

Gender-Affirming Surgery: Orchiectomy

Gender-affirming orchiectomy is a surgery to remove both testicles and part of the spermatic cord. This surgery is done to help relieve gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria is the medical diagnosis for those who feel discomfort when their gender identities do not match their sex assigned at birth. The surgery may also reduce your need for some hormone medications.

This brochure describes what you need to do before and after surgery to have the best possible outcome.

*If you have
any questions,
please ask your
physician.*

Surgical scheduling process

We follow the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH) standards of care guidelines for gender-affirming surgery. This includes needing 2 letters of support from a mental health professional to move forward with your surgery. We can give you resources to help you get these letters.

You may fax the letters of support to 312.695.7030 or send a message to us through MyNM with the letters as attachments. We will review these. The Northwestern Medicine Gender Pathways Program and Northwestern Medicine Financial Department will work with you and your insurance company for surgical clearance after we receive the letters. This may take up to 30 days. Once you have surgical clearance, we can schedule your surgery.

Preparing for surgery

Any surgery is hard for your body. It is important that you are as healthy as possible for the best outcome. You will meet with our Perioperative (meaning near the time of surgery) Medicine team who will check your overall health. They will tell you how you can improve your health to make your surgery safer and help you recover faster.

Smoking and nicotine use

Smoking increases your risk of problems after surgery. It can keep your wound from healing or cause it to become infected.

Medications

Your surgeon and care team will talk with you about your medication plan before surgery. You can keep taking your usual hormone medications up to the day of surgery.

Schedule a visit with your physician that prescribed the hormone medication within 2 weeks after surgery. They will need to adjust your medications since you will no longer have testicles making hormones.

Surgery

The surgeon will remove both testicles. They will also remove part of the spermatic cord, which contains the blood vessels and vas deferens (sperm tube). They will make a single incision in the scrotum. The incision will be along a natural skin line to lessen scarring. The surgeon does not usually take away the amount of scrotal skin left. They will close the incision with stitches that dissolve over several weeks. They will cover the incision with a surgical glue that protects the skin while it heals.

After surgery

You will be discharged from the hospital the same day as your surgery.

You will have a gauze bandage compressing the scrotal skin within a pair of disposable underwear. This is to protect against hematomas (blood collections) from forming. You will have bruising and swelling in the scrotal area that may last for several weeks.

You may notice numbness and tingling on the skin of your groin area. This may last for months until the nerves near the skin grow back.

Problems after surgery

Every surgery carries a risk for problems. Problems may include:

- Small blood collections in the scrotal area
- Poor wound healing
- Infection

Sometimes, part of the cord that is left can be felt in the groin, but this is rare.

We will talk with you about all of the possible problems and risks at your consultation.

Care at home after surgery

Keep the wound area clean by showering and using a mild soap. Do not scrub the incision. Keep the incision dry after showering and do not apply any ointments or lotion to the incision.

Follow these instructions for 2 weeks after surgery:

- Do not do heavy exercise
- Do not have sexual activity
- Do not lift anything over 10 pounds (about the weight of a gallon of milk)

Post-operative appointment

After your surgery, call the Northwestern Memorial Hospital Department of Urology to schedule a post-operative check-up with your surgeon. This visit should be 4 to 6 weeks after surgery.

If you have any questions or need help, please ask your care team or contact us through MyNM.

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