

North Carolina Women's Hospital
Having a D&C Procedure at UNC Women's Hospital

What is a D&C?

- Dilation and Curettage (D&C) is the procedure of cleaning out the uterus by gently widening the cervical opening and scraping the lining of the uterus.

Why is a D&C done?

- A D&C may be done to help diagnose and treat conditions such as excessive uterine bleeding or it may be performed after a miscarriage or abortion in order to clean the uterine cavity.

What should I do to be ready for the D&C?

- Your health care provider will arrange a pre-op visit. During this visit you may have blood work done and your health care provider will review information with you about the procedure.
- He or she may give you some medication to take home with instructions for use the day of your visit.
- You will also see the financial counselor at the end of this appointment.
- Your procedure date and time may be arranged during the pre-op visit or a health care provider may call you at home to schedule your D&C.

What should I do on the day of the D&C?

- Take medication prescribed by your health care provider for the procedure as instructed.
- Do not eat or drink anything 8 hours prior to the procedure. However, you may take any regular prescribed medications with a sip of water the morning of your visit.
- You will be instructed to come to Clinic B on the first floor of the Women's Hospital at the appointed time on the date of your procedure. You should have someone accompany you to drive you home as you may receive medications during your appointment that cause sleepiness.
- After you check in at the reception desk, you will be escorted to the exam room and your vital signs will be taken and recorded. You may use the rest room at this time. You will be given a gown or a drape and be seated on the exam table.

What will happen during the D&C?

- You may choose to receive intravenous medication just before the procedure to make you more comfortable. The medication may make you drowsy but you will not actually be put to sleep for the procedure.
- The D&C takes only a few minutes to perform. During a D&C, the doctor places a speculum into your vagina in order to see your cervix. A speculum is the same instrument your doctor uses when you have a pap smear. Then, the doctor places dilators into the cervix, one at a time, to help open the cervix. Next, a small tube is placed through the cervix into the uterus. Gentle suction is used to remove blood and tissue from inside the uterus.

- Your health care provider may use ultrasound during the D&C to confirm that all of the tissue has been removed.

What should I expect after the procedure?

- You will be monitored for about an hour after the D&C is completed.
- Your provider and nurse will review discharge information with you and make sure you have fully recovered from any medication given during the D&C.
- You will be given an antibiotic to take at home with instructions on when and how to take the medication.
- You will also be offered a pain reliever such as Motrin to help relieve cramping, which may occur after the D&C is finished.
- Once you and your doctor feel you are ready, you will be able to go home accompanied by a friend or relative.

Is there anything else to expect during the upcoming days?

- **Activity Level:** On the day of your procedure it is a good idea to rest and take things easy. Many women return to their normal activities, such as work or school, within 1-2 days.
- **Bathing:** Even if your miscarriage involved a D&C, you can take baths as soon as you desire.
- **Sexual Relations:** You should avoid intercourse for approximately 2 weeks. After two weeks, you can have intercourse as soon as you and your partner feel emotionally ready.
- **Sanitary Protection:** Use only sanitary pads (not tampons) for vaginal bleeding during the first two weeks to reduce the risk of infection.
- **Feelings:** If your D&C was scheduled due to miscarriage, you may experience feelings of grief. Grief is a natural response to any loss and often occurs even with the earliest miscarriages. Grief may cause sadness, fatigue, difficulty sleeping, and changes in your appetite. Symptoms of grief are not the same for everybody. Mothers and fathers may have differences in how they feel, how they react, and how long it takes for them to feel better. One way to understand your feelings is to talk with each other, a supportive friend, someone who has experienced a similar type of loss, or a counselor. If you are feeling hopeless or unable to do regular activities you should contact your health care provider or go to an emergency room as soon as possible.

When should I call my health care provider?

If you experience any of the following problems, you should call the clinic or your health care provider. You may call UNC Hospitals at (919) 966-4131. Ask for the GYN resident on-call.

- Vaginal bleeding that is heavier than a normal period for 1-2 days
- Vaginal bleeding that lasts more than 7 days
- Vaginal bleeding that completely soaks a large sanitary pad in one hour
- Fever of more than 100.4 F (38C) for 4 hours or any fever of 101 F (38.3 C)
- Foul smelling or unusual discharge from the vagina
- Abdominal pain that is severe enough to keep you from doing your regular activities

This is a difficult experience. Be gentle with yourself and give yourself time to heal both emotionally and physically. It is good to have someone to talk to about how you are feeling.