

Difference Between Dilated and Effaced

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Key Difference - Dilated vs Effaced

The [dilatation](#) and effacement facilitate the baby to be born through the birth canal. The meaning of the effacement is stretching and thinning of the [cervix](#). On the other hand, the dilatation means the cervix opening. When the labor is near, the cervix tends to be effaced and dilated that allows the birth of the baby. This process prepares the cervix for the passing of baby through the birth canal (vagina). The speed of this stretching and opening of the cervix is totally depended on the woman's health condition. And it varies for each woman. In some cases for some women, it starts to efface and dilate very slowly over a period of weeks. The woman who faces the labor for the first time often will not dilate until the active labor begins. Late in the pregnancy, the doctor might check the cervix of the mother in order to estimate how much the cervix is effaced and dilated. Every time, the doctor uses [sterile](#) gloves for this purpose. The contractions in the [uterus](#) during the labor facilitate the opening of the cervix. These contractions may also move the baby into a position to be born. The **key difference** between Dilated and Effaced is, **dilated means the cervix opening during active labor while the effaced is stretching and thinning of the cervix during the labor.**

What is Dilated?

Normally, the cervix (opening to the uterus) is tightly shut which is a protective mechanism. The cervix keeps the baby safe. But in the late [pregnancy](#) eventually, the baby needs to come out and hence, the dilatation process begins. Thus, the dilatation means the cervix opening during the active labor. At the end of the pregnancy, the cervix starts to open which might take a period of weeks or even a day, and this is known as dilatation. It usually starts after the cervical effacement. During the dilatation, the cervix is preparing for the delivery by providing enough opening from the uterus to the birth canal. It unblocks the baby's exit route. At the early labor (the week before hospitalization) the cervix will be dilated up to 3cm. Later, it will further increase the opening of cervix up to 7cm.

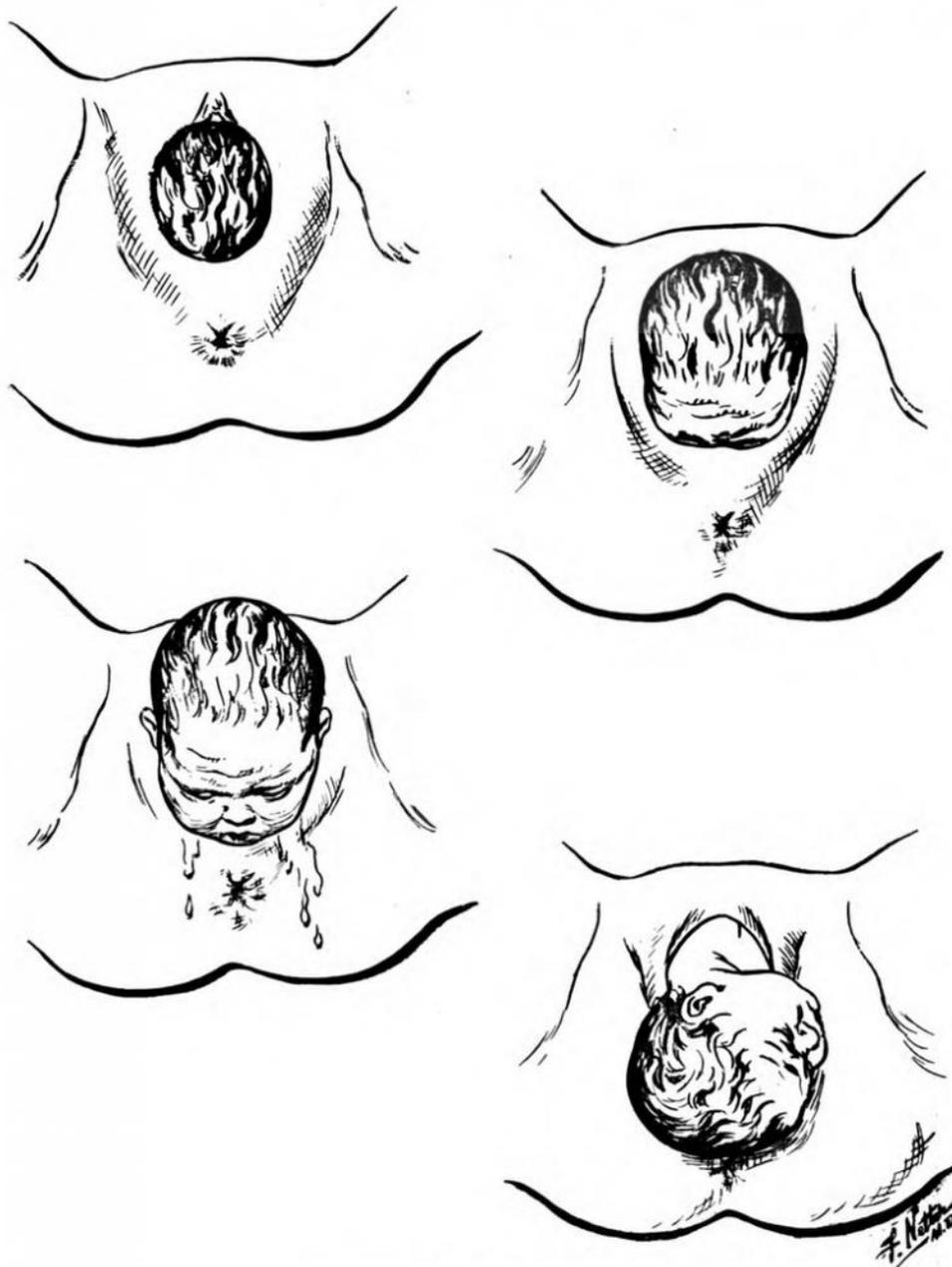


Figure 01: Dilation

The bulk of dilatation takes place during the active labor. The slight dilatation is not a reliable indicator on how fast the labor will be progressed. The full cervical dilatation is measured as 10 cm. It is an evident factor, that the dilatation rate is different from woman to woman. The cervix must be fully dilated before it starts the pushing stage.

What is Effaced?

The meaning of the effacement is stretching and thinning the cervix. At the beginning of the ninth month of the pregnancy, there will be clues for labor. Palpating the [abdomen](#) and internal examination of the cervix are the popular ways of identifying the labor. As the baby's head drops down to the [pelvis](#), it forces against or pushes against the cervix. This causes the cervix stretching and the thinning.

It is known that during pregnancy the cervix has been closed. And it is protected by a plug of [mucus](#). When the cervix is effaced the plug of mucus passes out from the birth canal. The plug of mucus may include the [blood](#). This is called as “show” or “bloody show”. The effacement is explained based on percentage. “0% effaced” of cervix means the cervix is not effaced at all. At 100%, the cervix is effaced fully.

What are the Similarities Between Dilated and Effaced?

- Both processes occur in the active labor.
- Both dilatation and effacement facilitate the baby to be born through the birth canal.
- Both processes are taken place at the cervix.
- Both processes are extremely important for safe delivery of a baby.

What is the Difference Between Dilated and Effaced?

Dilated vs Effaced	
Dilated is the process of cervix opening during the active labor.	Effaced is the process of stretching and thinning of the cervix during active labor.
Scale of Measurement	
The dilated process is measured by centimeters.	The effaced process is measured by percentage.
Minimum and Maximum Dilatation and Effacement During Active Labor	
Minimum dilatation is 0 cm and Maximum dilatation is 10 cm.	Minimum effacement is 0% and Maximum effacement is 100%.
Order	
The dilated process takes place after effacement of the cervix.	The effaced process comes before the dilatation of the cervix.

Summary - Dilated vs Effaced

The dilatation is the opening of the cervix that is measured by centimeters. Effacement is the thinning or stretching of cervix that is measured by percentage. These two processes occur in women when the labor gets closer. The timing for these two processes is different from woman to woman. It can be over a period of weeks or just a day. Dilatation and effacement are extremely important as they facilitate the baby to be born through the birth canal. Some hormones and bio molecules are helping the thinning process. The pushing stage is always taking place after complete dilatation.

Reference:

1. WhattoExpect. "Cervical Dilation and Effacement." What to expect, WhattoExpect, 24 Sept. 2015. [Available here](#)
2. "Cervical effacement and dilation." Mayo Clinic, Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. [Available here](#)

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