



Care After Your D & E

This handout describes what to expect after a D & E procedure, including care instructions and when to call the clinic.

You had a surgical procedure called dilation and evacuation (D & E), a second-trimester termination of pregnancy. Keep this handout until your next period and refer to it if you have questions. If you are unsure about anything, please call your clinic.

What is normal?

Bleeding

- Bleeding may be light or heavy; you should not soak more than 2 maxi-pads an hour for 2 or more hours in a row.
- Bleeding usually lasts about 2 to 4 weeks.
- You may not have bleeding for a few days right after your procedure, and then bleeding (as heavy as a period) may begin around the 3rd to 5th day. This bleeding is caused by hormonal changes and medicines.
- You may not bleed at all.

Clotting

- You may have clots as large as a lemon. If clots are consistently larger than a lemon, call your clinic.

Cramps

- Cramping happens because the uterus is returning to its normal size.
- You may have menstrual-like cramps for the first few days.
- Cramping may increase as bleeding increases, especially between the 3rd and 5th days.
- A heating pad may help ease cramping. Use it according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Temperature

- Your temperature may vary, but please call your primary health care provider if it is higher than 100.4°F (38°C).

Nausea

- You may feel sick to your stomach. Usually, this goes away within 48 hours.

Breast Soreness, Swelling, and Nipple Discharge

- These symptoms should go away in a few days to 2 weeks.
- Wear a bra with good support and avoid breast stimulation.

Medicines

Methylergonovine (Methergine)

You may receive a 3-day supply of methylergonovine to take after your procedure. This medicine helps decrease bleeding and helps your uterus return to a normal size. It does this by making the muscles of your uterus cramp.

Normal side effects from methylergonovine include:

- Menstrual-like cramps
- Back or leg pain
- Mild headache
- Feeling dizzy, sick to your stomach, and vomiting

Call the clinic right away if you have:

- A severe headache
- Severe cramps
- Ringing in your ears
- Rapid heartbeat or chest pain
- Unusual sweating
- Trouble breathing

You should not take methylergonovine if you have high blood pressure. Be sure to tell your doctor or nurse if you have high blood pressure.

If you do take methylergonovine, you will take 1 tablet 3 times a day – morning, noon, and bedtime. Expect your bleeding to be heavier in the morning when you first get up and for a few days after you finish methylergonovine.

Pain Medication

You may take up to 1,000 mg of acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 6 hours and/or up to 800 mg of ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) every 8 hours to help ease cramps (you may take both if needed).

Do **not** take aspirin because it increases bleeding.

Antibiotics

You will receive a prescription for antibiotics. These medicines help prevent or treat infection. Be sure to take all of your prescribed antibiotics according to the instructions on the bottle.

Rh Immune Globulin

This medicine (Rho(D) or RhoGAM) is given to women who are Rh negative. It helps prevent problems with future pregnancies.

To Prevent Infection

Infection in the uterus or fallopian tubes is a possible complication after a D & E procedure. Watch for these signs:

- Fever above 100.4°F (38°C)
- Shaking with chills
- Abnormal pain
- Foul-smelling discharge

Take your temperature 2 times a day for the first week – once in the morning and once before dinner. Call the clinic if your temperature is higher than 100.4°F (38°C).

For the first week, do **not** put anything in your vagina – this means **no sex, tampons, or douching**. This helps prevent germs from moving from your vagina to your uterus.

We recommend taking showers only for the first week. Avoid public swimming pools and hot tubs for the first week after your D & E procedure.

Exercise and Rest

Most women prefer to take it easy the day after this procedure before returning to normal activities. Some women feel fine right away, while others require more time. Let your body be your guide.

No matter how well you are feeling, you should not do heavy exercise for 1 week after your procedure. Heavy exercise may make bleeding heavier and may cause more cramping. If you are having these symptoms, reduce your activity for the next several days.

Feelings

Women feel a range of emotions when they are pregnant and when they have an end to pregnancy. Feelings of relief, sadness, depression, and a sense of loss are common. Some of these feelings do not last very long. If they do last, tell your primary health care provider.

It may help to talk with someone close to you, or you may want to follow up with your clinic if you are concerned about your feelings. Your partner or someone else close to you may also have feelings or concerns that they would like to talk about.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. Clinic staff are also available to help.

- UWMC Maternal and Infant Care Clinic:**
206-598-4070
Box 356159
1959 N.E. Pacific St.
Seattle, WA 98195
- UWMC Women's Health Care Center:**
206-598-5500
Box 354765
4245 Roosevelt Way N.E.
Seattle, WA 98195
- Harborview Family Medicine Clinic at the Pat Steele Building:**
206-744-8274
401 Broadway, Suite 2018
Seattle, WA 98104
- Women's Clinic at Harborview:**
206-744-3367
325 Ninth Ave.
Ground Floor, West Clinic
Seattle, WA 98104

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HARBORVIEW
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UWMC Patient Care Services
1959 N.E. Pacific St. Seattle, WA 98195

Menstrual Cycle

Right after your procedure, your body will begin to prepare for your next menstrual period. Your first period will usually come 4 to 8 weeks after your procedure.

Many women's cycles return to normal right away and are the same as they were before the pregnancy. Some women find that their first period after their procedure is heavier or lighter than usual. Periods may be slightly irregular for the first 2 or 3 months after the procedure.

Pregnancy and Birth Control

You can become pregnant again at any time, even before your period returns.

If you have sex and do not want to become pregnant, you must use birth control. If you know what birth control method you want to use, we can provide you with that method at the time of your procedure or at your follow-up visit.

If you need more information about birth control, we will provide this at your visit. You may also call the clinic if you have questions or concerns about birth control or pregnancy.

Call the Clinic If You Have:

- Heavy bleeding that soaks 2 maxi-pads an hour for 2 or more hours in a row. Know the number of pads you have soaked in the past 2 hours.
- Clots that are consistently larger than a lemon.
- Signs of infection, such as:
 - Discharge that is pus-like, has a foul (bad-smelling) odor, or causes pain or itching.
 - Fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C). Be ready to tell us your temperature within the past hour and what medicines you have taken in the past 6 hours.
 - Constant cramping or pain. Be ready to tell us what medicines you've taken in the past 6 hours.
- Severe cramps that are not eased by acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) and your cramps are keeping you from your normal activities.
- Chills or shaking.
- Nausea that lasts for more than 3 days.
- Breast soreness or swelling that lasts for more than 14 days.