

About Your Surgery

Varicocele repair

This handout explains how to prepare and what to expect after having surgery to repair varicoceles. These dilated veins can cause infertility, pain, and testicular atrophy.

What are varicoceles?

Varicoceles are veins that are larger than normal. They form inside the *spermatic cord*, the long tube that sperm travel through. The spermatic cord runs from the abdomen to each testicle.

Because they are larger than normal veins, varicoceles can cause blood to collect in the scrotum. They also allow blood to flow backward (*retrograde*) to the testes. You may want to consider having varicocele treatment if you have problems with infertility, pain, or *testicular atrophy* (testes getting smaller).

How are varicoceles treated?

Surgery to treat varicoceles is called *varicocelectomy*. It is a minimally invasive surgery, which means only very small incisions are made.

In a varicocelectomy, ties or clips are used to stop blood flow in the enlarged veins inside the spermatic cord.

Most men have general anesthesia for this surgery. This will make you sleep through the procedure. Local anesthetic is also used to numb the area so that you will be comfortable when you wake up.

Varicocelectomy can usually be done in less than 1 hour. Recovery time is often very short. Most men return to work 1 or 2 days after this surgery.



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How to Prepare

- For 10 days before your surgery, do **not** take any aspirin or aspirin-like drugs such as ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) or naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn). These drugs may cause excess bleeding during and after the procedure.

- Do **not** eat or drink anything after midnight the day before your surgery.

On the Day of Surgery

- If you have medicines that you must take in the morning before your surgery, take them with only a small sip of water.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing.

After Surgery

Precautions

For 24 hours after your surgery, do **not**:

- Drive.
- Use machinery.
- Eat any heavy or large meals. A heavy meal may be hard to digest.
- Drink alcohol.
- Make important decisions. The anesthesia you received can make it hard to think clearly. It can take up to 24 hours to wear off.

What to Expect After Surgery

Symptoms

You may have discomfort after your procedure. These common symptoms do **not** require a doctor's attention:

- Bruising and color change of the skin of your scrotum and swelling of your scrotum. These symptoms take about a week to go away.
- Some swelling, bruising, and color change of the skin around your incision.
- A small amount of thin, clear, pinkish fluid draining from your incision. This will take a few days to go away. Keep the area clean and dry.
- If you had general anesthesia, you may have a sore throat, nausea, constipation, and body aches. These symptoms should go away within 48 hours.

Swelling

To reduce swelling:

- Rest for the first 24 hours after your surgery.
- Use cold packs on your scrotum the night after your surgery and the next day:

- Do **not** place the cold ice pack directly on your skin. Place a thin towel (or scrotal support such as a jock strap) on your scrotum and lay the cold pack (such as a bag of frozen peas) on top of the towel.
- Leave the cold pack on for 20 minutes, then off for 20 minutes. Keep doing this for the first 24 hours after your procedure. Keep the area cool, **NOT** cold.

Fluids and Food

- After surgery, start with clear liquids or light foods. Slowly add your usual foods to your diet, as you are able to handle them.
- Make sure you drink plenty of water so that you stay hydrated.

Pain Medicine

- For moderate pain, take the pain medicine your doctor prescribed. Many doctors prescribe Vicodin, which contains acetaminophen and a prescription pain reliever. If you are taking Vicodin, always take it with food in your stomach so that you do not get nauseated.
- Do **not** drive while you are taking prescription pain medicine.
- You can take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) for mild discomfort beginning 2 to 3 days after surgery.
- **Do not take acetaminophen while you are taking Vicodin.** If you are given pain medicine other than Vicodin, ask your doctor or nurse if it is safe to take acetaminophen while you are taking your prescription pain medicine.

1st Day After Surgery

- Pain and swelling may be worse today than it was yesterday.
- Expect a small amount of bloody discharge from your incision.
- You may get black and blue around the incision site, scrotum, and on the base of your penis. This is normal.

After the 2nd Day

- You may shower.
- You may resume normal, **light** activities 48 hours after your surgery or when you feel better. Do not do any activities that cause you discomfort.
- You may resume more vigorous activities (such as jogging or weight lifting) in 5 to 7 days. Let your body be your guide. If an activity feels uncomfortable, slow down or stop and rest.

- Do **not** take part in any sexual activity, including masturbation, for 5 to 7 days.
- In 48 hours, remove the outer, clear dressing (bandage) and gauze just before you shower. Do not remove the small pieces of white tape (Steri-Strips). This tape will fall off in 7 to 10 days.
- You may return to work when you feel comfortable enough to do so.

When to Call Your Doctor

- During the 2 weeks after your surgery, call your doctor if you have:
 - Fever higher than 101°F (38.3°C)
 - Shaking and chills
 - Nausea and vomiting
 - Allergic reactions to the drugs, such as hives, rash, nausea, or vomiting
- Some bloody discharge from the incision is normal. If the incision site becomes red, painful, or pulls apart, call the Men's Health Center.
- Bruising around the incision site is normal, but if the amount of swelling concerns you, call the Men's Health Center.

If you are concerned about any of these symptoms, or if you have other symptoms that bother you, please call the Men's Health Center. If you need attention after normal business hours, go directly to the Emergency Room.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns.

Men's Health Center:
206-598-6358

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to
5 p.m.

After hours and on weekends
or holidays, call this same
number or go to the
Emergency Room.

Find more information at:
<http://depts.washington.edu/uroweb>

Follow-up Visit

Call the Men's Health Center at 206-598-6358 to make a follow-up appointment in 1 to 2 weeks if you have not already done so.