Information About Abortion

What is an abortion?
An abortion is the ending of a pregnancy. This is done by removing the embryo or fetus from the uterus. Abortions can be done by either a surgical procedure or by taking a special medication that ends the pregnancy (a medical abortion). An abortion is usually done in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy. After 12 weeks, it becomes a more complicated procedure. Abortions can be done as late as 20 weeks.

Is an abortion safe?
Abortions are very safe. The earlier the abortion is done, the lower the chance of any complications. It is important to remember that with any procedure there is always some risk of infection or bleeding.

Is an abortion painful?
During the abortion, either a local anesthetic (freezing of the cervix) or general anesthetic (making you unconscious) is given. You may have cramping (like a heavy menstrual period) for a short time. Extra medication is available for pain, if needed.

Will I be able to have children after having an abortion?
Yes. If you have had an abortion, you can get pregnant again and have a normal pregnancy in the future.

What happens during a surgical abortion?
At a clinic you will be given medication to make you relaxed and drowsy. In a hospital you will be given a general anesthetic to make you unconscious. During a surgical abortion, the doctor puts a speculum into the vagina to see the cervix (the opening into the uterus). The cervix is opened slightly and a small suction tube is placed inside. The inside of the uterus is then gently suctioned until the fetal tissue is gone. The entire procedure takes about 15 minutes. Afterwards you usually have some bleeding which can last up to 2 weeks. You will have to stay in the clinic or hospital for about 2 hours until staff are sure there are no complications. Abortions later than 12 weeks may need two or more visits to the clinic/hospital.

What happens during a medical abortion?
This procedure must be done before the 7th week of pregnancy and is only available at certain clinics. It requires a number of visits to the clinic. A drug is injected into the hip muscle and stops the growth of the pregnancy. Another drug is put into the vagina to make the uterus contract and the embryo then comes out with some blood. This process can take a few days to 2 weeks. Blood tests may be necessary to ensure that some hormones have decreased and you are no longer pregnant. Sometimes the medication does not work and a surgical abortion is necessary.

How much does an abortion cost?
In Ontario, abortions are paid by the Ontario Health Card (OHIP). At some clinics there is an extra fee which you must pay. The receptionist will let you know when you call for an appointment.

Do teenagers need their parent’s consent?
Procedures can be performed as long as it is clear to the health professional staff that you understand what is happening and can give consent once you know all the facts. It is helpful, especially if you are young, to tell a parent or a person that you trust so you have someone for support. Hospitals, clinics and health insurance plans must keep all medical procedures confidential.

What should I expect after an abortion?
Be sure to follow the instructions given to you by the clinic or hospital. After an abortion, you may have some bleeding and cramps over the next 2-3 weeks.

- Bleeding can last from a few days to 3 weeks but the amount of blood lost is not large. You may only have spotting but for others the
bleeding may be heavier. Sometimes there are clots which can cause cramping. Bleeding may stop and restart.

- Cramping similar to period cramps is normal after an abortion. Using a hot water bottle or massaging your belly can help to relieve cramps. Do not take aspirin as that may increase the bleeding. The clinic will tell you which pain medication you can use.

Pregnancy symptoms like tender breasts, nausea and tiredness may last for a few days but should go away by the second week after the procedure.

You should be able to restart your normal activities like work or school the day after the abortion. You should avoid strenuous activity for a few days.

**Possible problems**

After an abortion there is a risk of infection because your cervix is slightly open. *For the next 2 weeks do not put anything into your vagina.* This means:

- no intercourse
- use pads instead of tampons
- have showers only -no hot tubs, tub baths or swimming
- no douching

Signs of a problem may include:

- heavy bleeding, soaking 1 or more pads in 1 hour
- temperature above 38 degrees ºC (100.4ºF) or chills for more than one day
- severe abdominal pain
- bad smelling vaginal discharge

**Any of the above could be a sign of an infection or other complications.** Call the abortion clinic to see a doctor or go to a hospital emergency department immediately if you have any of these problems.

**What about birth control?**

You can become pregnant again after an abortion if you have unprotected sex before your first period. Many clinics will offer a birth control method before you leave or you will need to see your doctor in the next few weeks to discuss which birth control method is right for you.

Your period should come in the next 4-6 weeks. If you have started the birth control pill, patch or ring, your period will come at the end of your first package. Remember, condoms prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV and hepatitis B.

**How will you feel?**

Your reaction to having an abortion is unique and personal. Let how you feel be your guide. Whatever you are feeling, it is helpful to talk to a supportive person. If you feel that speaking with a counselor would help you, if you have more questions or just want to talk, call Peel Health or the clinic where you had your procedure. Ask the clinic for their website as it will have specific information about the clinic and the procedure.

**How do I get an abortion?**

You can visit a Healthy Sexuality Clinic or your family doctor for a referral or call an abortion clinic directly. Be aware that some individuals or organizations may discourage you from seeking an abortion.

Peel Public Health 905-799-7700 (to find the Healthy Sexuality Clinic nearest you)

Some helpful websites
peelregion.ca
intheknowpeel.ca
peelsexualhealth.ca
sexualityandu.ca
pregnancyoptions.info
prochoice.org
peaceafterabortion.com

**Remember….**

- Talk to a health professional as soon as you know you are pregnant. Don’t wait.
- Get all the facts-then make your decisions.
- Don’t be pressured by anyone else. The decision is yours.

Info about abortion June2014