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Castration Male To Eunuch

Castration (also referred to as: gelding, spaying, neutering, fixing, orchiectomy, oophorectomy etc) is any action, surgical, chemical or otherwise, by which a male loses the functions of the testicles or a female loses the functions of the ovaries.

The practice of castration has its roots before recorded human history. Castrated men - eunuchs - were often admitted to special social classes and were used to staff bureaucracies and palace households, as already mentioned.

In ancient times, castration often involved the total removal of all male genitalia. This involved great danger of death due to bleeding or infection. Removal of only the testicles had much less risk.

Types of Castration

a) Chemical Castration

In the case of chemical castration, regular injections of anti-androgens are administered to the person undergoing the procedure. Chemical castration seems to have a greater effect on bone density and depletes bone mass more rapidly than surgical castration.

b) Surgical Castration

This is normally done by quacks but this can also be performed by a doctor. A very sharp knife or razor is used. The environment is often unhygienic. The high immunity levels of the patients help them escape infection.

In two strokes, the penis and testes are chopped off. A lot of blood gushes forth. Hot sesame oil is applied to the wound, to prevent infection.

From the severed organs, blood oozes out profusely. The testes shrink to 75-80% whereas the penis shrinks to 40% of the original size. A penis of erect length of 7 inches and morbid length of 3 inches becomes a 2 inch flesh piece after being chopped off. The two testes remain joined to the penis in one piece. The operation causes immense pain.

c) Horse hair castration

In ancient times, one of the processes used for castration was to tie up the penis and scrotal sac tightly with a hair from a horse's tail. This would in effect, stop blood supply to these parts and thus, they would degenerate and fall off.

The process was very painful and long in duration but people in those days did not have a choice of surgical remedies like today. In the case of slaves, the least expensive remedy would probably be used. The only anaesthesia used was opium, which was plentiful in supply and freely available.

Reasons for Supporting Castration

1. Castration for Medical Reasons

The common belief is, castration is carried out generally as a religious procedure, but there are some medical conditions where castration is necessary for the treatment of the disease.

In case of testicular cancer, it is generally treated by surgical removal of the cancerous testicle(s) by orchiectomy, often followed by radiation or chemotherapy. Unless both testicles are cancerous, only one is removed.

Either surgical removal of both testicles or chemical castration may be carried out in the case of prostate cancer as hormone testosterone depletion treatment to slow down the progression of cancer. Similarly, testosterone-depletion treatment is used to greatly reduce sexual drive or interest in those with high sexual drives, obsessions, behaviour or any combination of those that may be considered deviant.

2. Castration as Punishment

In ancient times after battles, winners castrated their captives or the defeated to symbolise their victory and 'seize' their power. The practice was used by the winning side to torture or demoralise their enemies.

It was also employed to extinguish opposing male lineages and thus allow the victor to sexually possess the defeated group's women. Also, in

some countries, castration involving removal of all male genitalia was seen as the same as a death sentence.

3. Castration as a preventive measure

Castration has been in practice in some countries like USA and the Czech Republic as a voluntary option for the people who have broken laws of a sexual nature, allowing them to return to the community from otherwise lengthy detentions.

A temporary chemical castration had been studied and developed as a preventive measure and punishment for several repeated sex crimes, such as rape or other sexually related violence.

4. Other reasons

Castration in humans has been proposed and sometimes used, as a method of birth control in certain poorer regions. MtF transsexuals often undergo orchiectomy, as do some other transgendered people. Orchiectomy may be performed as a part of more general sex reassignment surgery, either before or during other procedures but it may also be performed on someone who does not desire or cannot afford, further surgery.

Medical Consequences of Castration

A subject of castration who is altered before the onset of puberty will retain a high voice, non-muscular build and small genitals. He may well be taller than average, as the

production of sex hormones in puberty, particularly testosterone, stops growth of long bones such as the femurs, tibiae and fibulae of the legs.

The person may not develop pubic hair and will have a diminished sex drive or none at all. Castrations after the onset of puberty will typically reduce the sex drive considerably or eliminate it altogether. Also castrated people are automatically sterile. The voice does not change. Some castrates report mood changes, such as depression or a more serene outlook on life. Body strength and muscle mass can decrease somewhat. Body hair sometimes may decrease.

Castration prevents male pattern baldness if it is done before hair is lost. However, it will not restore hair growth after hair has already been lost. Castration also eliminates the risk of testicular cancer. Historically, eunuchs who additionally underwent a penectomy reportedly suffered from urinary incontinence associated with the removal of the penis.

Without Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT), castrates may feel the typical symptoms similar to those experienced by menopausal women for example hot flashes; gradual bone-density loss, resulting in osteopenia or osteoporosis; potential weight gain or redistribution of body fat to the hips/chest etc. Replacement of testosterone in the form of gel, patches or injections can largely reverse these effects, although breast enlargement has also been reported as a possible side effect of testosterone usage.

Castration in Veterinary Practice

Domestic animals are usually castrated to avoid unwanted or uncontrolled reproduction; to reduce or prevent other manifestations of sexual behaviour such as territorial behaviour or aggression (e.g. fighting between groups of uncastrated males of a species), such as boundary/fence/enclosure destruction when attempting to get to nearby females of the species.

Male horses are usually castrated (gelded) using emasculators, because stallions are rather aggressive and troublesome. The same applies to male mules, although they are sterile. Male cattle are castrated to improve muscling and docility for use as oxen.

Livestock may be castrated when used for food to increase growth or weight or both of individual male animals and because of the undesirable taste and odour of the meat from sexually mature ones. In domestic pigs the taint is caused by androstenone and skatole concentrations stored in the fat tissues of the animal after sexual maturity. It is released when the fat is heated and has a distinct odour and flavour that is widely considered unpalatable to consumers. Consequently, in commercial meat production, male pigs are either castrated shortly after birth or slaughtered before they reach sexual maturity. This is due to many breeds of pigs simply not having the heredity for the boar taint and the fact that pigs are normally slaughtered at a young market weight. In the case of pets, castration is usually called neutering.¹

¹ Oophorectomy in female pets is often called spaying.

Castration Open and Closed

In veterinary practice an 'open' castration refers to a castration in which the inguinal tunic is incised and not sutured.

A 'closed' castration refers to when the procedure is performed so that the inguinal tunic is sutured together after incision.



Schematic of horizontal section of inguinal canal and testis

Instruments used for surgical castration



Burdizzo 9" open



Burdizzo 9" closed



Burdizzo being used



Burdizzo 6" closed

It is encouraged to prevent overpopulation of unwanted animals and to reduce certain diseases such as prostate disease and testicular cancer in male dogs. Testicular cancer is rare in dogs, but prostate problems are somewhat common in unaltered male dogs when they get older. Neutered animals have a much lower risk of developing prostate problems in comparison.

A specialised vocabulary has arisen for neutered animals of given species:

1. Barrow (pig)
2. Bullock (cattle)
3. Capon (chicken)
4. Gelding (horse)
5. Gib (cat, ferret)
6. Neutered (dog)
7. Ox (cattle)
8. Stag (cattle, sheep)
9. Steer (cattle)
10. Wether (sheep, goat)

How is veterinary castration done?

Veterinary castration involves the use of an elastrator tool to secure a band around the testicles that disrupts the blood supply. A Burdizzo tool or emasculators are used to crush the spermatic cords and disrupt the blood supply. Pharmacological injections, implants and immunological techniques are used to inoculate the animal against its own sexual hormones.

Certain animals, like horses and swine, are usually surgically treated by a scrotal castration (which can be done with the animal standing while sedated and

after local anaesthetic has been applied), while others, like dogs and cats, are anaesthetised and recumbent when surgically castrated with a pre-scrotal incision in the case of dogs or a pre-scrotal or scrotal incision used for cats.