

Procedural Abortion

What is a procedural abortion ?

- A procedural abortion uses gentle suction (like a vacuum) to remove tissue from the uterus and end a pregnancy.
- This procedure is also called a uterine aspiration procedure or a “D&C”, which stands for dilation and curettage.
- You will be asked if you would like medication to help you relax during the procedure and to help with mild pain. This medication will not put you to sleep for the procedure.
- Recovery time and side effects from this medication is very minor. Side effects may include nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) and fatigue (tiredness).
- You must have a responsible adult take you home by car. You will not be allowed to walk home, drive yourself home, or take a bus or taxi. You should also have someone stay with you at home and care for you for 24 hours (1 day).

Can I get a procedural abortion?

A procedural abortion may be done if your pregnancy is **15 weeks and 6 days or less**, counting from the first day of your last normal menstrual period.

You will need to have an ultrasound to date your pregnancy. You will also have blood work to check your blood type and pregnancy hormone level.

What happens during a procedural abortion?

- **If your pregnancy is between 6 to 12 weeks:**
 - › The doctor will gently open your cervix (the opening to your uterus or womb) with dilators (like those used during a Pap exam) that slowly open your cervix wider.
 - › Once the cervix is open, the doctor will insert (put in) a hollow straw-like tube (called a cannula). This machine uses gentle suction (like a vacuum) to remove pregnancy tissue from the uterus.

- › The doctor may then use a spoon-shaped instrument (called a curette) to check the walls of the uterus for any leftover tissue. The procedure takes about 5 to 10 minutes.
- **If your pregnancy is between 13 weeks to 15 weeks and 6 days:**
 - › You will be given a medication called misoprostol before the procedure. Misoprostol softens the cervix and makes dilation (opening the cervix) easier. Misoprostol takes 1.5 to 2 hours to work. After this, you will have the procedure described on the previous page, which will last about 5 to 15 minutes. An ultrasound will be used to help the doctor during the procedure. You will not be able to see the ultrasound screen.

What are the possible risks?

- Infection may happen in 0.1% to 2% of cases. You will be given antibiotics to help prevent this.
- There is a very low risk (less than 1 in 1000) of:
 - › Injury to your uterus.
 - › A second procedure to remove leftover tissue.
 - › A lot of bleeding (more than normal).

What to expect after you go home

- You may have bleeding like your regular period, pass blood clots, have light bleeding or spotting, or not have any bleeding for days. You may also have period-like cramps at times. You may have bleeding for 2 to 3 weeks.
- You may take ibuprofen (Advil[®], Midol[®]) or acetaminophen (Tylenol[®]) to help with the pain.

Questions

- For more information, call the self referral line toll-free at 1-833-352-0719 or visit:
 - › www.nshealth.ca/abortion
- Please see the pamphlet, *After Your Procedure*, for more information on what to expect after your procedure.
 - › www.nshealth.ca/sites/nshealth.ca/files/patientinformation/1509.pdf

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