

Advances in Women's Health

New Minimally Invasive Procedure Delivers Permanent Sterilization

With the recent FDA approval of the Essure System (Conceptus), women seeking permanent sterilization now have the option of choosing a minimally invasive procedure that can be performed without abdominal incisions or general anesthesia.

Las Colinas Medical Center in Irving, Texas is one of the first centers in the state to offer this new sterilization method, which involves placing a small metallic implant into a section of each fallopian tube using a standard five-millimeter telescope (hysteroscope) and a disposable delivery system. Each implant consists of a spring-like coil with intertwining polyethylene fibers. The flexible coil expands when released in the fallopian tube, anchoring itself and conforming to the shape and diameter of the tube. The polyethylene fibers elicit a benign tissue response that further stabilizes the device and leads to occlusion of the fallopian tube.

John J. Zavaleta, M.D., medical director of Las Colinas Obstetrics and Gynecology in Irving, has found the technique to be both safe and highly effective. Typically patients are able to resume their normal activities within a day or two, at most, following surgery.

Compared with laparoscopy that requires general anesthesia and hospital admission, the Essure system offers advantages for the patient. It is a welcome addition for women who may be poor candidates for laparoscopic procedures, including those who are very obese or who have had multiple previous abdominal surgeries, in that it offers less risk than the more traditional approach. The Essure procedure is done in our office with mild sedation by board certified anesthesiologists.

As with men who choose vasectomy as the sterilization of choice, permanent contraception does not occur immediately with this technique. Vasectomy patients incur a waiting period and monitoring prior to confirmation of sterilization. Women who undergo the hysteroscopic sterilization procedure must continue to use some form of contraception while waiting for the painless scarring to close the fallopian tubes. After approximately three months, patients return for an evaluation including x-rays to verify proper localization of the device and complete tubal blockage. This visit typically results in the discontinuance of the need for alternate contraception.

Essure is a simple, safe, office procedure covered by all insurances. Most require only your customary office co-pay.

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