

Woman's Health Options

Considering a tubal ligation?

What is a tubal ligation?

A tubal ligation is a permanent method of birth control. It is a surgical procedure and it is **not reversible**. It cannot be undone; you must be sure that you do not want to have any more children before you choose tubal ligation as birth control. An operation is done to block the fallopian tubes. When the fallopian tubes are blocked the sperm and the egg cannot meet and fertilization does not occur. You can have a tubal ligation shortly after you give birth or after an abortion, but you must talk with your doctor or a specialist first to figure out when would be the best time.

Tubal ligation might be right for you if:

- ♀ You decide that you don't want any or more children in the future.
- ♀ You do not want to risk contraceptive failure.
- ♀ You have concerns about the possible side effects of other contraceptive methods.
- ♀ You cannot use other contraceptive methods.
- ♀ Your health might be negatively affected by pregnancy, especially if you have had complications with past pregnancies.
- ♀ You do not want to pass on any hereditary illness or disability.

Tubal Ligation might be wrong for you if:

- ♀ You want to have a child at some point in your life or you and your partner want more children.
- ♀ Your partner, friends, and/or family are pressuring you.
- ♀ You are counting on reversal if you change your mind.
- ♀ You are facing marriage and/or sexual problems, temporary mental or physical illness, or financial worries, or you are out of work (temporary problems can be resolved; tubal ligation is permanent and cannot be easily reversed).
- ♀ You have not considered possible changes in your life, such as, divorce, remarriage, or death of children (tubal ligation cannot be reversed even if your life changes).

How effective is a tubal ligation?

A tubal ligation is **ALMOST** 100% effective. That means less than 1 woman in 100 can get pregnant after having a tubal ligation. You will be sterile immediately after the operation and you cannot get pregnant. It is important to know that a tubal ligation does not protect against sexually transmitted diseases/infections (STDs/STIs). If you are concerned about infections use a condom every time you have sex to protect yourself.

How is a tubal ligation done?

- ♀ Your family doctor might perform the tubal ligation or she/he will refer you to a specialist (gynecologist). Alberta Health Care will pay for the procedure.
- ♀ A tubal ligation is performed in a hospital with local or general anesthetic. It is a "day surgery" which means you do not have to stay in the hospital overnight.
- ♀ You and your doctor will decide which method and type of anesthetic is best for you.

♀ Three methods are used to do a tubal ligation (with each method the surgeon locates the fallopian tubes and either cuts and ties them or seals them shut):

1. **Abdominal method:** The surgeon makes a 3 to 4 inch cut through the skin above the pubic hairline to reach the fallopian tubes.
2. **Laparoscopy:** The surgeon makes two tiny cuts, in or near the belly button, one for a light and the other for the instrument to seal off the fallopian tubes.
3. **Vaginal method:** The surgeon makes a small cut at the top of the vagina to reach the fallopian tubes. This method leaves no visible scars.

What are the side effects of a tubal ligation?

- ♀ You may feel a few small pains or discomfort after the operation. These pains should not be serious and they will go away in a few days. The discomfort will depend on which procedure was used for your tubal ligation. Call your doctor if you think the pain is lasting too long or if it is worse than you think it should be.
- ♀ Serious side effects are not common, however, call your doctor immediately if you have:
 - ♀ Fever greater than 39 degrees Celsius
 - ♀ Dizziness that is followed by fainting
 - ♀ Abdominal pain that does not go away or gets progressively worse
 - ♀ Bleeding or fluid coming from the cut
- ♀ You can have vaginal intercourse once you are finished healing. Your doctor will let you know when you are finished healing. Light household work is recommended and women can return to work when they feel comfortable to do so.

Are there long long-term side effects?

- ♀ A tubal ligation does not affect a woman's sexuality, sex drive, or ability to have sex.
- ♀ Your body will continue to make the female hormones and you will still get your period every month.
- ♀ Your body will release an egg every month until menopause. The egg will be naturally absorbed into your body.

For more information or to find a doctor call:

The Birth Control Centre	735-0010
Options Sexual Health Association	423-3737
Woman's Health Options	484-1124
STD Clinic	413-5156
Capital Health Link	408-LINK (5465)

For more information about sexuality, contraception, and women's health:

www.sexualityandu.ca www.cwhn.ca