

Medication abortion explained

Medication abortion occurs after taking tablets prescribed by a doctor to induce a miscarriage. It requires more than one visit to the clinic, and is available up to nine weeks of pregnancy.

At your first visit to the clinic, the doctor will assess if this method of abortion is suitable for you. You will be examined and have some tests done. A partner or support person may accompany you into the clinic and possibly attend the consultation.

To complete the abortion, generally you will be provided with two different medications. The first medication is taken at the clinic. The second medication may be taken either at home or at the clinic 24 to 48 hours after the first medication.

After taking the second medication, you will start to feel cramping similar to period pain but more severe. Pain, cramping and bleeding occur as a normal part of the process. You can take normal pain relief medication (except aspirin) to help relieve the cramping. Most women experience the miscarriage within 24 hours.

Around two weeks after taking the second medication, it is very important to return to the clinic or your GP to confirm the abortion is complete. If it is not, you may need further medication or a surgical abortion.

possible side effects or complications

Side effects of the medications may include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, chills or fever. Complications are rare, but may include excessive bleeding, incomplete abortion or ongoing pregnancy which requires a surgical abortion.

It is essential that you follow the after care instructions to minimise the risk of infection. The clinic will give you an after hours contact number should you have any concerns.

Surgical abortion explained

Surgical abortion is generally completed in a single clinic visit. A partner or support person may accompany you into the clinic and possibly attend the initial part of the consultation and will be contacted to pick you up when the procedure is complete.

In preparation for a surgical abortion, you will be examined to confirm how far along the pregnancy is (gestation) and your blood type. The clinic will also discuss the type of anaesthetic that may be used.

A surgical abortion is a simple surgical procedure, removing the pregnancy tissue using gentle suction. Surgical terminations performed up to 12-13 weeks gestation typically require a clinic visit lasting three to four hours, which includes pre and post-operative care. For terminations after 13 weeks, the operation will take longer as different procedures and pre-operative medications may be used.

possible side effects or complications

Any surgery carries some risk of complications, but abortion is one of the safest and most commonly performed surgical procedures in Australia. On very rare occasions, complications such as heavy bleeding, perforation of the uterus, or tearing of the cervix may occur. The clinic should fully inform you of the risks prior to the procedure.

After the anaesthetic, it is usual to feel drowsy or vague. You are advised not to drive for at least 24 hours and it is a requirement that a support person be available to drive you home after the procedure.

It is essential that you follow the post-operative care instructions to minimise the risk of infection. The clinic will give you an after hours contact number should you have any concerns.

General issues for consideration

health

An abortion is a safe medical procedure, especially when performed early in the pregnancy. It is essential, as with any medical procedure, that at least one other person knows that you have had a medication or surgical abortion that day. Having an abortion will not affect your ability to become pregnant or to carry a pregnancy to term later in life.

emotional well being

It is uncommon for women to experience ongoing emotional problems if they have been supported to make their own choice about the pregnancy without judgement or coercion. Many women feel relief following an abortion. Some may experience mixed feelings; however these generally pass in the weeks following the abortion.

cost

Costs of medication and surgical abortion in early pregnancy are similar, however prices can rise significantly for surgical abortion after 12 weeks. Women without a Medicare card will have higher costs. Some private health insurance funds will provide reimbursements for surgical abortion.

The cost of the termination is payable to the clinic in full on your first visit. Information about all costs should be explained clearly to you by clinic staff prior to the procedure. Please contact Children by Choice for current costs.

location

Depending on where you live, you may have difficulty finding a service close to you, particularly if you live in a rural, regional or remote community. Some clinics only perform abortions up to 12 weeks gestation. Outside of South East Queensland, options may be more limited and the procedures will cost more.

Your choice

If you ...

feel comfortable with having a miscarriage at home

live near to a service that provides medication abortion

are keen to avoid a surgical operation

are fewer than nine weeks pregnant

...then **medication abortion** may be a suitable option for you

If you ...

prefer to complete the abortion in a single visit

can access a service that provides surgical abortion

feel comfortable having a surgical procedure and anaesthetic

...then **surgical abortion** may be a suitable option for you

It is estimated that one in three women will have an abortion during their lifetime.

While the decision on whether or not to continue a pregnancy can be a difficult one for some women, it is not for others.

Many women find that after talking through the options with key people in their lives they feel confident to make a decision, but every woman is different.

If you feel like you'd benefit from discussing your options, call a confidential, all options counselling service like Children by Choice or Family Planning Queensland (FPQ), or your general practitioner (GP).

Children by Choice can also offer counselling and support following abortion.

More information about abortion and abortion providers is available on the Children by Choice website, www.childrenbychoice.org.au.

You may also contact clinics providing abortions directly if you wish to make an appointment or require more information.

Children by Choice

www.childrenbychoice.org.au

07 3357 5377 (Brisbane)

or freecall 1800 177 725 (outside Brisbane)

Family Planning Queensland

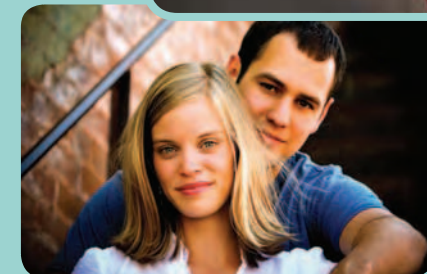
www.fpq.com.au

07 3250 0240 (Brisbane)

Please visit our website for regional clinic contact details.

Choosing abortion

Information for women on medication and surgical abortion options



CHILDREN BY CHOICE
ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

fpq
Family Planning Queensland