

Dilation and Curettage (D&C)

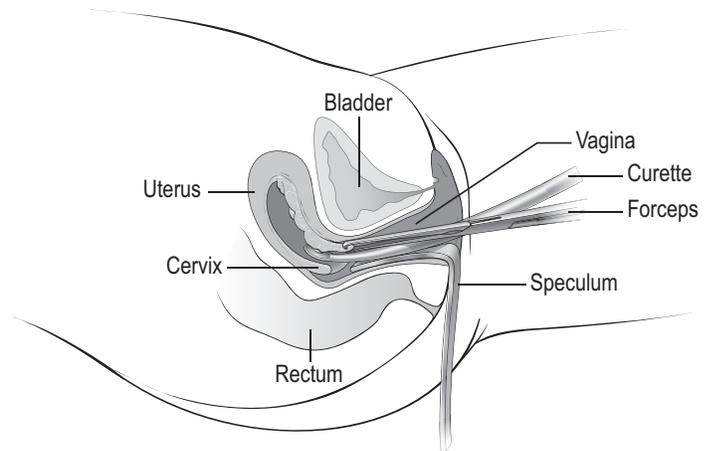
What is it?

Dilation and curettage, commonly abbreviated as D&C, is a minor surgery in which your doctor opens (dilates) your cervix and gently removes tissue from inside your uterus. The tissue can be removed using suction or a metal instrument called a curette. D&C is one of the most common women’s health procedures.

Why do I need it?

The D&C procedure can be used to collect tissue for testing so your doctor can diagnose your condition. Or, it can be used to remove tissue that could cause problems. Your doctor may recommend a D&C if you are experiencing one of the following:

- Abnormal bleeding from the uterus
- Heavy menstrual bleeding or cramps
- Thickening of the lining of the uterus
- Miscarriage or abortion
- Abnormal growths or cancer in the uterus
- Infections of the uterus
- Infertility



Your doctor uses suction or a tool called a curette to remove tissue from your uterus.

Talking with your doctor about this procedure

Before your D&C, your doctor will explain the procedure’s potential benefits, risks, and alternatives. (These are summarized in the table below.) Be sure to ask any questions you have.

Benefits	Potential complications	Alternatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May relieve abnormal bleeding • Can help diagnose infection, cancer, infertility and other diseases • Can remove abnormal or unwanted tissue 	<p>Complications are rare, but may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to the uterus, including perforation or scarring in the uterus lining • Damage to the cervix that may affect future pregnancies <p>Rare complications that may occur with any surgery include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bleeding, which may require a blood transfusion • Infection • Reactions to anesthesia medication 	<p>Alternatives to D&C depend on the reason you are having the procedure. Ask your doctor for more information about alternatives.</p>

What happens before?

The D&C procedure can be performed in a hospital or outpatient clinic.

- Before going in for the procedure, arrange for someone to drive you home.
- You may be asked to not eat or drink after midnight the night before the procedure. If so, be sure to follow the recommendations you're given.
- Your vaginal area will be cleaned.
- You will be given medication so you don't feel the procedure. Depending on the type of medication you are given, you may be asleep or awake.

What happens during?

The procedure usually takes less than an hour.

- You will lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet propped up.
- Your doctor will insert an instrument called a **speculum** into your vagina to help see.
- Another instrument, called a **dilator**, will be used to open your cervix.
- The doctor will insert either a suctioning instrument or a curette to remove tissue from the uterus.

What happens after?

- You'll spend 30 to 60 minutes in a recovery room.
- You may be given an antibiotic to prevent infection after the procedure.
- You may have some cramps or back pain after the procedure. It usually goes away within 24 hours. You'll be given oral medication to relieve pain.
- You may experience a small amount of blood or discharge from your vagina after the procedure. You'll be given a sanitary pad for this.
- Most patients go home the day of the procedure. Some stay overnight as a precaution.

What happens after the procedure?

- You may have some bleeding, discharge, or cramps during the first few days after the procedure. Bleeding and discharge can last up to 2 weeks. Continue to use sanitary pads to absorb it. (Don't use tampons.)
- Most women are able to go back to normal work and activity 24 hours after a hysteroscopy. If your job involves physical labor, you may need to wait longer. Wait a week or so before you resume sexual activity.
- If the purpose of your D&C was to diagnose a problem, your doctor will send tissue samples to a lab for testing. The laboratory results should come back in several days, and your doctor will discuss them with you.
- Your next menstrual period will probably be different from what is usual for you. It may arrive early or late, and it may be heavier or lighter than normal. If 2 weeks have passed since your D&C, you can use tampons.

When to call the doctor

Call your doctor right away if you have any of the following after your D&C:

- Fever of 101°F or higher
- Chills
- Heavy vaginal bleeding
- Severe cramps or abdominal pain
- Foul-smelling discharge