

Obstetrics and Gynaecology

Sterilisation at the time of Caesarean Section

What is female sterilisation?

Female sterilisation is a permanent and irreversible way of preventing pregnancy.

Is sterilisation reversible?

Female sterilisation is a permanent procedure with reversal not available on the NHS. Where reversal is attempted you would usually have to pay for it and the chances of success are very low. It is important therefore to be sure that you have completed your family before undertaking this decision.

How is the procedure performed?

The procedure is performed through the same cut as a caesarean section. There are various methods used to perform female sterilisation which all involve either tying or cutting the fallopian tubes in order to prevent fertilisation occurring. The procedure is also known as tubal ligation. This prevents the egg and the sperm from meeting, thus stopping fertilisation from occurring.

How effective is female sterilisation?

Female sterilisation by tubal ligation has a failure rate of 1 in 200. This means that 1 woman in every 200 who has the procedure may fall pregnant at any time after the operation. Additionally, when the sterilisation is performed at caesarean section it might have higher chance of failure than sterilisation performed outside of pregnancy because of the changes to the uterus and fallopian tubes in pregnancy.



Will I still have periods?

As female sterilisation does not involve changes to the menstrual cycle, you will still have periods as before.

What are the risks?

If performed at the same time as a caesarean section many of the risks of sterilisation will be the same. These can be found on the information leaflet for caesarean section. Undergoing sterilisation at the time of caesarean section does not increase the risk of your caesarean section. Risks that are specific to the sterilisation procedure include:

- The procedure is permanent and not reversible;
- There is a failure rate of 1 in 200 as discussed above;
- If a woman does fall pregnant after sterilisation there is a risk that the pregnancy may develop in the fallopian tube. This is called an ectopic pregnancy and may be life threatening.

What happens if I fall pregnant after sterilisation?

As described above if you fall pregnant after sterilisation you are at increased risk of an ectopic pregnancy. It is important if you do miss a period that you perform a pregnancy test. If the pregnancy test result is positive you should seek early medical advice as you will need a scan in early pregnancy to identify where the pregnancy is.

Consent for sterilisation

Given the permanent nature of sterilisation it is not possible to get your consent for the procedure on the same day as your caesarean section if the procedure has not previously been discussed with you. This is because it is really important that you have time to consider your options and discuss these with your partner.

Will the procedure be performed?

If you have requested sterilisation at the time of caesarean section it may not always be possible to perform this. This may happen if your caesarean section has to be performed as an emergency rather than as a planned operation or if there is a complication during your caesarean section that makes this not possible.

What are the alternatives?

It is important that you know that there are many alternatives to female sterilisation some of which may be more effective at preventing pregnancy. These include:

- **Male Sterilisation:** this is called a vasectomy. It is usually performed under a local anaesthetic and has a lower failure rate than female sterilisation. Male sterilisation has a failure rate of 1 in 2000, therefore meaning that it has a higher chance of success than female sterilisation. If you are in a long term relationship you and your partner may want to consider both forms of sterilisation and decide which is best for you.
- **Contraceptive methods** including the progesterone intra-uterine system, progesterone-only contraceptive pill, oestrogen-only contraceptive pill, condoms, etc.

Further Information

If you have any other questions or you would like further information, please contact:

Maternity Department
UHCW NHS Trust
Clifford Bridge Road
CV2 2DX
02476967339

For more information about contraceptive methods, see your GP or visit: (website)

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