

# Procedural Management of Pregnancy Loss: What you need to know

## About the procedure

The Early Pregnancy Assessment Clinic (EPAC) has referred you for procedural management of pregnancy loss.

A doctor dilates (opens) the cervix (the opening to the uterus). Then, they use a small tube to suction any remaining tissue in the uterus. This procedure empties the uterus and usually takes 15-30 minutes.

## What to expect after the procedure

If you have sedation medication, you may feel drowsy for the rest of the day.

If you have a general anesthetic:

- You may have an oxygen mask over your nose and mouth when you wake up.
- You may have a sore throat for a few days. This is normal and usually goes away on its own.

## What can I do?

- You may not feel like yourself for the first day. Rest in bed until you feel better. **DO NOT** do other activities for the rest of the day.
- If you feel nauseous, try sips of ginger ale and eat some dry crackers. If you feel like eating, try small amounts of foods that are easy to digest, like soups and cereals. Drink lots of fluids for 2-3 days, when you can.

## How can I keep myself safe?

- You **MUST** have a responsible person who knows you well take you home.
- For 24 hours after surgery:
  - Someone **MUST** stay with you.
  - **DO NOT** drive, operate heavy machinery or make important decisions.

- **DO NOT** drink alcohol or use recreational substances. The effects will add to those of the surgery medications.

## Caring for yourself at home

- **Activity:** On the day of the procedure, rest. You can return to your usual activities the next day.
- **Hygiene:** You may shower any time. Do not go in a bathtub, hot tub, or swimming pool until all bleeding has stopped. This reduces your risk of infection, and helps you heal.
- **Bleeding:** Light vaginal bleeding after this procedure is normal. Bleeding may last for 1-2 weeks. Use a pad until the bleeding has stopped. Do not insert tampons or menstrual cups.
  - You may also see occasional blood clots and/or tissue pieces. They should be smaller than a toonie coin. A normal period (menstruation) should start within 2-6 weeks.
- **Sexual activity:** Do not insert anything in your vagina until all bleeding has stopped.
- **Body changes:** Most pregnancy symptoms will go away within a few days. It will take time to heal physically and emotionally. You may have hormone-related mood changes for a few weeks.
- **Emotions:** It is normal to have mixed emotions, feelings of grief or loss, and questions. Your experience is unique. Emotional healing takes time. Be kind with yourself. Ask for help if you need it. You can access short-term counselling support services at BC Women's Health Centre. Please phone **604-875-3137** to book an appointment.
- **Pain:** For the first 1-2 days, you may have occasional cramping. This can feel like period cramps. To relieve the discomfort, take pain medication. (Please read the next section.) A heating pad to the abdomen can also help.

## Pain medication

- Take pain medication if you need it.
- If you have a prescription, follow the instructions from your doctor and pharmacist.
- If you do not have a prescription, you can take the following medications:

Acetaminophen (Tylenol): 1000 mg every 6 hours

Next dose at: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

**AND / OR**

Ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin): 400 mg every 6 hours

Next dose at: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

**OR**

Naproxen 440 to 500 mg every 12 hours

Next dose at: \_\_\_\_\_ am/pm

**NOTE:** Naproxen is available without a prescription as 220 mg tablet (take 2 tablets). Prescription Naproxen comes in 500 mg tablets (take 1 tablet).

**Do NOT take Naproxen with Ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin) or Diclofenac (Voltaren).**

## Follow-up care

- **If you have concerns following your procedure, please make a follow-up appointment with your primary care provider.**
  - Contact the EPAC clinic (604-875-2592) **ONLY** if you have a positive urine pregnancy test 4 weeks after your procedure.
- Additional resources on pregnancy loss can be found on the BC Women's website at: <http://www.bcwomens.ca/health-info/pregnancy-parenting/miscarriage>



**Contact your primary care provider or go to Emergency if you:**

- Have vaginal bleeding that is increasing, heavy (soaks 1 full pad in 1 hour), or lasts longer than 3-4 weeks.
- Pass blood clots larger than a toonie AND continue to feel unwell after.
- Have bad smelling vaginal discharge.
- Have chills or a fever (temperature above 38 degrees Celsius or 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit).
- Have severe pain, and pain medication does not help.
- Have nausea or vomiting for more than 24 hours, and you cannot keep fluids down.
- Cannot pee for 8 hours after you leave the hospital.