

Local

Vasectomy you can turn off

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A NEW male contraceptive that works on a trapdoor-style valve mechanism will be unveiled by its Australian inventor this week.

The Microvalve, which can be opened and closed by radio control, would give men a less permanent and simpler alternative to vasectomy.

It acts as a contraceptive when closed but can be re-opened if users decide they want to try for more children. During a year-long test of the device on 55 men, there were no pregnancies nor loss of libido.

Professor **Derek Abbott**, an engineer at the University of **Adelaide**, came up with the idea for the device when he saw a friend hopping around in pain after having a vasectomy.

“It got me thinking that there's got to be a better way to do it,” he said. “And there's always the sense of doubt

-- what if one wants to change one's mind further down the track?

“I thought it would be good if there was some kind of valve that could be opened and shut.”

Professor Abbott and his invention will feature on a New Inventors special called Re-inventing The Body to be aired on ABC 1 at 8pm on Wednesday.

Professor Abbott almost gave up on his quest after hitting problems with a magnetically operated version and unworkable materials. But then he met a US colleague, who was developing a self-powering electric plastic that would not be rejected

by the body.

This provided the key to his radio-controlled invention.

“We can code the signal so it's secure; it's a bit like opening your car door with central locking,” Professor Abbott said. “You don't open everyone else's, as well.”

The trial-stage device was inserted through a hypodermic needle, under local anaesthetic.

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