

How will I feel afterward?

There is usually some bleeding and it is quite common to have cramps (like period pain) for a short while after an abortion. Over-the-counter painkillers can help. Some women feel tired or sick after the procedure so it's advisable to plan to rest afterwards. If you are experiencing fever, heavy bleeding (needing more than one pad per hour) or severe pain, contact the clinic or hospital where you had the procedure as soon as possible.

During the few weeks following an abortion you may experience emotions ranging from relief, sadness, anger, guilt, doubt, depression, renewed energy, remorse, or "back to normal". There is no right way to feel, and it is important to have someone to talk to about your feelings.

If you don't have anyone you can talk to, or feel you need additional support, post-abortion counselling is available (see 'Need more information or someone to talk to?')

Do I need a follow-up examination?

If you have had a surgical abortion you should see a doctor 10 – 14 days after the procedure to make sure there are no problems or ongoing pregnancy. If you have had a medical abortion you will be required to return to the clinic two weeks afterwards to confirm there is no ongoing pregnancy. DON'T rely on a home-pregnancy test.

This is also a good time to discuss contraception with your doctor, as you can get pregnant very soon after having an abortion.

What if I'm under 16?

If you are under 16 years of age and still living at home, a parent or legal guardian must be informed that you are considering an abortion. While the parent or guardian must be given the opportunity to participate in the counselling and consultation process between you and the doctor, the final choice is yours. In special circumstances you can apply to the Children's Court for an order to proceed with an abortion without parental involvement.

Need more information or someone to talk to?

FPWA Sexual Health Services
70 Roe Street, Northbridge, WA, 6003
Ph 08 9227 6177
info@fpwa.org.au

Quarry Health Centre for under 25s
7 Quarry Street, Fremantle, WA, 6959
Ph 08 9430 4544
Confidential and affordable services for young people,
including clinical and counselling services.
quarry@fpwa.org.au

Sexual Health Helpline
Metropolitan callers 08 9227 6178
Country callers 1800 198 205
Confidential answers and advice about unplanned pregnancy
issues.
sexhelp@fpwa.org.au

Roe Street Centre for Human Relationships
08 9228 3693
roest@fpwa.org.au
Counselling sessions for unplanned pregnancy and post
abortion issues are subsidised by the Department of Health
WA. A small client contribution fee entitles access to four free
sessions.

WA clinics which perform abortions:

Nanyara Medical Group
9277 6070

The Women's Clinic
9440 0044
www.thewomensclinicwa.com.au

Marie Stopes International: Midland Centre
Freecall 1800 003 707 (24 hours)
www.mariestopes.com.au



Unplanned Pregnancy Considering Abortion

For some women, decisions around unplanned pregnancy are relatively simple. For others, the decision-making process is more complex. If you are pregnant and don't know what to do, talking to a doctor or counsellor about the choices available may help you decide what is right for you.

It is very important to confirm your pregnancy early on with a doctor or at FPWA Sexual Health Services to allow you plenty of time to consider your choices. Don't wait to find out, and seek help early if you think you might be pregnant.

While FPWA is a pro-choice organisation, be aware that some organisations which advertise to help pregnant women have very strong beliefs, which you may not share. Try finding out about an organisation before you approach them. Alternatively, if you are not getting the sort of advice and support you want, go elsewhere for help.

What is an abortion?

An abortion is a way of ending, or terminating, a pregnancy. There are two types of abortion available in WA – surgical abortion and medical abortion.

A surgical abortion is a simple procedure using gentle suction to remove the pregnancy and tissue from the uterus. It is performed with anaesthetic at a special clinic or hospital by a qualified doctor.

A medical abortion is when medication is used to end a pregnancy. It provides an alternative to a surgical abortion for women during the early weeks of pregnancy. Medical abortions are only available at selected clinics and hospitals. A doctor can provide you with more information.

Abortions can also be performed later in pregnancy, but the procedure is more difficult and the risks increase as the pregnancy advances.

I've decided to have an abortion...now what?

If you live in WA and decide to have an abortion, you will need to see a doctor to discuss the risks associated with abortion and with pregnancy. The doctor will also offer you the opportunity of a referral for counselling around abortion, and advise you that counselling is available following the procedure before providing you with a referral (it is up to you if you want to have counselling). This is known as 'informed consent'.

Is abortion legal?

When a woman gives her informed consent, and the procedure is carried out by a qualified doctor, abortions are legal in WA under 20 weeks of pregnancy.

At 20 weeks of pregnancy and beyond two medical practitioners from a panel of six appointed by the Minister for Health must agree that the mother or unborn child has a severe medical condition that justifies an abortion.

How much does it cost?

The cost of an abortion varies between clinics, and some of the cost is covered by Medicare. Please phone FPWA or the clinics listed at the end of this brochure for more information regarding costs.

Special arrangements can sometimes be made for women with serious financial problems – discuss this with the clinic or the doctor providing you with a referral. Some private health insurance hospital cover plans will meet the entire cost of an abortion.

How long does it take?

The procedure for a surgical abortion only takes a few minutes, but you should allow for around three hours at the clinic as you will need to talk to a nurse and have an ultrasound to determine how many weeks the pregnancy is, and time to recover after the procedure. The procedure may take a bit longer if you are over 12 weeks pregnant.

Medical abortions require a consultation of up to an hour.

What are the risks involved?

An abortion is considered to be a safe, low-risk procedure, particularly if done in early pregnancy (up to 12 weeks). In later pregnancies the risk of complications after an abortion rise, however they are still (very) low.

There is no evidence to suggest that an abortion has any effect on future fertility or future pregnancies. However, there are a small number of possible, but rare, complications involved with the procedure – the clinic or hospital will discuss these with you in more detail.

Infection is uncommon, especially if you follow any instructions given to you by the clinic or hospital. These may include not using tampons or having vaginal intercourse or baths for around two weeks after the procedure.

An incomplete abortion can occur when some tissue does not come away from the uterus during a surgical abortion, or when medication used for a medical abortion doesn't work, which can cause long-lasting bleeding and pain. If this happens it is important to contact a doctor or FPWA as soon as possible to decrease the risk of an infection developing. Occasionally a second procedure or dose of medication is required to clear the uterus.

There is also a small chance of damage to the uterus during a surgical abortion. While still very small, this risk is greater if the procedure is performed after 12 weeks of pregnancy.

See our 'Help! I think I'm Pregnant' brochure for more information