

Information for Patients Undergoing D & E Procedures at LHSC

What is a cervix dilator?

Dilators are sticks made of either seaweed (Laminaria®) or synthetic (Dilapan®). They help to open the cervix in preparation for your surgical procedure. They are inserted the day prior to your procedure. How many dilators you require will depend on how far along in the pregnancy you are.

How are the dilators inserted?

The physician will place a speculum in the vagina in order to see the cervix, much like during a Pap test. One or more dilators will be placed in the cervix depending on how far along the pregnancy is. Inserting the dilators will cause some mild cramping, similar to a period.

What will I experience after the dilators are inserted?

You may have cramping at the time of insertion and for several hours after the insertion. You may take pain medication such as Tylenol and/ or Advil to help alleviate the cramps. It is not uncommon to bleed lightly after the dilators are placed. Sometimes amniotic fluid may leak as well. This does not affect your procedure. Please wear a pad if you experience leaking and/or bleeding.

Do not have anything to eat or drink after midnight the day before your procedure. If you eat or drink prior to your surgical procedure this will delay your surgery for up to 6 hours. You may continue to take pain medications with small sips of water as needed.

What if the dilator falls out?

Sometimes one or more dilators may fall out prior to the surgical procedure. This is normal and will not affect the surgery. Do not flush dilators down the toilet as this may clog the toilet. Remember to tell the physician on the day of your procedure if the dilator fell out.

What is Digoxin and why do I need it?

Digoxin is a medication that assists in ending the pregnancy. If your pregnancy is greater than 18 weeks at the time of your procedure the physician will administer Digoxin when the dilators are placed. Digoxin is given through a thin needle either

through your abdomen or through your cervix. The needle is very thin and causes minimal discomfort. There are no side effects to Digoxin administration.

What is Misoprostol and why do I need it?

Misoprostol is a medication given **on the day of your procedure** to help soften the cervix. You may be given 2 tablets to place in your cheeks in the surgical day care area. The physician will determine when you will take these tablets based on your needs. Misoprostol may start uterine cramps and light bleeding.

What if I change my mind about ending the pregnancy?

If Digoxin has been administered there is no way to reverse it. Digoxin will result in demise of the fetus.

Misoprostol has potential teratogenic (harm causing) effects to the fetus. If Misoprostol has been taken it may also cause uterine contractions and eventual expulsion of the fetus.

If dilators have been placed the cervix is now slightly open. There are few reports of pregnancies progressing after dilators have been inserted and then removed. Risks of proceeding with a pregnancy after dilators have been removed include infection, preterm labour, and preterm rupture of membranes (breaking water).

Once medication and/or dilators are given for a surgical procedure it is almost impossible to safely change your mind. If you have concerns please address them with your physician or social worker/nurse prior to signing your consent.

What if I have excessive pain/bleeding?

If you are experiencing severe pain (10/10 pain not alleviated by Advil and Tylenol) then please call LHSC Victoria Hospital at 519-685-8500 and ask to page the Pregnancy Options Physician on call.

If you are soaking through 1 large pad every hour for 2 hours with bright red blood please call the above number as well.

If you feel you need immediate assessment, please present to LHSC Victoria Emergency Department 800 Commissioners Road East London. Please present your information letter to the emergency physician so that she/he may call the Pregnancy Options Physician on call for further direction.

