



CONNECT



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ABOUT ABORTION a fact sheet for teens

Abortion is one of three options for dealing with accidental, unplanned or unwanted pregnancy. The other options are to let the pregnancy move forward, give birth and be a mother, or give birth and give the baby for adoption. Abortion is a medical option offered by clinics to remove a fetus from a woman's body ending the pregnancy.

Abortion was made legal and safe across the United States by a Supreme Court decision in 1973 known as *Roe v Wade*. Before that, it was a crime, and thousands of women died because of self-induced or black-market abortion.

In the first trimester, abortion is roughly 10 times safer than giving birth. In WA State over 24,000 abortions are done each year. Over half are for women under age 25; 37% are under age 20.

Why do I want to know about abortion?

Understanding abortion is important to knowing your options. Also it can help you support a friend, partner or family member before or after their abortion.

Why does someone choose abortion?

For teens, not having a baby at this time, lets them finish growing up before they become parents themselves. For adults, having an abortion may allow her to continue her education, advance in her career, care for the family she already has, break off an abusive relationship, decide if and when to have children, and make other important life decisions.

The person who is pregnant is the expert when it comes to her own reproductive decisions.

Making decisions about pregnancy is rarely easy. There is no one right answer for everyone. Each woman needs to think about her unique circumstances, goals, feelings and needs.

Visit www.pregnancyoptions.info for tools to help make a decision. Or, call Cedar River Clinics for an Options Counseling appointment.

Having an abortion does not affect ability to get pregnant in the future. Having more than one abortion is relatively common as women are fertile for most of their lives.

Who Has Abortions?

One in three American women will have an abortion in their lifetime. We are mothers, sisters, daughters, friends, grandmothers, teens. We are Latina, Asian, Middle Eastern, African American, Southeast Asian, Native American, mixed race, and Caucasian. We are immigrants, U.S. citizens, soldiers in the military. We are women of faith, lawyers, waitresses, teachers, students, coworkers and unemployed. We are married, single, straight and queer. We are all around you.

- Nearly half of pregnancies in America are unintended; of these 4 in 10 end in abortion, 22% of all pregnancies, excluding miscarriages, end in abortion.
- In Washington State, 52% of those who get abortions are younger than age 25, under age 20 is 19%.

The reasons women give to explain their abortion decision underscore their understanding of the responsibilities of parenthood and family life.

$\frac{3}{4}$ say concern for or responsibility to other individuals

$\frac{3}{4}$ say cannot afford a child

$\frac{3}{4}$ say having a baby would interfere with work, school or the ability to care for dependents

$\frac{1}{2}$ do not want to be a single parent or are having problems with their husband or partner.

(Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, 2005)

About Abortion Procedures

There are two main kinds of abortion: surgical abortion and the abortion pill. The options available to you depend on how far along the pregnancy is. Nearly 90% of abortions happen during the first trimester of pregnancy (the first third or about 13 weeks). Weeks in pregnancy are measured since the Last Menstrual Period or LMP.



Choosing between a first trimester surgical procedure and the abortion pill is a personal decision. In the second trimester, the procedure called D&E requires appointments on two consecutive days, and the abortion pill is not an option.

Cost

In Washington State, low income women, including teens, can apply for DSHS medical coverage for pregnancy which covers either abortion or hospital delivery. Most insurance plans in WA State cover abortion. If a woman does not have insurance or DSHS coverage, then the price of abortion ranges from about \$500 in the first trimester to over \$8000 in the second trimester. The later in a pregnancy, the more it costs.

The Day of the Abortion

At the clinic, they will run some basic lab tests and perform an ultrasound to determine the stage of the pregnancy on that day. Clinic staff will review a person's medical history, answer her questions about abortion, confirm her decision, discuss pain medication options, and learn what to expect during and how to care for herself after the abortion.

The abortion pill is available to women who are less than 8 weeks LMP. The abortion takes place over several days. First, at the clinic, a woman swallows a pill, Mifepristone, causing the pregnancy to stop developing and to separate from the lining of the uterus. Then 24-72 hours later, she takes Misoprostol pills which cause the uterus to contract. For the next several hours, she experiences cramping and bleeding to expel the pregnancy from her body.

A surgical abortion is performed in the clinic. A first-trimester surgical abortion is called a vacuum aspiration. With a female health-worker assisting, the doctor will do the procedure that usually takes less than five minutes to complete. Recovery afterward in the clinic lasts from half hour to several hours depending upon the pain medication received.

In a second-trimester abortion, over 13 weeks, the Dilate and Evacuate D&E procedure takes place over 2 to 3 days, and the woman must stay overnight within 30 minutes of the clinic. The procedure starts with the insertion of dilators that gently expand open the cervix. Depending

on how many weeks a woman is pregnant, on the second or third day, the dilators are removed and then the doctor removes the pregnancy in a procedure which usually lasts about 10-15 minutes.

A follow-up appointment is scheduled within 1-3 weeks. And, birth control is offered and provided.

After an Abortion

Emotions following an abortion are different for each person. Pregnancy causes big hormonal changes in the body which affect emotions. For many, the end of a pregnancy brings feelings of relief. Others experience feelings of sadness or anger. A wide range of feelings is normal. It helps to talk about it with a trusted friend. Another option is to call the talkline at Exhale 866-439-4253 and speak with a volunteer. There are several websites where you can read true-life stories about abortion such as www.fwhc.org/stories. Some people find the experience makes them feel stronger and determined to make sure abortion remains accessible. The most important thing to feeling good afterward is to make your own decision in the first place.

Teens and Abortion

In Washington State, teens do not need a parent's permission to have an abortion. However, about 61% of young women having an abortion do involve one or more parent.

For More Information

- Cedar River Clinics offers abortion up to 24 weeks, pregnancy testing, birth control and STI testing. 1-800-572-4223.
www.Birth-Control-Comparison.info
www.FWHC.org
- Backline is a pregnancy-options information hotline. www.yourbackline.org 1-888-493-0092.
- Community Abortion Information and Referral (CAIR) Project, based in Seattle, offers details on clinics and money for abortion. www.cairproject.org
- Call Exhale to find someone to talk with after an abortion. www.4exhale.org 1-866-439-4253.

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