



## WHAT TO EXPECT WITH A DILATION AND CURETTAGE (D&C)



A D&C is one of the methods used to treat an early pregnancy that has stopped growing or may be needed to remove tissue that did not come out after a spontaneous miscarriage. The procedure is done by the gynecologist in the Operating Room under a general anesthetic.

### WHAT IS A D&C:

D&C is an abbreviation for dilation and curettage. Dilation means to open up the cervix; curettage means to remove what is still inside the uterus. This may be performed by suction (vacuum-type instrument) and/or by gently scraping the uterine wall with a curette instrument.

### CONSIDERATIONS:

- Risks associated with anesthesia such as a reaction to medication or breathing problems.
- Risk of infection (less than 3 percent).
- A small amount of tissue may stay inside the uterus.
- Rare possibility of complications such as puncturing the uterus, weakening the cervix, or scarring in the uterus.

### PREPARATION FOR D&C:

- A D&C is booked as a scheduled procedure and can usually be arranged within one to two weeks.
- You will be required to complete a pre-admission appointment a few days prior to the procedure. Your nurse will provide information on when you should come to the hospital for the D&C, how to prepare for the procedure and what to expect during your recovery time.
- A support person is welcome to come with you to this appointment and on the day of your D&C.

### WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER THE D&C PROCEDURE:

- Most women recover quickly from the anesthetic and the procedure and will go home within a few hours. You will need to be driven home by a family member or a friend and have a responsible adult stay with you overnight.
- You may have some stronger cramping initially, but this should not last longer than 24 hours. Mild cramping may come and go for up to 1 week.
- You can take medication for your pain such as ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol). Follow the recommended amount listed on the package.
  - You may alternate between the above pain medications.



- You may have some bleeding. For the first 2 to 3 days it may be as heavy as a period or may only be light to moderate. You may pass a few blood clots as large as a loonie (coin). By the end of a week the bleeding should be light. It is normal to have spotting for up to 2 weeks.
- Most women return to normal activities within a few days after a D&C. Self-care includes drinking extra water to stay hydrated, eating healthy meals, and increasing activities, as able. Avoid vigorous exercise until your bleeding has completely stopped for 2 weeks.
- While you are bleeding use pads not tampons, shower rather than bathing, do not use hot tubs or swimming pools, and do not have sexual intercourse until your bleeding has completely stopped for 2 weeks.

#### **PROCEED TO AN EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT IF YOU:**

- Have chest pain, are short of breath, or cough up blood.
- Have very heavy vaginal bleeding (soaking through 4 maxi pads in 2 hours).
- Have dizziness (not relieved with resting) or fainting.

#### **SEE A PRIMARY HEALTHCARE PROVIDER FOR ASSESSMENT IF YOU:**

- Have signs of infection, such as:
  - New, increasing, or foul-smelling vaginal discharge.
  - Fever over 38°C; chills.
- Are feeling sick to your stomach or not able to drink fluids.
- Have pain that does not get better after you take pain medication.
- Cannot pass gas or have a bowel movement.
- Have symptoms of a blood clot in your leg such as:
  - Pain in your calf, back of the knee, or groin.
  - Redness and swelling in your leg.
- Have prolonged bleeding and cramping (over 2 weeks).

#### **FOLLOW-UP CARE:**

- The Early Pregnancy Loss Program nurses will continue to monitor your healing and provide emotional support after the D&C. The clinic is open Monday to Friday from 8:00 am until 4:00 pm (excluding stat holidays). Please call if you have any concerns or questions (780-735-9712). Outside of these hours, you may call Health Link Alberta at 811.
- You are encouraged to arrange a 6-week follow up appointment with the gynecologist who performed your D&C or with your primary healthcare provider.

***Grief and loss is an individual journey and the path to healing is different for each person. The Early Pregnancy Loss Program nurses offer support for this journey.***