

Abortion

Unplanned pregnancies happen to women of all ages and backgrounds. About half the pregnancies in Australia are unplanned. Some women choose to have their baby, while others choose to end their pregnancy with abortion.

What is abortion?

Abortion is a safe medical procedure that ends a pregnancy. It may also be referred to as a 'termination' or 'pregnancy termination'. It's estimated that about one third of unplanned pregnancies are ended.

Is abortion legal in Australia?

Abortion in Australia is only legal if done by a registered medical professional. But abortion laws vary between states and territories (e.g. laws about how and when women can access abortion).

Reasons for abortion

Abortion is a personal choice. It can be a hard decision to make. There are many reasons why you might choose to have an abortion. Regardless of the reason, if you want to end your pregnancy, it's your choice.

Types of abortion

There are two types of abortion: medical abortion and surgical abortion. Both are safe and effective.

Medical abortion

A medical abortion means you take medicine to cause a miscarriage. This option is available up to nine weeks of pregnancy.

If you have a medical abortion, you will have several hours of intense cramping, but the pain should ease once you have had the miscarriage. Your doctor can prescribe stronger pain medicine to help. You should be able to manage at home.

Surgical abortion

If you are more than nine weeks pregnant, or you don't want to have a medical abortion, you may choose to have a surgical abortion instead.

Surgical abortion is usually done as a day procedure.

If you have a surgical abortion under general anaesthetic (while you are asleep), you will not experience any pain. But you may have cramping for a few days afterwards. If you have a surgical abortion under local anaesthetic, you are likely to feel mild to strong cramps during the abortion.

It's also normal to have cramping and pain that's similar to a period for the next few days.

To relieve pain, you can use heat packs, pain-relief medicines and rest.

If you have severe pain, talk to your doctor.

When can you go back to normal activities?

You can go back to normal activities the day after the abortion if you feel physically and emotionally well. But for the next one to two weeks, you should avoid:

- heavy lifting, physical work and strenuous activities
- having sex, using tampons and inserting anything in your vagina
- having baths and going swimming.

Common emotional symptoms include:

- mood changes
- forgetfulness
- anxiety.

How much does an abortion cost?

The cost of an abortion depends on:

- the type of abortion
- your stage of pregnancy
- where you have the abortion (e.g. public or private clinic)
- if you are eligible for Medicare
- if you have private health insurance.

If you have a Medicare card and visit a private clinic:

- medical abortion may cost \$100 to \$500
- surgical abortion may cost \$400 to \$600.

Some clinics or public hospitals may have lower fees. If you are eligible, there may be no charge. Your doctor can give you more information.

Do you need a referral to have an abortion?

You do not need a referral from your doctor to book an abortion – except in Western Australia where it's legally required.

Do you need to have counselling before having an abortion?

You do not need to have counselling, but it is available if you want to talk to someone or need more information.

More information

You can get more information about abortion from your doctor, local family planning organisation or women's health centre. You can also contact the sexual health and family planning service in your state or local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Service.

You can also find more information from these reputable organisations:

- MSI Australia (formerly Marie Stopes Australia)
- 1800MyOptions (Vic)
- Children by Choice (Qld)
- Pregnancy Choices Helpline (NSW)
- Pregnancy Advisory Centre (SA)

For more information, resources and references, visit jeanhailes.org.au/healtha-z/sex-sexual-health/abortion



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Jean Hailes for Women's Health gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government.

Updated May 2023

Disclaimer: This information does not replace medical advice. If you are worried about your health, talk to your doctor or healthcare team.

We write health information for people with diverse backgrounds, experiences and identities. We use the term 'women', but we acknowledge that this term is not inclusive of all people who may use our content.

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