

# Varicocele Surgery

SUNA Postoperative Care Task Force

## Overview

Varicocele surgery is a procedure offered to men who have pain from the varicocele or male-factor infertility that may benefit from varicocele correction. The cause of varicoceles remains unclear, and there are no specific risk factors.

## Indications

This is a procedure offered to men who have pain related to a varicocele, or who have changes to their sperm count or the shape of their sperm.

There are two common ways that your surgeon may perform this surgery:

- One or two incisions to the groin, and the use of an operating microscope.
- One or two incisions to the groin and the use of magnification glasses.

This surgery is usually done under general anesthesia in the operating room.

## Possible Risks with This Procedure

Every surgery has some risk of infection, and infection is uncommon with this surgery. Any infection is treated on a case-by-case basis. You can expect bruising to the groin area and scrotal swelling that will start 18 to 24 hours after the surgery, and gradually decrease over the following 1 to 2 weeks.

## What to Expect Before Surgery

- You may need to have lab tests, X-rays, and electrocardiograms (EKGs) completed before your surgery if ordered by your surgeon.
- You may be asked to attend a preoperative clinic before surgery.
- You will need to stop taking blood thinners before your surgery (the length of time depends on the type of blood thinner). Make sure you understand how many days you need to stop before surgery. You will also be instructed when to resume them after your surgery.
  - Men taking any type of blood thinner, aspirin, and NSAIDS (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) may have special instructions or may need to take a different blood thinner instead. The provider who prescribes these medications will be contacted to verify it safe for you to be off of them during the time of surgery. Do not stop taking these medications until this is verified.

- If you start any new medications before your surgery, please contact the urology office as soon as possible to discuss whether or not the medication may be taken up to and including the day of the surgery.

## Preoperative Instructions

- Plan to wear loose clothing and loose underwear on the day of your procedure to accommodate the post-operative dressing and maintain your comfort level.
- Do not shave your genitals for two weeks in advance of your scheduled surgery date.

## What to Expect After Surgery

- This is an outpatient procedure. You will be discharged home after the surgery has been completed. You must bring a driver with you to this surgery because you will not be allowed to drive yourself home.
- Some men receive a prescription for 7 to 14 days of antibiotics at discharge, depending on their other medical conditions and individual risk for infection. If you receive antibiotics, please be sure to complete the entire course of antibiotics.
- Once you are home, you may shower and resume self-care. You may wash your incisions gently with soap and water, and pat dry.
- Do not take a bath or use a hot tub until cleared by your surgery team.

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*We hope you and all your family members may benefit from these handouts.*

- Do not drive any motor vehicle or operate motorized equipment for at least 24 hours after your procedure or while taking narcotic (opioid) pain medications.
- Do not make any complex decisions, sign legal documents, or participate in activities that are potentially harmful to others (such as cooking) without supervision for at least 24 hours after your procedure.
- Do not drink alcohol for at least 24 hours after your procedure.
- You may continue your normal diet.
- You may return to work after a few days, as long as your job is sedentary and does not involve heavy lifting. Your surgery team will discuss these details when your surgery is scheduled.
- Expect some mild pain and mild swelling of the scrotum. A gauze pad may be applied to the incision if there is any leakage.
- Please limit your activity until your postoperative visit to promote faster healing. This includes avoiding any heavy lifting, exercise, and sexual activity.
- Please avoid swimming/soaking in any pools, baths, or hot tubs until your first postoperative visit (usually 14 days after your surgery).
- You may resume sexual activity when cleared by your surgical team. This is usually at the first appointment after the surgery.
- Prescription pain medication will be provided. You may also take Extra-Strength Tylenol, Motrin, or Advil as needed for any pain or discomfort after the first 2 to 3 days. Follow the package directions regarding dose.
- If you experience unusual or severe pain that is not relieved by pain medication, excessive bleeding or drainage, excessive swelling or redness, foul odor, or a fever over 101 degrees F, please contact the urology clinic.

You will be given an appointment to return for a postoperative visit approximately 2 weeks after surgery, at which time your progress will be evaluated.

If your sperm count is being monitored, a series of semen analyses to evaluate sperm count are done following the surgery, approximately every 3 months from the original surgery date. The first count after the surgery may not show much improvement, but this usually improves from that point on.

### Resources

- Hayden, R.P., & Goldstein, M. (2019). Microscopic surgical techniques for varicocele repair. In *Varicocele and male infertility* (pp. 209-223). Springer.
- Keller, A.K., Howard, M.M., & Jensen, J.B. (2021). Complications after scrotal surgery – Still a major issue? *Scandinavian Journal of Urology*, *65*(5), 404-407. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21681805.2021.1884131>
- McCormick, B.J., & Coward, R.M. (2019). Varicocele and orchialgia. In *Varicocele and male infertility* (pp. 171-182). Springer.

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