

## Care After Your D&E

### *What to Expect*

*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 a *dilation and evacuation* (D & E). This procedure is for termination of pregnancy or management of pregnancy loss in the second trimester. Keep and refer to this handout 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 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> 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 healthcare 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, avoid breast stimulation, and consider using ice for pain relief.

## **Medicines**

### **Pain Medication**

You may take up to 800 mg of ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) every 8 hours or 1,000 mg of acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 6 hours to help ease cramps. You may alternate between the 2 medicines if needed. You may also receive narcotic pain medication, which you may take as directed.

Do not take aspirin because it increases bleeding.

### **Exercise and Rest**

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

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.

You may shower and bathe as you normally would after your procedure. You may resume sexual activity when you feel ready.

### **Feelings**

People feel a range of emotions when they are pregnant and when their pregnancy ends. 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 healthcare 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.

## 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 people's cycles return to normal right away and are the same as they were before the pregnancy. Some people 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 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.

## When to Call the Clinic

Call the clinic if you have:

- Heavy vaginal bleeding that soaks 2 maxi-pads an hour for 2 or more hours in a row.
- Heavy vaginal bleeding that continues 10 days after your procedure (light bleeding or spotting is OK).
- Clots (clumps of blood) that are consistently larger than a lemon.
- Nausea that lasts for more than 3 days.
- Breast soreness or swelling that lasts for more than 14 days.
- Signs of infection, such as:
  - Vaginal discharge that has a bad-smelling odor or causes pain or itching.
  - Fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C).
  - Chills or shaking
  - Constant cramping or pain not relieved by ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or acetaminophen (Tylenol).

## Questions?

Your questions are important. Keep these instructions so you can refer to them as needed.

Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have any questions or concerns about your IUD.

- UWMC Maternal and Infant Care Clinic:** 206.598.4070  
1959 N.E. Pacific St.  
Seattle, WA 98195
- UWMC Women's Health Care Center:** 206.598.5500  
4245 Roosevelt Way N.E.  
Seattle, WA 98195
- UWPC Northgate Family Medicine:** 206.528.8000  
314 NE Thornton Pl  
Seattle, WA 98125
- Harborview Family Medicine Clinic at the Pat Steele Building:**  
206.744.8274, option 2  
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

## Resources

### All-Options

[www.all-options.org/resources](http://www.all-options.org/resources)

### Connect & Breathe

[www.connnectandbreathe.org](http://www.connnectandbreathe.org)

### Defending Grace

[www.defendinggrace.com](http://www.defendinggrace.com)

### Ending a Wanted Pregnancy

[www.endingawantedpregnancy.com](http://www.endingawantedpregnancy.com)

### A Heartbreaking Choice

[www.aheartbreakingchoice.com](http://www.aheartbreakingchoice.com)

### National Abortion Federation

[www.prochoice.org](http://www.prochoice.org)

### Planned Parenthood

[www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)

### Reproductive Health Access Project

[www.reproductiveaccess.org](http://www.reproductiveaccess.org)

### So I Had An Abortion

<https://soihadanabortion.squarespace.com/>

### Termination for Medical Reasons

[https://community.babycenter.com/groups/a6325/termination\\_for\\_medical\\_reasons](https://community.babycenter.com/groups/a6325/termination_for_medical_reasons)