

Male Urethral Sling

WARWIKI

Patient Information · A sling to treat urine leakage after prostate surgery

A male sling is a soft strip of mesh placed under the urethra (the tube urine flows through) to treat urine leakage — most often the leakage with coughing, lifting, or activity that can follow prostate surgery. It lifts and supports the urethra so you can hold urine better. Unlike the artificial sphincter, there is nothing to operate. This handout explains how it works, how to prepare, and what to expect.

About This Procedure

Leaking urine with activity, coughing, or lifting is called **stress incontinence**, and it often follows prostate surgery. A sling treats it by placing a soft mesh strip under the urethra and gently lifting it back toward its normal position.

The sling **supports** the urethra rather than squeezing it shut, so once you heal you **urinate normally** — there is no pump, button, or device to operate.

What to Know

A sling works best for **mild-to-moderate** leakage in men who still have some sphincter function, which your surgeon checks beforehand. For heavier leakage, or if you have had **pelvic radiation**, an **artificial urinary sphincter** is usually the better choice — your surgeon will discuss which fits you. A sling may greatly **reduce** leakage rather than stop it completely, and if it is not enough, a sphincter can still be placed later.

LEARN THE TERMS

Stress incontinence

Leaking urine with activity, coughing, or lifting.

Urethra

The tube that carries urine out of the body.

Sling

A soft strip of mesh placed under the urethra to lift and support it.

Repositioning check

A look inside with a small camera to confirm that lifting the urethra is likely to help.

Urinary retention

Temporary trouble emptying the bladder after surgery; may need a catheter for a short time.

Artificial sphincter (AUS)

An alternative device, with a pump, usually used for heavier leakage.

General anesthesia

Medicine that keeps you asleep and pain-free during surgery.

WILL IT HURT? The surgery is done under general or spinal anesthesia, so you feel nothing during it. Afterward, expect soreness, swelling, and bruising in the groin and the area between the scrotum and anus for a couple of weeks — ice, a scrotal support, and pain medicine help. The surgery takes about an hour, and many people go home the same day.

How to Get Ready (Before Surgery)

- Done under **general or spinal anesthesia** — follow all surgery instructions (fasting, and which medicines to hold, including blood thinners).
- A **urine test** checks for infection (treated first), and a **camera check (cystoscopy)** confirms a sling is likely to help.
- **Do not smoke**, manage your weight and diabetes, and take antibiotics as directed — the sling is a mesh implant.

Tell your team ahead of time if you:

- Have had **pelvic radiation** — a sling often works less well, and a sphincter may be a better choice
- Have had prior incontinence surgery, or a urethral narrowing
- Have any infection, anywhere

What Happens During Surgery

- 1 You are asleep or numb from the waist down under anesthesia, and antibiotics are given.
- 2 Through small incisions in the groin and between the scrotum and anus, the surgeon passes the mesh sling under the urethra and lifts it into position.
- 3 The sling is anchored, the incisions are closed, and a catheter is usually placed for a short time.

After Surgery

- Expect **soreness, swelling, and bruising** in the groin and perineum for 1–2 weeks. Use ice, a scrotal support, and pain medicine.
- **Avoid heavy lifting, straining, cycling, and sex** for several weeks (often ~6) — straining can loosen the sling before it heals into place.
- You may have **temporary trouble urinating** and need a catheter for a short time; this usually settles.
- Keep using pads at first — improvement may build over the following weeks. There is **nothing to operate**; once healed, you urinate normally.

Call your care team or seek care if you have:

- You **cannot urinate** at all
- A fever or chills, or growing redness, pain, or drainage at an incision
- Worsening groin or perineal pain

THREE THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. A male sling is a mesh strip placed under the urethra to lift and support it, improving urine control after prostate surgery — there is nothing to operate.
2. It works best for **mild-to-moderate** leakage; for heavier leakage or after radiation, an artificial sphincter is usually better — and one can still be placed later if needed.
3. Afterward, **avoid heavy lifting, straining, cycling, and sex** for several weeks so the sling heals in. You may have temporary trouble urinating — call right away if you cannot urinate or have signs of infection.