

Information on Abortion

in South Australia

Fact Sheet

How do you know you're pregnant?

Possible signs include:

- a missed period or your period may be shorter or lighter than usual
- tender and/or bigger breasts
- tingling or tender nipples
- feeling sick and/or tired
- need to pass urine more often
- food cravings

Pregnancy testing

To confirm you are pregnant you will need to have a pregnancy test. You can do a urine test yourself by buying one from a pharmacy or supermarket, or see your doctor, SHINE SA or the Pregnancy Advisory Centre.

A pregnancy test can take 3 weeks to show a positive result. If you have tested negative but still feel that you may be pregnant then it is a good idea to repeat the test.

The decision is yours

If you are pregnant you have the following options:

- continue the pregnancy
- have an abortion
- continue the pregnancy and consider adoption or alternative care.

It helps to talk to a health professional about your pregnancy if you're not sure about your options. Remember that you don't have to make the decision without support.

It can also be helpful to talk it over with someone you trust, who won't tell you what to do. Think about who might be there for you, to listen to you and provide support so you can make the right decision for you. This may be a friend, partner or family member, or it may be useful to speak to someone from a health service.

Organisations such as the Pregnancy Advisory Centre (08 7117 8999) or SHINE SA can help provide support in decision making. More information on making a decision can also be found at the Children by Choice website (www.childrenbychoice.org.au).

Whatever you decide, the choice is yours.

How is an abortion done?

In Australia there are two methods available: medication abortion and surgical abortion. Both methods are safe and effective.

Medication abortion involves taking medication to cause a miscarriage. This causes cramping and bleeding which can be mild or severe. This method may need a follow-up appointment to check it has worked. In about 2% of cases an operation may be required if the pregnancy hasn't completely come away.

Surgical abortion is done in hospital under anaesthetic. It does not need an overnight stay. There may be some cramping and bleeding afterwards.

When can I have an abortion?

There are different reasons for choosing between medical and surgical abortion.

There is no 'right' method for every person.

Reasons for choosing a surgical abortion might include:

- it can be performed later in the pregnancy
- the procedure is over quickly
- there is no need for a follow-up test to confirm the pregnancy has ended
- it is done under anaesthetic.

Reasons for choosing a medical abortion might include:

- it is less invasive
- there is no need for anaesthetic
- there is more privacy than a surgical abortion
- you are at home.

Your options can be discussed in more detail at the abortion service.

Who has to know about the abortion?

Only your health care staff need to know about your abortion. The health care staff involved in your abortion care will keep your abortion information confidential unless child abuse or sexual assault is suspected. You don't have to tell anyone about your abortion.

You may need someone to go home with and be with you for 24 hours after your abortion in case of an emergency. If you do not have such support, you may be able to stay in hospital instead.

Is abortion legal?

Abortion can be legally accessed in Australia.

A medical assessment is needed to meet legal requirements. Partner or parental consent is not necessary for an abortion if you are 16 or over. If you're under 16 and feel you cannot talk to your parents or guardians about the pregnancy, then you can discuss this with a doctor, social worker or counsellor. Abortion can be provided under the age of 16 without parental consent if certain requirements are met.

Where can I have an abortion?

A medication abortion is available at some GPs and at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre. Surgical abortions are available at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre and some public hospitals, including some country hospitals. A doctor's referral is not needed for the Pregnancy Advisory Centre or most public hospital services. Some regional services may need a referral from a GP to receive an abortion.

Abortions later than 16 weeks of pregnancy are mostly provided at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre.

How much does it cost?

If you have a Medicare card, surgical abortions are free at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre and public hospitals.

There is a cost for a medication abortion. GPs may charge a gap fee. You will need a Medicare card and a health care card (if you have one).

If you are an overseas student with health cover, abortions may be covered. You will need to check with your insurer.

What are the risks?

Most abortions are done with no complications. Abortion is a simple, safe procedure. As with any procedure there are some risks and it is important to be aware of these.

Bleeding (retained tissue)

The uterus may not be completely emptied, causing heavy bleeding and cramping pains. This is more common with medication abortion and in a small number of people further treatment may be required.

Infection

There's a small risk of infection, which can be simply treated with antibiotics. Signs of infection are abdominal pain, fever or unpleasant smelling vaginal discharge.

Other risks

Damage to the uterus or cervix during a surgical abortion is very rare. A failed procedure or an incomplete abortion is also very rare. If you have any concerns, get medical advice.

There are no long-term health issues after having either a medication or surgical abortion and they have no effect on your future ability to get pregnant.

What happens after an abortion?

People recover quickly after an abortion. A follow-up appointment after the abortion may be recommended to ensure you are feeling well and to discuss any concerns.

Ongoing contraception can be organised at the time of the abortion or at the follow-up appointment. It is important to know that you can get pregnant again if you have unprotected sex as early as 5 days after an abortion, so you should use condoms or avoid sex until you have effective contraception.

If you have any concerns, counselling and information is available at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre and SHINE SA.

Pregnancy Advisory Centre

Tel 08 7117 8999

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/AbortionSupportServices



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SHINE SA Fact Sheets are regularly reviewed and updated. To download the most recent version visit www.shinesa.org.au

SHINE SA Appointments and Enquiries

Tel 8300 5300 **Online Bookings** www.shinesa.org.au

Clinic locations and times are available at www.shinesa.org.au

Sexual Healthline

Tel 1300 883 793 **Country callers (toll free)** 1800 188 171

Talk to a sexual health nurse about any sexual health issue.

Available 9am – 12.30pm, Monday – Friday

National Relay Service

www.relayservice.gov.au

133 677 (TTY/Voice) 1300 555 727 (Speak & Listen) 0423 677 767 (SMS Relay)