

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.
 - › This medication has a short recovery time and causes very few side effects. Side effects may include nausea (feeling sick to your stomach) and tiredness.
- **You must have a responsible adult take you home by car. You will not be allowed to walk, drive, or take a taxi or a bus by yourself.**
- **You should also have someone stay with you at home and care for you for 24 hours (1 day).** This is for your safety.

Can I have a procedural abortion?

- You may be able to have a procedural abortion if:
 - › Your pregnancy is **15 weeks and 6 days or less**, counting from the first day of your last regular menstrual period. You will need to have an ultrasound to date your pregnancy.
- You will have a blood test to check your hemoglobin and pregnancy hormone levels.

What happens during a procedural abortion?

- **If your pregnancy is between 6 to 12 weeks:**
 - › The doctor will use a dilator to gently open your cervix (the opening to your uterus or womb).
 - › Once your cervix is open, the doctor will put in a hollow, straw-like tube (called a cannula). This machine uses gentle suction to remove tissue from the uterus.
 - › The doctor may then use a spoon-shaped instrument (called a curette) to check the uterus walls 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 ½ to 2 hours to work.

- › After this, you will have the procedure described on the previous page, which will take about 5 to 10 minutes.
- › The doctor will use an ultrasound to help them during the procedure. You will not be able to see the ultrasound screen.

What are the possible risks?

- There is a 0.1% to 2% chance of infection. 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
 - › Needing a second procedure to remove leftover tissue
 - › A lot of bleeding (more than usual)

What to expect after you go home

- For 2 to 3 weeks after your procedure, 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.
- Take ibuprofen (Advil®) or acetaminophen (Tylenol®) to help with pain. **Do not** drink alcohol while taking pain medication.
- Please see the pamphlet, *After Your Procedure*, for more information on what to expect.
 - › <https://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/1509>

Questions?

- For more information, call the self-referral line:
 - › Phone (toll-free): 1-833-352-0719
 - › Or visit: www.nshealth.ca/abortion



This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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