

HAVING AN ABORTION

Your guide to termination of a pregnancy



T: **0333 004 6666** T: **(01) 874 0097** (Eire)

www.nupas.co.uk

HAVING AN ABORTION

If you have made the decision to have an abortion, remember you are not alone.

- Every year almost 200,000 abortions are performed in the UK
- 1 in 3 women across the UK will have an abortion during their lifetime
- Abortions have been legal in England, Wales and Scotland for over 40 years

If you are pregnant and have decided that an abortion is the right choice for you, please take time to read this leaflet and learn about the different options that are available to you.

We have provided our services and care to women for over 40 years and fully support the Abortion Act 1967 and the right for a woman to limit her family.

This leaflet offers you information about abortion treatments and advises you on what will happen during your visit to us for treatment. The information is based on the guidelines offered by the Royal College of Obstetricians & Gynaecologists (RCOG).

HELPLINE

T: 0333 004 6666
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Abortion law

Under the Abortion Act 1967, abortions are legal in England, Scotland and Wales up to the 24th week (23 weeks and 6 days) in pregnancy. Abortions can only be carried out after the 24th week in exceptional circumstances eg. the woman's life is at risk or there are fetal abnormalities.

The law states that two doctors must agree that having an abortion would cause less harm to your mental or physical health than continuing with the pregnancy. The two agreed doctors must then sign a legal document called a HSA1 form.

It is illegal to provide abortion treatment based on the gender of the fetus.

Abortions must only be carried out in a hospital or a specialised licensed clinic.

What is an abortion?

An abortion is a procedure that ends a pregnancy; it is also known as a "termination".

Considering an abortion can be a very confusing, stressful and upsetting time. We understand this and promise to provide you with our care and support to help you through this time.

Types of treatments

There are 3 options when considering which abortion is most suitable for you. The type of abortion that is available to you will also depend on how many weeks pregnant you are (*this is called gestation*). These will be discussed with you during your consultation.

Types of abortion	Gestation
Early Medical Abortion 'the abortion pill'	Available for women up to 9 weeks
Surgical abortion under local anaesthetic	Available for women up to 10 weeks
Surgical abortion under general anaesthetic	Available for women up to 16 weeks

The Consultation

Before any treatment is decided you will receive a consultation with a doctor or a nurse where he or she will explain all your treatment options and answer any questions you may have about the abortion.

The doctor or the nurse will ask you for your medical history. It is very important that you answer their questions honestly and give as much information about any medical conditions you may have or medications that you take.

This is to ensure your safety and suitability for treatment. You may be able to receive part of the consultation over the phone if you are limited to when you can attend the clinic.

The doctor or nurse will also record or perform the following tests:

- Ultrasound scan to determine how many weeks pregnant you are (*length of gestation*)
- Height
- Weight
- Body mass index (BMI)
- Blood pressure
- Blood test (*finger prick tests to check for Anaemia and Rhesus Factor*)
- Sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening

During your consultation the nurse and doctor will discuss contraception and advise you on what forms of contraception are available. It is important to consider what type of contraception you are going to use as you can still get pregnant following an abortion.

The doctor or nurse will ask if you understand the abortion procedure and that you are clear about giving consent to receive treatment.

Confidentiality

Any contact you have with us or any treatment you receive is completely confidential. Even if you are under 16 years old; we will not tell anyone unless we have your permission to do so. We will only share your details with other health professionals or organisations if we believe that you are at serious risk of harm. We will always try and tell you if we think we need to do this.

Counselling

Having an abortion is an important event in your life. All women will cope with this event in a different way. Some women will feel confident with their decision to end the pregnancy while others may struggle to come to terms with having an abortion.

If you feel that you would like to talk to someone about your decision and the feelings and emotions you are experiencing, please call us and we can arrange for you to have counselling.

TYPES OF ABORTION

There are three different abortion methods:

- Early Medical Abortion
- Surgical with local anaesthetic
- Surgical with general anaesthetic

If you are a resident in England, Scotland or Wales these are usually funded by the NHS.

EARLY MEDICAL ABORTION

This method of abortion is available to women who are up to 9 weeks pregnant

THE TREATMENT

This treatment involves taking two different drugs on two separate visits to the clinic.

FIRST VISIT

During your consultation with the nurse you will receive an explanation about the early medical abortion treatment. The nurse will check your medical history to ensure you are medically suitable for this treatment. In some cases you may not be suitable to have an early medical abortion due to an existing medical condition.

The first tablet is called Mifepristone and this is taken orally (*swallowed with water*). Mifepristone works by blocking the hormone progesterone. This hormone is needed to continue with the pregnancy. Blocking the hormone stops the pregnancy and causes the lining of the uterus to break down, similar to what happens during your monthly period.

You will be able to leave the clinic as soon as you have taken the first tablet (*part one*) and have been discharged. We will then book you an appointment for your second visit.

Women may experience some common side effects such as:

- Nausea and vomiting *
- Headache
- Feeling faint or dizzy
- Skin rashes
- Fever

**If you vomit within 2 hours of taking the Mifepristone you must contact the clinic immediately as you will need to take the medication again*

If bleeding commences after part one of the treatment you must still attend your appointment for part two of the treatment.

SECOND VISIT

It is very important that you keep your appointment for your second visit. If for any reason, you cannot make the appointment you must contact the clinic to rearrange another time.

At your second appointment you will have the chance to discuss any side effects that you may have experienced or ask any further questions about the treatment.

On the second visit four tablets called Misoprotol will be inserted vaginally – these tablets cause the uterus (womb) to contract and eventually expel the pregnancy.

You will experience pain, cramping and bleeding similar to a heavy period. This is how the pregnancy is removed. Pain relief will be given before you leave the clinic.

You may experience some common side effects from the medications such as:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Headache
- Hot flushes
- Diarrhoea
- Fever

The abortion will usually take place between 2–12 hours after receiving the second part of the treatment. You should expect to bleed and pass blood clots. You may continue to bleed, on and off, for up to 2 weeks. If bleeding does not occur after 24 hours from receiving part 2 of the treatment then you should phone the Aftercare Line and speak to a nurse.

Before leaving the clinic your aftercare arrangements will be discussed and you will be given information and advice, you will also be given an Aftercare pack that contains:

- Antibiotics – these are to reduce your risk of infection
Please ensure that you read the instructions and complete the course
- Aftercare leaflet
- Contraception leaflet
- Condoms
- Pregnancy testing kit

We advise all our clients regardless of gestation (*stage of pregnancy*) to repeat a pregnancy test after 4 weeks. It is very important to use the first sample of urine you pass that day.

The pregnancy testing kit will be in your aftercare pack. You must contact the clinic immediately if your result is positive.

THE BENEFITS OF HAVING AN EARLY MEDICAL ABORTION ARE:

- Non-invasive treatment and no need for anaesthetic
- High safety levels
- Treatment can (*often*) be accessed more locally than travelling to a surgical clinic
- You can eat and drink before the treatment
- You can be at home whilst the pregnancy is passed

POSSIBLE RISKS

All abortions have some risks and these will be discussed at your consultation.

INCOMPLETE ABORTION

If you have an incomplete abortion, you have a higher risk of developing an infection. A surgical procedure would be needed to remove any remaining tissue associated with the pregnancy.

FAILURE TO STOP THE PREGNANCY

In a very small number of cases (*1 to 3 per 100 cases*) the treatment may be unsuccessful and you could remain pregnant. It is important to follow all aftercare guidelines including repeating a pregnancy test in 4 weeks and attend your follow up appointment after your abortion. If the treatment has failed then you will need to have a surgical abortion to remove the pregnancy.

INFECTION

There is a risk of infection so please be aware of the following symptoms:

- High temperature and/or fever
- Excessive bleeding (*if you are soaking 2 sanitary pads in less than one hour for more than a two hour period*)
- Abdominal tenderness / prolonged pain
- Abnormal vaginal discharge

If you experience some or all of these symptoms you should contact the Aftercare Line immediately and speak to a nurse as you may have an infection or have developed a complication.

REMEMBER IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT ANYTHING CONTACT OUR AFTERCARE LINE

T: 0333 004 6666 T: (01) 874 0097 (EIRE)

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SURGICAL ABORTION

There are different surgical abortion procedures and the method used depends on your health, personal choice and your gestation (stage of pregnancy). Surgical abortions are minor operations and are performed as a day-case procedure; they do not require you to stay overnight.

Surgical abortion with local anaesthetic

Manual Vacuum Aspiration

This procedure is recommended for women who are up to 10 weeks pregnant. During this procedure you will receive local anaesthetic and remain awake throughout the abortion. A nurse will be by your side throughout the procedure for your support.

The procedure is very quick; usually taking 10 – 15 minutes. Local anaesthetic is injected around the entrance to the womb to numb the area. The surgeon uses a syringe and gentle suction to remove the pregnancy. Some discomfort may be felt, from light period-type pain to heavy cramping pains. You will be given painkillers to ease any discomfort.

If you are worried about any discomfort then you may request gas and air whilst having the abortion. This will make you feel relaxed and drowsy and help with pain relief.

Please note if you have gas and air, you will not be able to drive

Recovery is quick and you can usually leave the clinic after resting for about half an hour.

Before leaving the clinic your aftercare arrangements will be discussed and you will be given information and advice, you will also be given an Aftercare pack that contains:

- Aftercare leaflet
- Contraception leaflet
- Condoms
- Pregnancy testing kit

We advise all our clients regardless of gestation (*stage of pregnancy*) to repeat a pregnancy test after 4 weeks. It is

very important to use the first sample of urine you pass that day. The pregnancy testing kit will be in your aftercare pack. You must contact the clinic immediately if your result is positive.

BENEFITS

- Quick procedure
- High safety record and success rate
- You can eat and drink before the treatment
- You can drive a car following your treatment

RISKS OF SURGICAL ABORTIONS INCLUDE:

- Damage to the womb (4 in 1000 cases)
- Damage to the cervix (10 in 1000 cases)
- Haemorrhage (1 in 1000 cases)
- Infection
- Retained products of pregnancy

NOTE - All surgical procedures carry certain risks, but please be assured that we have an excellent safety record and only employ highly qualified surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses.



SURGICAL ABORTION WITH GENERAL ANAESTHETIC

Suitable for women who are between 5-16 weeks pregnant

This procedure is performed under general anaesthetic which means you will be asleep during the treatment.

At the surgeon's discretion and depending on how many weeks pregnant you are, Misoprostol tablets are either taken by mouth or placed into the vagina 1-4 hours before the procedure. This drug acts to relax the neck of the womb, which enables the pregnancy to be removed with either gentle suction or forceps and gentle suction.

Before leaving the clinic your aftercare arrangements will be discussed and you will be given information and advice, you will also be given an aftercare pack that contains:

- Aftercare leaflet
- Contraception leaflet
- Condoms
- Pregnancy testing kit

You must not drive or operate machinery for 48 hours after a general anaesthetic.

Following an abortion performed under a general anaesthetic, we ask that you have someone available to care for you for 24 hours following your treatment.

POST PROCEDURE CHECK

We advise you to carry out a pregnancy test 4 weeks after your procedure to make sure the abortion has been a success. You are advised to have a check up in 4 weeks time. The check up can be at the clinic, at your local Contraception and Sexual Health (CASH) clinic or with your doctor.

You will be offered a courtesy call after approximately 4 weeks to check you are well, that you have completed your pregnancy test and discuss any issues you may have. If you miss that call we will not continue to contact you but if you are worried about anything please contact the Aftercare Line.

BENEFITS

- Quick procedure
- Low levels of discomfort for most women
- High safety record and success rate

RISKS OF SURGICAL ABORTIONS INCLUDE:

- Damage to the womb (4 in 1000 cases)
- Damage to the cervix (10 in 1000 cases)
- Haemorrhage (1 in 1000 cases)
- Infection
- Retained products of pregnancy

NOTE - All surgical procedures carry certain risks, but please be assured that we have an excellent safety record and only employ highly qualified surgeons, anaesthetists and nurses.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

IS AN ABORTION PAINFUL?

Whatever kind of abortion you have, there will be some discomfort or period-like pain. Painkillers will be provided if you need them.

ARE THERE RISKS WHEN HAVING AN ABORTION?

All medical and surgical procedures have risks, but for most women an abortion is a safe procedure. The earlier you identify the pregnancy and have an abortion the safer the procedure is. You will be informed about any risks and complications by the doctor or nurse during your consultation. If you have any concerns, please discuss these with them.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

You should plan to rest and take it easy for 24 - 48 hours following your abortion.

Avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous exercise for 2-3 weeks. You should also avoid swimming for 3 weeks as this may increase the risk of infection.

WHAT IF I'M BREAST FEEDING?

If you are breast feeding, please inform the doctor or nurse before starting your treatment as special precautions need to be taken.

SEXUAL HEALTH

If you have not already been tested for a sexually transmitted infection now is a good time. You should also speak to your partner about getting tested and staying sexually healthy.

WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND?

If you feel unsure regarding your decision, please don't worry. You can change your mind right up to the point before treatment begins. If for any reason, you feel that you need more time in which to reach your decision, please tell us. If you feel that you would benefit from speaking to a trained counsellor we can arrange this for you.

WILL HAVING AN ABORTION STOP ME GETTING PREGNANT IN THE FUTURE?

Having an abortion should not affect your ability to get pregnant. In fact, your fertility can return to normal immediately; so it is very important that you use contraception to prevent becoming pregnant again.

HOW MUCH DOES AN ABORTION COST?

If you live in England or Wales most abortions are fully funded by the NHS. Please give us a call with your location and GP's details to find out if you are eligible for funding. If you live outside England and Wales then you would need to pay for the treatment. Please refer to our website for up-to-date prices. www.nupas.co.uk

CAN I BRING SOMEONE WITH ME ON THE DAY?

Of course; you may find having the support of a loved one or friend will help you through the day. They will be able to wait with you until you go through for your consultation. Whilst you have your procedure, they will be directed to the waiting room where they can watch TV. If you are under 16 years and you wish to be accompanied throughout your treatment, please let a member of our team know.

I HAVE YOUNG CHILDREN; CAN I BRING THEM WITH ME?

Unfortunately we do not allow children at the clinics so you must arrange childcare for the day of your appointment. Failure to do so may mean we have to rebook your appointment or treatment.

WILL MY TREATMENT BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL?

All consultations and treatments are completely confidential. However, if we feel that you are at risk of abuse or harm,

then we are obliged to inform a local safeguarding team. This is for your protection. We will not disclose your details to anyone unless we have your permission to do so. We will respect your privacy and dignity at all times.

WHAT HAPPENS TO THE FETAL TISSUE AFTER THE ABORTION?

Please rest assured that the fetal tissue removed during the abortion procedure will be disposed of in a sensitive and respectful manner in accordance with the Human Tissue Authority guidelines; these can be viewed at:

https://www.hta.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Guidance_on_the_disposal_of_pregnancy_remains.pdf

You have the right to ask about the disposal of fetal tissue and any personal requests for the tissue will be met wherever possible. If you would like to discuss this further, please ask the Doctor or Nurse for more information during your consultation



THINGS TO REMEMBER

It is important to follow these instructions before you arrive at the clinic; failure to do so might mean that your treatment is delayed or, in some cases, cancelled.

For all consultations, Early Medical Abortions and surgical abortions under local anaesthetic you should follow these instructions:

- Bring your referral letter from your doctor (if you have one)
- Wear loose fitting, comfortable clothing
- Bring a list of any prescribed medications or inhalers
- If you are on prescribed medications you should continue to take these as normal
- If you are prescribed the following medications please contact us: Aspirin, Warfarin or Clopidogrel (*Plavix*)
- You will need to bring a supply of sanitary towels (*not tampons*)

For surgical abortions under general anaesthetic please also follow these additional instructions:

- Do not eat or drink from midnight the night before your surgical abortion with a general anaesthetic
- Make sure you have someone to care for you for 24 hours after your treatment
- We strongly recommend that you do not smoke for 24 hours before and after your surgical procedure
- Bring with you a dressing gown and slippers
- Bring a supply of sanitary towels (*not tampons*)
- Please remove all facial and body piercing, make-up and nail varnish
- Please remove contact lenses before your procedure
- If you are ill within 48 hours prior to your surgical procedure please contact the clinic as we may need to re book the procedure
- You must not drive for 48 hours

COMPLAINTS

We are committed to providing high standards of care to all our clients.

If you feel disappointed with any aspect of the service, please ask to see the Duty Manager.

If your complaint is of a serious nature, we request you put it in writing to the Registered Clinic Manager. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 48 hours and a detailed response will be sent out to you within 20 days.

If you are not happy with the response you receive you may write to:

*The Chief Executive Officer
5 Arthur Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2UL*

We will arrange a review of your complaint. Your letter will be acknowledged within 48 hours and a detailed response will be sent out to you within 20 days.

APPOINTMENT DETAILS

FIRST APPOINTMENT

Appointment time:

Appointment date:

SECOND APPOINTMENT

Appointment time:

Appointment date:

NOTES

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Informing...

to enable choice

Advocating...

to ensure rights

Enabling...

to increase skills

Supporting...

**with compassion
and care**

T: 0333 004 6666 F: 0845 659 0666

E: info@nupas.co.uk

NATIONAL TREATMENT CLINICS

SEE OUR WEBSITE

www.nupas.co.uk