

D & C (Dilatation & Curettage)

This information sheet may be available in different formats. It is a brief outline of this problem and is not intended to replace verbal communication with medical or nursing staff.

What is a D & C?

A Dilatation and curettage involves the dilatation or expanding of the cervix so that it's possible to pass a curette (a metal instrument used for scraping) into the womb, to scrape away some of the lining. The scrapings are inspected under a microscope to see if they are healthy. The results can take up to two weeks, if changes are noted you will be informed as soon as possible.

How long does it take?

D & C is usually quite quick but because it is usually done under general anaesthetic it does involve being admitted to hospital, either as a day case or overnight. You will be advised not to eat for 6 hours before going to theatre.

Why is D & C necessary?

D & C can help to diagnose conditions that cause irregular bleeding. D & C is occasionally recommended after early miscarriage because the uterus or womb has only partly emptied. Any products of conception that are left behind can become infected and cause problems and bleeding. D & C should prevent this. D & C also allows the surgeon to treat minor conditions such as removal of any polyps that may be found.

What alternatives do I have?

This depends on the reasons for having a D&C. Other possible investigations may be an ultrasound scan or surgery to view the pelvis. The doctor would be happy to discuss any alternative investigations or treatment if they are applicable to your particular case

What can I expect after the operation?

You will return from the recovery area to the ward, where you will be expected to remain for a minimum of 5 – 6 hours, until you recover

fully from the anaesthetic. Then, providing your vaginal blood loss via the vagina is minimal, you will be discharged home.

You may bleed a little for about 2 weeks. Use sanitary towels not tampons and change them frequently to avoid infection. Report any bright red bleeding with clots to your GP. Bathe as necessary. Consult with your GP if you have any problems.

Will I have any pain following D & C?

It is normal to expect period like pains and simple painkillers, such as paracetamol are usually enough to relieve the pain.

What are the risks involved with D & C?

D & C is a very safe operation but on very rare occasions it is possible to suffer a small perforation to the wall of the womb, this will usually close without surgical intervention and will result in you needing to stay in hospital for a longer period, so that you can be observed closely.

Infection is a possible complication, however it is rare. If this should happen you may develop a foul smelling discharge, abdominal discomfort and a temperature. If you have any of these symptoms, seek advice from your GP.

An extremely rare complication is weakening of the fibres and muscles of the cervix (neck of the womb). If this does happen it can increase the risk of late miscarriage.

When will I be back to normal?

You should return to work in 2 – 3 days after surgery. If you feel unable to resume normal activities after this time contact your own GP.

The doctor will decide whether or not you will need a follow-up appointment in the Gynaecology Clinic. If you need an appointment it will be sent to you in the post. On discharge home you are advised not to have intercourse for at least two weeks to avoid the risk of infection.

Retained tissue?

Any tissue taken at the time of your operation will be sent for examination and your Consultant will be informed of the result. Following investigation the tissue will be disposed of in accordance with health and safety.

If you have any concerns please contact either your own GP or the Emergency Room at Liverpool Women's Hospital on 0151 702 4583.

Ward 4 at Aintree Centre for Women's Health on 0151 529 3433

For further information visit <http://www.2womenshealth.co.uk/>

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