Dilation and Curettage

D&C

Your physician has recommended you have a D&C (dilation and curettage). This common procedure helps your physician learn more about problems inside your uterus. During a D&C, the cervix (opening of the uterus) is widened or dilated. Tissue samples are then removed from the endometrium (lining of the uterus) with an instrument called a curette. In many cases, D&C is done to find the cause of abnormal vaginal bleeding, or as a form of treatment.

Preparing for D&C

- Arrange for an adult family member or friend to drive you home.
- Don’t eat or drink anything after the midnight before your D&C (unless told otherwise by your physician).

During Your D&C

Just before your D&C, you’ll receive medication to prevent pain. You may be awake but relaxed during the procedure, or you may be completely asleep.

- Instruments are used to hold the vagina open and to steady the uterus. The cervical canal is widened using tapered instruments called dilators.
- A hysteroscope (thin, flexible telescope) may be inserted into the vagina. This allows your healthcare provider to see into the uterus.
- The curette is inserted into the uterus. Tissue samples are taken from several areas. These samples are sent to a lab to be studied.

After Your D&C

- You can expect some cramping for a few hours after a D&C. This can be controlled with an over-the-counter pain reliever.
- You may have some light bleeding for a few weeks. Use pads instead of tampons.
- Take showers instead of baths for about a week. Ask your physicians if you should avoid exercising or having sex for a period of time.

Risks and Complications

D&C rarely causes complications. However, as with any procedure, D&C has some risks. Before your D&C, your physician will discuss these with you. You may be asked to sign a consent form.

Risks may include:

- Infection
- Heavy bleeding
- Perforation of the uterine wall or damage to nearby organs
- The need for additional tests or procedures
- Risks associated with anesthesia

When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor immediately if you have any of the following after surgery:

- Heavy bleeding (more than 1 pad an hour)
- A fever over 100.4°F
- Increasing abdominal pain, tenderness or cramping
- Foul-smelling discharge