Abortion

Summary

- There are two types of abortions – surgical and medication.
- Support is available to women deciding whether to have an abortion, and to women who have had the procedure.

Abortion (or 'termination of pregnancy') is when a pregnancy is intentionally ended. In Victoria, abortion is legal.

This factsheet provides an overview of the information you might need and where to get additional support if you need it.

Depending on how long you have been pregnant, as well as service availability, you may have the option of either a medical or surgical abortion. For more information about each procedure, and to work out which one is right for you, visit:

- Abortion procedures – medication
- Abortion procedures – surgical

Abortion law in Victoria


A GP who has a conscientious objection to providing abortion information or a referral for an abortion must refer any woman seeking this information to another GP who doesn’t object.

If you feel your GP has not done this, you can make a complaint via the Victorian Health Complaints Commissioner or the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

In May 2016, the Victorian Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 was amended (new Part 9A inserted) to provide for the establishment of legally protected safe access zones within a radius of 150 metres around abortion providers. This ensures that women and staff entering or leaving premises providing abortions can do so safely and privately, without fear or harassment.

Abortion law in the rest of Australia

Abortion laws vary between Australian states and territories. Most of the variation concerns the reason for the abortion and the stage of pregnancy.

Read more about abortion law across Australia.

Deciding whether to have an abortion

While many women have made their decision to have an abortion before attending a clinic, you may feel you need more information to help make your decision. This may include information about alternatives (such as adoption and foster care), and support services that are available if you wish to continue with your pregnancy.
So that your decision is fully informed, at your first visit the abortion service provider will inform you about:

- the procedure
- the risks
- anaesthesia options for surgical termination
- pre- and post-abortion support.

If you need an interpreter, let the clinic know before you have your first appointment. They can arrange an interpreter on the phone or face-to-face.

If you are considering abortion and having difficulty making a decision, unbiased, non-judgemental and non-directional counselling from a trained professional may help you to work through your feelings and thoughts. Medicare-rebated pregnancy support counselling services are provided by some doctors, social workers, mental health nurses and psychologists.

1800 My Options

If you need more assistance with decision-making or support, you can contact 1800 My Options (1800 696 784) for information about support and counselling services, based on your needs and location.

1800 My Options is Victoria’s sexual and reproductive health information and phoneline service. It is a woman-centred service, established to provide non-judgmental information to meet individual sexual and reproductive health needs.

1800 My Options does not provide medical, legal or financial advice or counselling to women as part of its service.

Abortion and planned or wanted pregnancy

During pregnancy, a woman may be informed about significant problems with her health or the health of the fetus. If this happens, she may be faced with the decision of whether to have an abortion. Genetic and pregnancy counselling is available to support women in this situation.

A woman may also reconsider her plans and terminate (end) a pregnancy that she had originally wanted -- perhaps because of a relationship ending, financial problems, medical conditions or family issues.

If you need more assistance with decision-making or support, contact 1800 My Options (1800 696 784).

Abortion facts and myths

There are many myths and misconceptions about abortion. Some are based on beliefs from the past when abortion was illegal and ‘backyard’ procedures carried considerable risks.

If you have ever searched for information on abortion online, you might have encountered websites with conflicting and sometimes inaccurate information.

The Better Health Channel has created a list of abortion myths and facts to help separate fact from fiction.

Follow-up care and emotional support after an abortion

How you feel after an abortion will depend on your reasons for having one and how comfortable you were about your decision. In most cases, emotional distress peaks before the procedure and resolves soon after.

After having the procedure, most women feel:

- relief
- the return of a feeling of control
- that they made the right decision for them at the time.

After an abortion, some women find it helpful to talk about their experiences with a trained professional. For some women, professional, non-biased counselling can be valuable.

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If you find that you need additional support, let your abortion provider know. They will either provide follow-up support or refer you to an appropriate support service.

**Important note:** Some organisations that claim to offer non-biased counselling do not provide credible and balanced advice. They may be against abortion in all circumstances and may not be the right people to support you. Please see the list of non-biased support and information services below.

**Where to get help**

- **1800 My Options** – Victoria’s sexual and reproductive health information and phoneline service Tel. 1800 My Options (1800 696 784)

- **Family Planning Victoria** – comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for people of all ages Tel. 1800 013 952 or (03) 9257 0100

- **Family Planning Victoria’s Action Centre** – comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for people of all ages, with an afternoon drop-in clinic for people under 25 years of age Tel. (03) 9660 4700 or 1800 013 952

- Your local community health service’s sexual health clinic, sexual and reproductive health clinic or women’s health clinic

- Women’s health organisations for your region

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