

gold coast
spine

Anterior lumbar spinal surgery & fertility preservation

What men need to know...

If you are a man who is considering anterior lumbar spinal surgery, you need to give some thought to what your current family plans are and how they may change in the future.

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Retrograde ejaculation

Anterior lumbar spinal surgery involves the surgeon approaching your spine from the front - through the abdomen. During the approach, every care is taken to protect the structures in front of the spine. However, in a small number of cases, problems occur that can impact on your fertility in the future.

The complication is called **retrograde ejaculation** and it affects a small number of men undergoing anterior lumbar spine surgery. Published research suggests that it occurs in **less than 2% of cases (2 in every 100 cases)**.

NOTE: This complication does not affect female surgical patients.

How does it happen?

The sympathetic nerves that lie over the spine supply the bladder neck muscle. This muscle tightens to prevent semen from entering the bladder as the semen passes from the prostate to the penis. If the sympathetic nerve is injured, this muscle may not work properly. When an injury occurs, some of the sperm enters the bladder instead of being ejected out through the penis. Injuries to the sympathetic nerve can occur even when the utmost care is taken by the surgical team during your procedure.

How does it change sexual intercourse?

Retrograde ejaculation does not affect your ability to have sexual intercourse. But, when you orgasm, there will be little or no semen out of your penis (dry orgasms). Your urine may also be cloudy after orgasm as it contains semen.

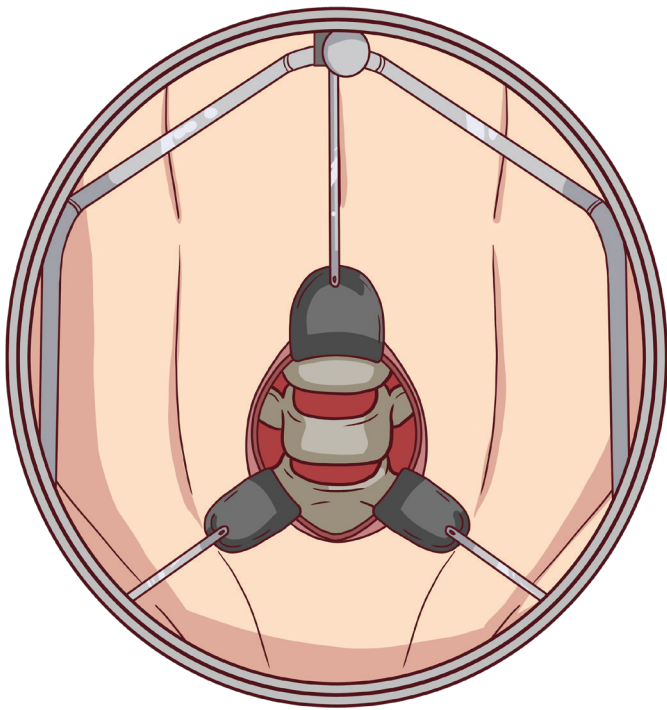
How does it affect my fertility?

As retrograde ejaculation reduces the amount of semen ejaculated into the vagina, it can reduce the ability of your female partner to conceive a child. It can also affect your ability to donate or freeze your sperm in the future.

Sperm freezing

We recommend that you give serious thought to freezing and storing your sperm before undergoing anterior lumbar spinal fusion. While you may not be planning to father children currently, you may wish to in the future. Sperm freezing is now quite a common procedure but there are some steps you need to take. We recommend acting well in advance of your surgery.

There are several fertility organisations on the Gold Coast that offer sperm freezing. While we do not specifically recommend one over the other, we would encourage you chose an organisation with an established track record and is likely to be able to keep your sperm until you require it, maybe even years down the track. If you are not from the Gold Coast, these services are offered in most Australian cities.



Anterior approach - lumbar spine