


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**Key unresolved issues**

Is there a number of ejaculations after which the man can comfortably rely on his vasectomy for contraception?

How does vasectomy effectiveness vary by method of vas occlusion, especially in low-resource settings?

Can reliable tests be developed for low-resource settings for determining vasectomy effectiveness (including semen analysis)?