



Abortion

Having an abortion means you choose to end your pregnancy. Unplanned pregnancies happen to women of all ages and backgrounds. About half the pregnancies in Australia are unplanned.

What is abortion?

Abortion is a 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 by abortion.

Is abortion legal in Australia?

Abortion in Australia is legal if done by a registered medical professional. But abortion laws about how and when people can access abortion vary between states and territories.

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. For example, if you don't feel ready or don't want to have children.

Regardless of the reason, if you want to end your pregnancy, it's your choice.

Types of abortion

There are 2 types of abortion: medical abortion and surgical abortion. Both are safe and effective.

Medical abortion

A medical abortion means you take prescribed medicines to cause a miscarriage. It can be performed in the first 9 weeks of pregnancy, so it's important to see a doctor in the early stages of pregnancy.

If you have a medical abortion, you will experience bleeding and cramping. These symptoms usually ease within 24 to 48 hours, but light bleeding can continue for up to 2 weeks. Medical abortion is successful in most cases. If it's unsuccessful, you will need to have a surgical abortion.

Surgical abortion

Surgical abortion is usually done as a day procedure under local anaesthetic. Your doctor inserts a small tube into your uterus via your vagina. A suction action removes the lining and pregnancy from your uterus.

If you have a surgical abortion, you may feel mild to strong cramps during the abortion and have light bleeding for up to 2 weeks. You can take pain-relief medicine for both types of abortion.

Surgical abortion is successful in over 99% of cases.

What should you avoid after an abortion?

For 1 or 2 weeks after an abortion, 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.

Where can you get an abortion?

Abortions are available at private abortion clinics and some public hospitals. Medical abortions are also available at some GP clinics, and via Telehealth if you can't go to a clinic in person.

How much does an abortion cost?

The cost of an abortion depends on many factors. For example, the type of abortion, where you have the abortion and if you have private health insurance.

If you are eligible for Medicare, you might get some money back from the government.

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

Do you need a doctor's referral?

No, you do not need a referral from your doctor to book an abortion.

Counselling and support

You might need support before or after an abortion. You can talk to someone you trust, like a friend or family member, or seek professional support from a counsellor.

More information

You can get more information about abortion from your doctor, a family planning or sexual health organisation, a local women's health centre or an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Medical Service.

You can also contact the following reputable organisations:

- MSI Australia (formerly Marie Stopes Australia)
- 1800MyOptions (Victoria)
- Children by Choice (Queensland)
- Pregnancy Choices Helpline (New South Wales)
- Pregnancy Advisory Centre (South Australia)
- Tasmanian Government Department of Health (Tasmania)

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

 **Jean Hailes
for Women's Health**

Phone 03 9453 8999
jeanhailes.org.au

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

Updated July 2024

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.

© Jean Hailes for Women's Health 2024