



MARIE STOPES  
INTERNATIONAL

# Unplanned Pregnancy

Practical Information  
for women living in Ireland

# 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 centres in the UK.

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 booklet 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. They can include any of 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)

Every woman experiences different symptoms. So if you think you might be pregnant, the first step is to take a pregnancy test. You can get a test at your GP, local family planning clinic or by visiting Reproductive Choices in Dublin. Their address can be found at the back of this booklet. You can also purchase a home test from most chemists, and some chemists may provide pregnancy testing services.

**Do this as soon as possible.**

## 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. Continue with the pregnancy and consider adoption or fostering.

If you do not wish to become a parent but do not want an abortion, contact the Irish Family Planning Association. See the back of this booklet for details.

### 3. End the pregnancy through abortion.

If you do not want to continue with the pregnancy, abortion is safe and you have more treatment options the earlier it is carried out.

# What if you decide to have an abortion?

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 and wish to discuss your situation or your options further, we can arrange for a phone consultation with one of our counsellors (**00 44 845 300 8090**) or by contacting one of the agencies at the back of this booklet. Young women under the age of 16 need to see a counsellor.

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

As abortion is restricted in Ireland, if you decide to have an abortion you must travel to the UK and pay for the service. We can provide you with all the information you need to make this appointment.



# How we can help you

**It is hard to know where or who to turn to when faced with an unplanned pregnancy. We respect every woman's right to receive impartial information to make her own decision about what is best for her.**

Although abortion is restricted in Ireland, it is not against the law to obtain advice or information about abortion from any sexual health clinic or from Reproductive Choices in Dublin. It is also legal to travel to the UK (or any other country where abortion is legal) to have an abortion.

**Contact us using the Live Chat feature on our website homepage**

**([www.mariestopes.org.uk](http://www.mariestopes.org.uk))**

**or call us on 00 44 845 300 8090**

**at any time of day or night.**

**Your call will be completely confidential.**

**When you contact us, we can:**

- answer any questions you might have
- arrange for you to have counselling over the phone or point you in the direction of counselling services in Ireland
- arrange for you to discuss your options with an experienced nurse
- advise you on how many weeks pregnant you may be. You can have a scan at Reproductive Choices or elsewhere in Ireland (contact details at the back of this booklet)

**If you decide you want to end the pregnancy, we will make an appointment for you at one of our centres in the UK to suit you and your travel arrangements. We will also give you information on treatment choices, prices, maps, travel and accommodation.**

# Travelling to the UK

Most treatment options can be carried out during one day but you will need to think about your travel arrangements. When you call to make an appointment we will be able to advise you about how long you will be at the centre so you can estimate your travelling times. There are a number of airlines that fly from Ireland to the UK (see back of this booklet) but it is very important that you co-ordinate your flight with an appointment.

You can check the available flights but don't book a flight until you have made an appointment for your treatment. MSI can help you with these arrangements when you call to make an appointment.

We have centres in Bristol, Manchester, Leeds, Essex and London and you will find that it is less expensive to fly during the week instead of at weekends.

We will arrange and cover the cost for a taxi to pick you up from the airport and take you to the nearest MSI centre.

**It is really important to face the situation and assess how far into the pregnancy you are as soon as you can. The legal time limit for abortion in the UK is 24 weeks of pregnancy.**

If you need help to fund your procedure, you can contact the Abortion Support Network. They are also able to help with accommodation. See the back of this booklet for details.

[www.mariestopes.org.uk](http://www.mariestopes.org.uk) 00 44 845 300 8090



## How do I book an appointment?

You can call our 24 hour booking and information service on **00 44 845 300 8090** (or 0845 300 8090 if you are calling from the UK).

**Please let us know that you will be travelling from Ireland. As well as offering you advice on flights, we can talk to you about accommodation if you choose to stay overnight.**



## What happens at the MSI centre in the UK?

**After an appointment has been made for you at a centre, the first step is the consultation where you will see a doctor or a nurse. Consultations are also available over the telephone as 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 clinical team keep your details and any other information completely private and confidential.

Under the terms of the 1967 Abortion Act, medical professionals need to know the reason why you are requesting an abortion, and two doctors' signatures are needed for an abortion to take place. These signatures are provided at the centre in the UK.

# Methods of abortion

There are two main methods of abortion: medical and surgical abortion.

All treatment options are safe, effective and straightforward.

If you have the opportunity to stay locally with friends or family we advise you to do so.

## Medical abortion

(sometimes called the 'abortion pill')

Medical abortion is available to women who are six to nine weeks pregnant and involves taking two tablets at different times. This can be six hours apart – allowing the treatment to be completed during one day – or over 24 or 48 hours meaning that the treatment is over the course of two days and we advise you to stay locally.

## Surgical abortion

Surgical treatments are available for all women up to 24 weeks. In early pregnancy it can take less than five minutes and can be done without anaesthetic. In later pregnancy, the procedure will take longer and may require anaesthetic.

**We will advise you on your options and recommend the best treatment for you.**

**If you would like more information about each procedure please visit [www.maristopes.org.uk](http://www.maristopes.org.uk)**

Treatment type	How many weeks pregnant	Time in UK
Medical abortion (tablets taken over 6 hours)	6-9 weeks	1 day
Medical abortion (tablets taken over 24 or 48 hours)	6-9 weeks	2 days
Surgical abortion	Up to 19 weeks	1 day
Surgical abortion	19-24 weeks	2-3 days



## Common questions answered

### Is abortion safe?

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

### Does an abortion hurt?

You may experience discomfort and cramping following your treatment. We will give you painkillers to help manage this.

If you have a surgical abortion you can choose to have this without anaesthetic, to be sedated or have a general anaesthetic.

### 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. For the vast majority of women who have an abortion, there are no long-lasting effects afterwards. However, distress may be triggered if the circumstances surrounding the abortion are especially stressful. We have specialist counsellors available if you wish to talk through your feelings at any point after your abortion.

Following your treatment you will also be given a card with contact details of people who are able to help you once you return home to Ireland.

### **Will anyone else find out?**

No. Like all other medical procedures, 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 GP. Your visit will only go on your medical record if you want it on there.

### **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 should make this decision for you – or stop you from making the decision that is right for you. We will 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 very reliable methods of contraception available which if used properly will significantly reduce the risk of an unplanned pregnancy and 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, you can contact our team of supportive nurses at any time on **00 44 845 122 1441**. You can also contact the Irish Family Planning Association on the number listed at the back of this booklet.

# Abortion myths

**Groups and individuals who are against abortion have spent years circulating inaccurate information about abortion and its effects on women. These include:**

## **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](http://www.mariestopes.org.uk) and any questions you might have can be answered by our team at any time.

# Don't forget about your contraception

## Contraception

You can conceive 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 important to find the method of contraception that works for you. We provide a full range of contraceptive methods and 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. It should not be seen as a regular method of contraception as 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 contraceptive pill (or 'morning after' pill)**

should be taken as soon as possible after unprotected sex and is available from chemists, your GP, family planning clinic or Reproductive Choices in Dublin.

The **emergency contraception IUD** can also be fitted up to five days after unprotected sex – available from your GP, family planning clinic or Reproductive Choices.

**If you have unprotected sex please seek advice as soon as possible.**

www.mariestopes.org.uk 00 44 845 300 8090

## 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 **00 44 845 300 8090**
- ✓ If you decide to end the pregnancy you can book an appointment at **Marie Stopes International**



## Contact information

**Marie Stopes International**  
**00 44 845 300 8090 (24 hours)**  
**[www.mariestopes.org.uk](http://www.mariestopes.org.uk)**

*Help and advice with unplanned pregnancy and abortion*

**Reproductive Choices**  
**01 830 0630**  
**[www.reproductivechoices.ie](http://www.reproductivechoices.ie)**

*Help and advice with unplanned pregnancy and abortion, based in Dublin*

**Irish Family Planning Association**  
**1850 49 50 51**  
**[www.ifpa.ie](http://www.ifpa.ie)**

*Sexual health advice and unplanned pregnancy support and counselling*

**Abortion Support Network**  
**00 44 7897 611 593**  
**[www.abortionsupport.org.uk](http://www.abortionsupport.org.uk)**

*Help with travel costs and overnight accommodation*

**Positive Options**  
**[www.positiveoptions.ie](http://www.positiveoptions.ie)**  
*Crisis pregnancy services*

**One Family**  
**[www.onefamily.ie](http://www.onefamily.ie)**  
**1890 66 22 12**

*Provides support and help for single parents*

**The Adoption Authority of Ireland**  
**01 230 9300**  
**[www.adoptionboard.ie](http://www.adoptionboard.ie)**

*Provides information on adoption*

**Irish Foster Care Association**  
**01 459 9474**  
**[www.ifca.ie](http://www.ifca.ie)**

*Provides information on fostering*

# Airlines that fly from Ireland to the UK

## Airline

Aer Arann	0818 210 210 www.aerarann.com
Aer Lingus	0818 365 044 www.aerlingus.com
BMI	00 44 1332 648 181 www.flybmi.com
Easy Jet	00 44 843 104 5454 www.easyjet.com
Ryan Air	0818 30 30 30 / 1550 92 70 30 www.ryanair.com
CityJet	01 605 0383 www.cityjet.com

## Airports closest to MSI centres

MSI Centre	Closest UK airport
Bristol	Bristol
Manchester	Manchester
Essex	Stansted, City
South London	Gatwick, City
West London	Heathrow
Central London	Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, City, Luton

**It is best not to book your flight before you have arranged your appointment with Marie Stopes International. You can always change your booking with us if you need to; it's harder to change your flight.**

Airports (Ireland)	Airline	Fly to UK Airports
Cork	Aer Arann	Bristol, Manchester
	Aer Lingus	Bristol, Heathrow, Manchester
	BMI	Leeds Bradford, Heathrow
	Ryan Air	Gatwick, Stansted
Dublin	Aer Lingus	Bristol, Heathrow, Manchester
	CityJet	City
	Ryan Air	Bristol, Gatwick, Leeds Bradford, Luton, Manchester, Stansted
	BMI	Heathrow, Manchester
Galway	Aer Arann	Leeds, Luton, Manchester
Kerry	Aer Arann	Manchester
	Ryan Air	Luton, Stansted
Knock	Aer Lingus	Gatwick
	BMI	Manchester
	Ryan Air	Bristol, Gatwick, Leeds Bradford, Luton, Stansted
Shannon	Aer Arann	Bristol, Manchester
	Aer Lingus	Bristol, Gatwick, Heathrow, Manchester
	Ryan Air	Gatwick, Stansted
Waterford	Aer Arann	Luton, Manchester

**Marie Stopes International**

1 Conway Street  
Fitzroy Square  
London  
W1T 6LP  
United Kingdom

24 hour advice line 00 44 870 300 8090  
[services@mariestopes.org.uk](mailto:services@mariestopes.org.uk)  
[www.mariestopes.org.uk](http://www.mariestopes.org.uk)

Registered charity number: 265543  
Company number: 1102208