Female Sterilization: Essure

Female sterilization is a permanent method of birth control that cannot be reversed. It should only be done if you never want to become pregnant again. Talk to your doctor about your choice for birth control.

What is Essure?
Essure is a permanent method of birth control for women. A small, flexible device called a micro-insert is placed into each fallopian tube. The fallopian tubes are the tubes the eggs travel through from the ovaries to the uterus.

Once the micro-inserts are in place, scar tissue grows into the micro-inserts, blocking the fallopian tubes. It takes three months for the tubes to become blocked. This blockage of the tubes keeps sperm from reaching and fertilizing the egg to prevent pregnancy.

How is this procedure done?
- Your doctor will talk to you about giving you medicine, called anesthesia, to keep you comfortable during the procedure.
- You will undress from the waist down and given a paper sheet or hospital gown to wear.
- You will lie down on the exam table and put your feet in the stirrups.
- An instrument may be used to expand the opening of the cervix.
- Your doctor inserts a scope with a camera through the vagina and cervix and into the uterus.
- Fluid is added through the scope and into the uterus. The fluid is used to expand the uterus so your doctor can see the openings to the fallopian tubes. You may feel some cramping.
- A small tube, called a catheter, passes through the scope and into the fallopian tube. The micro-insert is attached to the end of the catheter.
The micro-insert is placed in the fallopian tube, and the catheter is removed. This process is repeated for the other fallopian tube. You will be given medicine to reduce spasms and cramping. This procedure takes about 35 minutes. Your recovery will take several hours. It is best for your safety to have an adult with you to drive you home after this procedure.

How well does Essure work?

Female sterilization is 99% effective. This means it prevents pregnancy most of the time. It is very rare, but pregnancy can still occur. If you become pregnant after sterilization, the pregnancy may grow in the tube rather than the uterus. This can cause severe problems.

When does it start working?

You will need to use another form of birth control for three months after the procedure or until your tubes become blocked. After three months, you will have an x-ray test, called a hysterosalpingogram (HSG). This test is done to check that your fallopian tubes are blocked and the micro-inserts are in place. Pregnancy could occur if the micro-inserts fail to block the tubes. Your doctor will tell you when it is safe to only use the micro-inserts for birth control.

What are the benefits of using this type of birth control?

- Can be done at your doctor’s office
- No incisions or general anesthesia is needed
- Most women return to their normal activities in 1 to 2 days
- Covered by most insurance plans
- Very effective birth control that you don’t need to think about before, during, or after sex

What are the risks of Essure?

- Injury to fallopian tubes or uterus
- Pain or cramping
- Vaginal bleeding
- Menstrual cycle changes
- Nausea or vomiting
- Fainting
- Sweating
- Slowed heart rate
- Pregnancy outside of the uterus (ectopic)

Call your doctor if you have any problems or signs of infection, such as fever, vaginal discharge, odor, or severe pain.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail health-info@osu.edu.

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