

**“Hauber crafts a suspenseful story, which reads like a good murder mystery”**

**“BALLS TO THE WALL** Kevin Hauber isn’t pulling any punches in his new book, “If It Works, Don’t Fix It!,” which urges readers to think twice before getting a vasectomy.”

**“UNCUT VERSION** The full story of Kevin Hauber’s painful vasectomy is told in his recently published book.”

## Leave it alone

*Vasectomy survivor Kevin Hauber explains why in his new book*

BY SUSAN STEWART



Photo by Chris Gardner courtesy of New Times

“First, do no harm.”

A good principle for physicians to follow.

If Kevin Hauber had his way, he'd add this: “Tell your patients the truth.”

Five years ago, Hauber had what he was told would be “a safe and simple surgical procedure with few known complications and a high rate of satisfaction.”

The “routine” vasectomy, however, turned his life into a nightmare of excruciating and debilitating pain. The chronic condition that affects more men than doctors care to admit is known as post-vasectomy pain syndrome. His doctors never told him about it before the surgery was performed.

Had his urologist warned him of the potential risks, says Hauber, he might have chosen another option. Now he lives with chronic pain and he's angry that his doctors never warned him. So he's putting out his own warning to men considering vasectomy as an option for birth control.

In his recently published book, “If It Works, Don't Fix It! What Every Man Should Know BEFORE Having a Vasectomy,” Hauber tells a story that mocks the promise of “do no harm” and rocks the foundation of commonly held beliefs about this popular form of male contraception.

In an affable, “I-know-what-you're-thinking” writing style, Hauber sets out to educate, inform, enlighten, and yes, persuade the reader to think twice (or better yet, not think at all) about getting a vasectomy.

Hauber approaches his subject with grace, eloquence, understanding — and large doses of humor because, as Hauber puts it, “It's the *only* way to approach this subject.”

His message is unmistakable in the eye-catching, bright blue, 8-by-11-inch cover featuring the familiar circular symbol for male with a pair of scissors clipping off its arrow!

Inside, Hauber begins with an academic look at the history and politics of vasectomy, covering the social, sexual, and psychological implications as well. The documentation is meticulous and the material well-organized, establishing strong credibility with his reader before launching into his personal saga.

Hauber crafts a suspenseful story, which reads like a good murder mystery, complete with the dark humor and amusing asides one finds in the best of that genre.

Stoically, he leads us through the procedure itself, and the painful immediate aftermath. Though we suspect what's coming, we are so conditioned by what we have been told about vasectomy that we are just as surprised, just as baffled as Hauber was, by the intensity and duration of his subsequent pain.

We hold our breath and pray for relief right along with him as he leads us through the agonizing days that follow. With pain and fear fueling Hauber's early decisions, we empathize. These soon give way to anger and then grim determination as we watch him search for answers in a frustrating web of misinformation, intentional silence, and revealing studies as the days turn into weeks, months, then years.

Hauber mounts convincing evidence countering the claim commonly cited by urologists that the complication rate for vasectomies is really as low as 2-3 percent. And we find ourselves chanting right along with Hauber his constant refrain, “So I’m one in a million, huh?”

More like one out of four men who receive vasectomies have complications of one sort or another, according to some of the statistics cited by Hauber.

Painfully graphic drawings and photos show us the male genitalia in excruciating detail, sliced, cross-sectioned, x-rayed, and diagrammed so that we have every conceivable view of every conceivable tube, vein, pipe, gland, and sack we never imagined.

These graphics, interspersed with uproariously funny, full-page cartoons of “experimental” mice strapped to gurneys, kilted doctors using golf clubs instead of medical instruments, grinning pain doctors with jackets full of medieval torturing devices, and ads for “Scrota-Zip” and “The Double-Nut Contour Razor” make Hauber’s book look like a maniacal cross between *Mad Magazine* and the textbook for Urology 101.

However, the result is a comprehensive look at all the bodily systems that vasectomy can affect — the complex hormonal system and the highly sensitive immune system to name just two. Hauber’s simple but rational conclusion is that surgery of any kind is not a naturally occurring phenomenon, that it is a trauma to the body with potentially long-term harmful impacts.

To alleviate a staggering amount of pain, Hauber allowed well-meaning doctors to talk him into more surgical procedures that only worsened his condition.

He then set about the arduous task of informing himself so that subsequent decisions would be based on hard fact and sound information — and not on the evasive, cover-my-ass non-answers and skewed statistics he’d received from his doctors.

Imaginative chapter titles such as “Just Cut It Out!” “Living with Mr. T” and “I’ve Got a Lovely Pair of Coconuts” make this highly provocative material easier to take in. Leaving no stone unturned, Hauber includes a predictable years-long battle with HMOs and other insurance programs whose “covered services” were mostly not. Plus three years in litigation wherein the good guy finishes dead last.

A devoted athlete with a drug-free history and a proactive approach to life, Hauber wastes no more than a nanosecond on self-pity. He freely admits that the writing of this book was a cathartic journey. But there is also great courage in these pages as Hauber lets go of the powerful childhood taboos, adult body guilt, and masculine shame that plague the many men who remain silent about their own vasectomies gone wrong.

“I thought my web site ([www.dontfixit.org](http://www.dontfixit.org)) would be a good thing to have to promote the book,” says Hauber. He hopes the book will refer people to the site, where he receives an average of 700 hits each day, mostly from men who express relief that they are not alone.

Final chapters summarize Hauber's six invasive procedures, a pharmacist's closet full of drug therapies, the myriad of pain management regimens, and profound lifestyle changes that followed his vasectomy in 1999.

The sources of his research are documented in the impressive 16-page bibliography and summarized in "The Ten Myths of Vasectomy" with their respective "realities."

Impressive, too, are the useful and extensive checklists and suggestions for those who are considering vasectomy and those who have had less than desirable results from theirs. Also included is a more hopeful section on how to manage pain based on Hauber's many and courageous experiments with the full gamut of regimens — from acupuncture to photon therapy.

His loudest critics have been women, avowed feminists and traditional homemakers alike, who view this book (without having read it) as just another male excuse to avoid taking responsibility for birth control. Equally opposed to tubal ligation for women, Hauber says, "I have no desire to toss the hot potato of birth control back and forth."

Both genders take for granted the pervading statistics that claim only 2-3 percent of men report any ill effects from their vasectomies. Some have even hinted that in writing this book, Hauber (and other men who have dared to give their pain a voice) is just whining on paper. To those critics, I have three words: Read this book. Is there anger here? Sure. Is there frustration, disappointment, and outrage? You bet. But Hauber's intelligent voice, with its methodical fact-checking and thoroughly documented research, does not whine — not a bit.

German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer once wrote that the truth is often ridiculed then violently opposed before it's finally accepted as self-evident.

With "If It Works, Don't Fix It!," Kevin Hauber sheds light on a very private ordeal, risking both ridicule and opposition to share the truth of his own experience. His fervent hope is that in so doing, he can "force" more thorough disclosure practices among doctors, and prevent the needless suffering of others. ?

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