

## Fact Sheet

# Unintended pregnancy - abortion



### Finding out you are pregnant

Most women will find out they are pregnant after their period is more than a week late. Other signs of pregnancy can be feeling sick (nausea) or vomiting, having sore or larger breasts and feeling dizzy or tired, but not all women who are pregnant have these signs. The length of time a woman is pregnant is measured from the first day of her last period.

If you think you are pregnant you should have a urine test to confirm the pregnancy. The test can be done by a doctor, at a youth health clinic or sexual health clinic, at a Family Planning clinic or you can buy a home test from the chemist or supermarket. The sooner you find out for sure the more time you have to think about your options.

### Your feelings

Finding out you are pregnant can bring up many different emotions, especially if it was not planned. Every woman will feel different. Some women feel confused and scared, whereas others may feel happy and excited. All these feelings are normal and okay. Your feelings will probably also change while you are thinking about your options.

### Someone to talk to

Unplanned pregnancies happen to women of all ages and backgrounds for many different reasons.

It can be important to talk about your options with people who are close to you, such as a trusted partner, friend or family member. It might also be helpful to talk to a health worker who has experience in this area to get more information before you make a decision.

The Children By Choice website [www.childrenbychoice.org.au](http://www.childrenbychoice.org.au) can be a useful resource in helping you to make a decision (see other resources at the end of this fact sheet).

### Making a decision

If you are pregnant there are four options for you to consider:

- Continue the pregnancy with a partner
- Continue the pregnancy on your own

- Continue the pregnancy followed by adoption or fostering
- Terminate the pregnancy (abortion)

### Take the time to think

Different issues will influence every woman and affect the amount of time needed to make their decision. The following questions may help you work out what is the best decision at this time in your life:

#### Your relationships

- Do you have support from family or a partner?
- Can you work things out through the tough times?

#### Your responsibilities

- What does being a parent mean to you?
- Who can you call on to offer you support emotionally and financially?

#### Future plans

- How will this decision affect your plans for the future? Where do you see yourself in one, two and five year's time?
- If you are considering having an abortion, it is best to have this as early as possible but it is important to take the time to make the best decision for you

### Your rights

It's your right to have:

- Confidential care
- Safe, non-judgemental care
- Respect, whatever choice you make

### Continuing the pregnancy

If you decide to continue the pregnancy you should see your GP for antenatal care and advice as soon as possible.

### Abortion

#### What the law says

Abortion is allowed in all States and Territories of Australia under certain circumstances and when done by a registered doctor. Each State and Territory has different laws.

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## The law in NSW

See the FPNSW Factsheet - The Law on Abortion in NSW

To check the law in other States, go to the Children by Choice website: <http://www.childrenbychoice.org.au/>

## What is an abortion?

Abortion is the termination (end) of a pregnancy by a procedure that empties the contents of the uterus (womb). Abortions are carried out at specialist clinics or hospitals.

There are two methods of abortion available in Australia: surgical or medical.

The surgical procedure is called a suction curette. This involves the removal of the lining and the contents of the uterus by applying gentle suction to the inside of the uterus with a small plastic tube. This is a safe, simple and low risk procedure when done between 7-12 weeks of pregnancy. The procedure takes about 15 minutes, but you will need to be at the clinic or hospital for about four hours.

## Will I remember anything?

Most surgical abortions are done under a light sedation or 'twilight sleep'. This means you can choose to have medication that will make you relaxed and sleepy and you usually will not remember anything about the procedure. There is also the option of having a local anaesthetic only or a general anaesthetic. The staff at the clinic or hospital can talk about these options with you.

Medical termination is an alternative to a surgical termination that can be performed when the woman is less than nine weeks pregnant. It is a two stage process involving an initial visit to a termination clinic where an oral medication (a tablet), Mifepristone, is given. A second medication called Misoprostol is then given to the woman for her to take at home. After taking both of these medications the woman will then experience something similar to a miscarriage. A second visit to the clinic is made about two weeks later for an ultrasound scan. Some women prefer a medical termination because of convenience and because it does not need a surgical procedure. Most women experience bleeding and cramping that can be mild to severe. The staff at the clinic will discuss what to expect and give a 24 hour advice number.

## Is abortion safe?

There are many trained and accredited providers of abortion in Australia ensuring that abortion is a safe procedure for women to undergo. You do not need a referral for an abortion. You can get advice from your local Family Planning clinic, Family Planning NSW Talkline

or the Children by Choice website about the clinics near you. Abortion is a safe and simple procedure in the first 12 weeks and the majority of women have no problems afterward. Although, as with all medical procedures, there are some risks involved. You will need to discuss these with your doctor or the staff at the clinic or hospital.

If it has been more than 12-14 weeks since your last period there is more involved with having an abortion. You can discuss this with your doctor or the staff at the clinic or hospital. How pregnant you are may determine which clinic you should go to so make sure you discuss this when you make an appointment.

## How much will it cost?

How much you will need to pay is different for each State and each clinic, so check when making the appointment. Medicare will cover some or sometimes all of the cost if you have a Medicare card.

## Making an appointment

When you make an appointment you will be asked questions about your general health and also questions about your last menstrual period.

If you are having a surgical termination, it is necessary to fast (have nothing to eat or drink) for 4-6 hours before the procedure. You will also be asked to bring some things such as spare pads, a nightshirt and your Medicare card with you on the day.

## On the day

It often helps to have a support person with you on the day and if you are having the light sedation you will need to have someone to drive you home.

Before the procedure a health worker will talk with you about what is involved, what the risks are and what to do to take care of yourself afterwards. You will be able to ask questions (sometimes it helps to write them down before hand).

This can also be a good time to talk about contraception and choose a method that will suit you.

## After the abortion

Your feelings:

Every woman has different feelings depending on her situation and the reasons for choosing an abortion.

Often women report feeling relieved and feeling 'themselves again'. Other feelings can include guilt, anger, regret or sadness or a mixture of feelings.

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All of these feelings can be a normal part of coming to terms with the abortion. If the feelings are still strong after two weeks it is important to talk with someone such as a supportive local doctor, a Family Planning clinic, youth health or women's health clinic or a counsellor.

Your health:

### Surgical abortion

You will usually be given a course of antibiotics to take to prevent any infection.

A routine two week check up at a health clinic or your local doctor is usually recommended to ensure that there are no signs of infection such as pain or fever and that you don't have any heavy bleeding.

In almost all cases having had an abortion will not stop you from being able to continue a pregnancy when the time is right for you.

### Medical abortion

You will be given advice on what to expect and will be required to return to the clinic about two weeks for a check up.

### Contraception

It is important to think about what you are going to use for contraception after the abortion. You can usually start this on the day of the termination and most clinics can prescribe the Pill, insert an IUD or contraceptive implant at the time of the abortion. If you do this you will be protected against another unplanned pregnancy straight away. See our fact sheets on different methods of contraception.

### For more information

- Contact the Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 or go to [www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline](http://www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline)
- FPNSW resource 'Pregnant? Working through your options'
- NRS (for deaf) 133 677
- Go to [www.childrenbychoice.org.au](http://www.childrenbychoice.org.au)
- Visit the ReachOut website: [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)
- Pregnancy, birth and baby helpline: 1800 88 24 36
- Kids Help Line 1800 55 18 00
- Lifeline 13 11 14
- A supportive local doctor
- Youth health clinic
- Sexual health clinic
- Women's health centre
- A Social Worker at the local hospital

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