

DILATATION & CURETTAGE (D & C)



BASIC INFORMATION

DEFINITION

Opening the cervix and removing the lining (endometrium) and contents of the uterus. The D & C is often both a diagnostic and a therapeutic procedure.

REASONS FOR PROCEDURE

- Diagnosis of abnormal bleeding or possible cancer inside the uterus.
- Incomplete spontaneous miscarriage.
- Treatment of minor diseases of the uterus.
- Elective abortion during early pregnancy.
- Removal of membranes and placenta after childbirth in cases where they fail to deliver spontaneously.

RISK INCREASES WITH

- Obesity.
- Smoking.
- Cervical infection or ongoing uterine infection.
- Excess alcohol consumption.
- Recent or chronic illness, including anemia, diabetes mellitus, and heart or lung disease.
- Use of drugs, such as antihypertensives; cortisone; diuretics; or insulin.
- Use of mind-altering drugs, including narcotics; psychedelics; hallucinogens; marijuana; sedatives; hypnotics; or cocaine.

DESCRIPTION OF PROCEDURE

- It is normally performed in a hospital or a surgery center.
- A general anesthetic, local anesthetic, or both will be administered.
- The vagina is cleansed with an antiseptic solution.
- The cervix is carefully opened with dilators, and a curette is inserted into the uterus. The curette can be a suction device or a looped knife.
- The curette is used to scrape the endometrium from the uterine wall. The tissue may be removed for examination and diagnosis, or for treatment of heavy or irregular uterine bleeding.
- Occasionally, ultrasound can be used for guidance of the instruments.
- The instruments are removed.

EXPECTED OUTCOME

Tissue obtained successfully without complications in virtually all cases. Allow about 4 to 6 weeks for recovery from surgery.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Surgical-wound infection.
- Excessive bleeding.
- Inadvertent injury to the uterus.



POSTPROCEDURE CARE

GENERAL MEASURES

- Don't douche unless your physician recommends it.
- Wear cotton underpants and pantyhose with a cotton crotch. Avoid underpants made from nylon, polyester, silk or other nonventilating materials.
- Expect slight vaginal bleeding during recovery from surgery. Use a sanitary pad to protect clothing. Avoid tampons temporarily; they may lead to infection.

MEDICATION

- Antibiotics are often given during, or following, the procedure to help prevent any infections.
- Prescription pain medication should generally only be required for 2 to 7 days following the procedure.
- You may use nonprescription drugs, such as acetaminophen, for minor pain.
- Hormones, if necessary to correct an imbalance.

ACTIVITY

- Resume driving in 1 or 2 days.
- To help recovery and aid your well-being, resume daily activities, including work, as soon as you are able.
- Resume sexual relations when spotting ceases.

DIET

No special diet.



NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

Any of the following occurs:

- Vaginal discharge increases or smells unpleasant.
- You experience pain that simple pain medication does not relieve quickly.
- Unusual vaginal swelling or bleeding develops.
- You develop signs of infection: general ill feeling and fever, headache, muscle aches or dizziness.