

March Madness: Basketball and Vasectomies

Lauren Cox, ABC News

A Wisconsin health care clinic ties in its vasectomy promotion with basketball. Yes, a vasectomy. In the past two years, more and more doctors across the nation have jumped on the tournament as a prime opportunity to get men to “take care of the equipment and lower your seed for the tourney,” as one advertisement for an Oregon urologist suggested.

Urologists are even offering March Madness deals with pizza, mugs and reminders of the mandatory days off of from work they'll need.

For the 15-minute procedure, one patient in Oregon will also receive a long weekend to sit at home and watch the games with his new promotional package: a cooler, a Subway sandwich coupon, a promotional T-shirt, a sports magazine and a bag of frozen peas, ah ... for the swelling. David Bone says he'll spend spare time playing with his five children.

Dr. Douglas Hoff, a urologist at the Oregon Urology Institute, said Bone is not alone. He's seen twice as many vasectomy appointments in March than in any other month. “I don't know if these were the guys who were on the fence and this pushed them over the edge, or if these are guys who would be doing it anyways,” said Hoff.

In Green Bay, WI, Dr. Bruce Neal is also reporting a slight business uptick during the tournament.

“Usually because of the weather the way it is, a lot of people are going to be watching ... [their] NCAA basketball team,” said Neal, of the BayClinic. “We thought we could catch people in their down time, and give them a reason to sit there and watch one basketball game after another.” Neal's office also used a “Let our Boys Take Care of Your Boys” promotion at the end of the year to draw in more customers. This is his second year of offering a March Madness promotion.

Although birth control is an option for many couples, urologists say men are far less likely to take the leap. The National Institutes of Health estimates that 15 percent of couples rely on female sterilization, but only five percent of couples rely on male sterilization as a form of birth control.

Like any surgical procedures, vasectomies have risks and a recovery time. But the operation is much less demanding than tubal ligation. There are also more risks during recovery for women than men. Complications, for men, according to Neal, include bleeding and infection in about one in 100 patients. Neal said most patients who start bleeding do so because they've ignored instructions to rest. Very few men may also develop chronic pain after the procedure.

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"I think it's hard to convince men, in general, to get health care," said Neal. However, Neal said once men enter his office the majority go through with the procedure.

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