

Are you Late?

Information about
unplanned pregnancy



MARIE STOPES
INTERNATIONAL



ABOUT MARIE STOPES INTERNATIONAL

Marie Stopes International (MSI) is a pro-choice organisation. We believe that abortion should be an integral part of women's healthcare and that a woman faced with an unplanned pregnancy has the right to access accurate, factual information about all her pregnancy options, including abortion. We support women to make confident, informed choices about their sexual health.

We offer a range of high quality, confidential services across our nine clinics, including free NHS services in many areas. We also have a 24 hour information, advice and service booking line. Our team members are dedicated professionals committed to improving women's and men's sexual health.

MSI is a charity with partner organisations in 43 countries worldwide. We care for millions of people every year.

THINK YOU MIGHT BE PREGNANT?

An unplanned pregnancy can be a confusing, stressful and difficult experience for any woman. We understand this. This leaflet aims to provide you with clear, non-judgemental information about all the options available to you help you make the best decision.

If you have had unprotected sex or contraception has failed, you could be pregnant.

Signs of pregnancy vary and can include the following:

- Late or missed period
- Swelling or tenderness of the breasts
- More frequent trips to the loo
- Nausea or vomiting ('morning sickness' can in fact occur at any time of day)
- Change in appetite

It's important to take a pregnancy test as soon as possible to confirm whether you are pregnant. You can get a free pregnancy test from your GP, family planning clinic, or buy one from a chemist. You can also have a test at an Marie Stopes clinic for a small fee.

If you are pregnant, what are your options?

1. Continue with the pregnancy and become a parent.

If you wish to do this, you should contact your GP, who will arrange ante-natal care.

2. Continuing with the pregnancy and considering adoption or fostering.

If you do not wish to become a parent but do not want an abortion contact the British Adoption and Fostering Association. See the back of this leaflet for the contact details of specialist agencies

3. Ending the pregnancy through abortion.

If you do not want to continue with the pregnancy, contact your GP, family planning clinic or Marie Stopes clinic.

Weigh up each of these options carefully. If you are unsure, talk to someone you trust. If there is no-one you can talk to, you can always call us to discuss your options with a counsellor – although the final decision should be yours.

WHAT IF YOU DECIDE TO HAVE AN ABORTION?

Around 200,000 abortions are carried out in Britain each year, so you are not alone. Women choose to end a pregnancy for a number of reasons – all of which are totally valid. Women themselves are in the best position to know whether or not they can continue with a pregnancy. No one else can make this decision for them.

While many women are very clear about their decision to have an abortion, others are less so. If you are at all unsure or wish to discuss your situation or your options further, we can arrange for an appointment with one of our counsellors.

The first step is to go to your GP or family planning clinic and they will explain what services are available to you and refer you on to the local service. This could be your local hospital or a clinic, such as such as a Marie Stopes clinic who provide NHS services for many areas of the UK. Your doctor will advise you if you are able to access an abortion free on the NHS. If you would prefer not to go to your GP you may be able to self refer. To find out more you can call us on 0845 300 3737.

Alternatively, you may wish to visit a Marie Stopes clinic privately. Some women are not eligible for an NHS abortion, others simply prefer not have to go to their GP and therefore come to us privately.

We appreciate it can be difficult but it is best if you can make a decision as soon as possible as you will have more treatment options available to you.

Be aware that some doctors may be unsympathetic. They may delay you or refuse to refer you because they disagree with abortion. You have the right to contact another GP or go to a family planning clinic. If you are having difficulties, call us for advice.



WHAT HAPPENS AT THE CLINIC

After an appointment has been made for you at a Marie Stopes clinic, the first step is the consultation where you will see a doctor or a nurse. Consultations are also available over the telephone; many women find this more convenient.

Your abortion treatment options will be discussed and you will be asked about your medical history and any medication you may be taking. You may have a blood test (usually just a finger prick), a chlamydia test and an ultrasound scan to determine how many weeks pregnant you are.

You will also have the opportunity to speak to a counsellor if you wish to talk further about your situation. Our clinic team keep your details and any other information you provide them with completely **private** and **confidential**.

If you have any questions or concerns however small these may be, please ask.

ABORTION MYTHS

Groups and individuals who are against abortion have spent years circulating inaccurate information about abortion and its effects on women, such as:

Abortion causes breast cancer.

There is no evidence from the medical profession that abortion causes breast cancer. This was reiterated by a collective study analysing data from 83,000 women in 53 countries. (The Lancet, June 5 2004, Reardon D.C.)

Having an abortion will make it difficult to have a child at another time.

There are very few health risks associated with a straightforward abortion and little evidence of any effect on future fertility.

A woman's partner has to give consent to an abortion.

This is not true. Although we would advise you to talk to your partner if you can, we know this is not always possible. Ultimately, it is solely the woman's right to have an abortion or not.

More information is available at www.mariestopes.org.uk and any questions you might have can be answered by our team at anytime.

METHODS OF ABORTION

There are two main methods of abortion. **Medical abortion** sometimes called the abortion pill involves taking a combination of two different types of medication. **Surgical abortion** involves a minor procedure. Both are safe, effective and straightforward.

Surgical abortion

Involves a minor procedure where the pregnancy is removed vaginally by gentle suction.

Early surgical abortion (up to 12 weeks)

Takes less than 5 minutes. Can be done without anaesthetic, under sedation or general anaesthetic.

Surgical abortion (13-19 weeks)

Takes 10-15 minutes. Choice of conscious sedation or general anaesthetic.

Later surgical abortion (19-24 weeks)

Performed in two stages, one in the morning for preparation of the cervix and one a few hours later that requires general anaesthetic.

Medical abortion

Is the termination of pregnancy through the use of a drug or a combination of drugs to cause the pregnancy to pass.

Early medical abortion (up to 9 weeks)

Early medical abortion requires taking two doses of medication over two visits 6-48 hours apart and is very much like an early miscarriage.

Medical abortion can also be used between 13 and 24 weeks

Offered in some clinics in Great Britain.



COMMON QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Is abortion safe?

Yes. Abortion is one of the most frequently performed gynaecological procedures in Britain. Complications are extremely rare. However, any surgical procedure or medical treatment carries some risks. You will receive information about the possible risks and complications relating to abortion at the clinic.

Does an abortion hurt?

Many women experience cramping after an abortion – very much like bad period pains. This doesn't last very long and you can take painkillers to ease the discomfort.

There are different forms of anaesthetics that you can choose from. You could be awake during the procedure or sedated or have a general anaesthetic. The clinic will let you know about the pros and cons of each method so you can choose what is best for you.

How will I feel after my abortion?

Most women experience a sense of relief, but others may feel more emotional. It is quite normal to feel a bit low for a few days. The consensus of medical opinion is that the vast majority of women, who have an abortion, do not have major nor long-lasting effects afterwards. However, distress may be triggered if the circumstances surrounding the abortion are especially stressful. Marie Stopes International has specialist counsellors available should you wish to talk through your feelings at any point after your abortion.

Will anyone else find out?

No. Like all other medical services, abortion is **strictly confidential** and no one will be told about your visit unless you want them to be. This includes your parents, partner and doctor. Nothing that happens at the clinic will go on your medical record without your permission.

Can someone under 16 years have an abortion?

Young people, even those under 16 years old are allowed to access abortion services with complete confidentiality and

without informing parents. All young women aged under 16 years will see a counsellor who will support them with their decision.

We do advise that a guardian or trusted adult accompany a young person to the clinic, if they feel they are unable to tell their parents about their pregnancy.

Is it up to me if I have an abortion? Can my boyfriend or parents stop me from seeking an abortion?

It is entirely your right to decide whether or not to have an abortion. No one else can make this decision for you – or stop you from making the decision that is right for you. We will always respect your decision.

Can I have more than one abortion?

Yes. Women are free to seek abortion services on more than one occasion. However, there are reliable methods of contraception available which if used properly should reduce the risk of an unplanned pregnancy and reduce the need for abortion.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER MY ABORTION?

Abortion is a very safe procedure especially in the early stages and serious problems afterwards are very rare. If you are worried about anything or have questions following your abortion, our team of supportive nurses are here to help 24 hours on **0845 300 3737**.

DON'T FORGET ABOUT YOUR CONTRACEPTION

Contraception

You can become pregnant as early as one week after an abortion. Whether you have just had a pregnancy scare, or whether you have recently had an abortion. If you do not want to get pregnant, it is very important to find the method of contraception that is best for you. Marie Stopes International provides a full range of contraceptive methods and we can discuss your options with you.

Emergency contraception

This is contraception that can be used after unprotected sex - whether you have not used any contraception at all or whether your normal contraception has failed (a split condom, missed pill, etc). It should not be seen as a regular method of contraception – it is much better to use a reliable method every time you have sex and to be aware of the other risks carried by unprotected sex, such as sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS.

There are two methods of emergency contraception:

The **emergency contraception pill** can be used up to 5 days after unprotected sex - available from chemists, your doctor, family planning clinic or Marie Stopes clinics.

The **emergency contraception IUD** can also be fitted up to 5 days after unprotected sex – available from your doctor, family planning clinic or Marie Stopes clinics.

If you have unprotected sex it is advisable to get advice as soon as possible.

UNPLANNED PREGNANCY CHECK LIST

- ✓ Take a pregnancy test to confirm whether you are pregnant.
- ✓ Go to your GP, family planning clinic or call **Marie Stopes International** on **0845 300 3737**.
- ✓ If you decide to end the pregnancy you can book an appointment at **Marie Stopes International**, either under the NHS via your GP, self referral or as a private client.

ABORTION – AN INTEGRAL PART OF SEXUAL HEALTH

Abortion has been legal in Great Britain since 1967 and is available up to 24 weeks gestation under certain grounds to protect a woman's physical or mental health or that of any existing children. Abortion can be accessed beyond 24 weeks if there is serious risk to the life of the woman or evidence of severe foetal abnormality. All abortions must be agreed by two doctors (one in an emergency), carried out by a doctor, in a government-approved hospital or clinic. The 1967 Abortion Act applies to England, Scotland and Wales but was never extended to Northern Ireland where abortion can only be obtained if the woman's life is at risk and in some cases of foetal abnormality.

You're not alone

There are just under 200,000 abortions performed in England and Wales and about 14,000 in Scotland. Around 90 per cent of abortions are carried out at under 13 week's gestation. Later abortions (after 20 weeks) are extremely rare – about 1.6 per cent of the total¹. At least one-third of British women will have had an abortion by the time they reach the age of 45².

[1] http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsStatistics/DH_099285

[2] Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologist, The Care of Women Requesting Induced Abortion, Evidence-based Clinical Guideline 7, Sept. 2004



USEFUL CONTACT INFORMATION

Marie Stopes International

0845 300 3737 (24 hours)

www.mariestopes.org.uk

Help and advice with unplanned pregnancy and abortion

FPA

Family planning and sexual health clinics in your area

England - 0845 122 8690

Northern Ireland - 0845 122 8687

www.fpa.org.uk

Brook

Ask Brook 0808 802 1234

www.brook.org.uk

Confidential advice for under 25's

Gingerbread

0808 802 0925

www.gingerbread.org.uk

Working nationally and locally with single parent families, to improve their lives.

Talk adoption helpline:

0800 0 568 578

British Association for Adoption and Fostering (BAAF)

020 7421 2600

www.baaf.org.uk

Antenatal Results and Choice (ARC)

Helpline: 0207 631 0285

www.arc-uk.org

ARC offers information and support to parents who are making decisions before, during and after antenatal tests

Our services for women include:

- Contraception
- Pregnancy testing
- Abortion
- Well Woman health screening
- Cervical smear test
- Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) testing
- Female Sterilisation

We also offer a range of services specifically for men including:

- Contraception
- Vasectomy
- Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI) testing
- Well Man health screening

