



## Abortion:

After 14 weeks when  
there is a fetal anomaly





# Contents

Who is this booklet for? .....	4
Abortion when there is a fetal anomaly .....	5
Is abortion safe?.....	6
How do I access an abortion? .....	6
How much does an abortion cost?.....	7
What happens before an abortion?.....	7
Types of abortion .....	7
Abortion overview .....	8
What if I am under 16? .....	10
What if I am 20 weeks pregnant or more?.....	10
Following an abortion.....	11
Support services available at KEMH .....	14
Perinatal Loss Service (PLS) .....	14
Registration of a baby at KEMH .....	16
Counselling and other support .....	17
Abortion providers .....	17
Legal services.....	18
Other support services .....	18
Women's Health Services .....	18
Mental Health Services .....	19
Diverse sexualities and genders.....	19



## Who is this booklet for?

Unfortunately, not all pregnancies go as expected or hoped for. You may discover that your baby has medical complications. It may be that your baby will not be the healthy baby you hoped for. It may even be that your baby will not survive.

Learning that your baby has a serious condition is often a shock and you will be faced with difficult decisions. This booklet is designed for women who have been advised that their baby has a severe fetal anomaly and are considering ending the pregnancy.

Before making the decision to end the pregnancy it is important that you are provided with information on the type and severity of complication your baby has been diagnosed with, and the impact it might have. Your health care provider will either be able to provide you with this information or refer you to someone who can.

**This booklet provides general information. We encourage you to discuss your pregnancy, the diagnosed anomaly, your options, your concerns, the risks and the costs with your health care provider as soon as possible. This booklet does not replace medical advice.**

Please see the back of this booklet for contact numbers of counselling and support services. Please note that the information in this booklet refers to pregnant women but it is also applicable to other individuals who are pregnant, such as girls and those who are gender diverse.

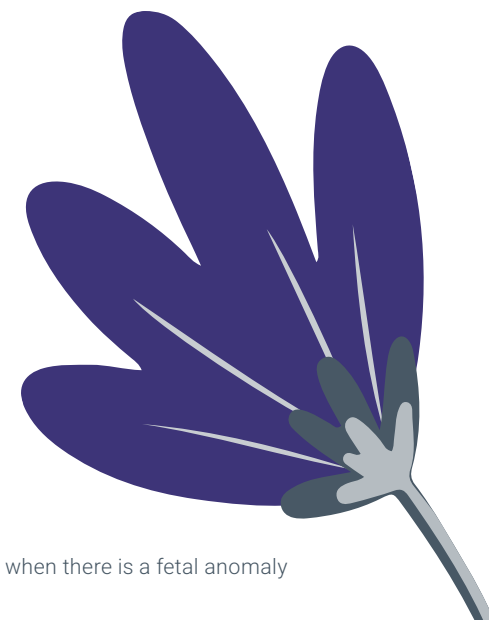
## Abortion when there is a fetal anomaly

An abortion, also known as termination of pregnancy, is a way of ending a pregnancy. This option is available for women in Western Australia who are up to 19 weeks and six days pregnant.

After 20 weeks, abortion is only available if the woman or fetus has a severe condition and the procedure must be approved by a panel of medical practitioners, who are specifically appointed for this role. There are different procedures for abortion. These will be covered later in this booklet.

The idea of having an abortion may be very confronting. Many women view abortion as something women choose when they have an unwanted pregnancy. Having an abortion does not mean you did not want the pregnancy. However, you might decide it is the best choice for you now that you have more information on the condition of your baby.

Deciding if you want to have an abortion can be a difficult choice. Every woman has the right to make her own choice about whether to have an abortion or continue with the pregnancy, as long as legal requirements are met.



## Is abortion safe?

When performed by a qualified health professional, an abortion is usually a safe medical procedure.

Generally, the earlier you have an abortion the safer it is. That is why it is important to discuss your options with a health care provider as early as possible.

Your health care provider will discuss possible complications of having an abortion or continuing the pregnancy. Although serious complications are not common, all medical and surgical procedures have some risks. These risks will depend on your specific circumstances and, depending on the anomaly, may significantly increase should complications arise.

## How do I access an abortion?

Depending on factors related to you and to your baby, your medical provider will either refer you to Maternal Fetal Medicine (MFM) at King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH) or an external provider.

In some instances, a health care provider may not wish to consult on abortion and will choose not to refer you for an abortion even when your baby has complications. You can still access abortion services; however, you will need to:

- Approach a different health care provider
- Seek help from one of the Women's Health Services (see list on page 18)
- Contact Sexual Health Quarters on (08) 9227 6177 for information and referral options

For abortion of 20 weeks gestation or more, there are legal requirements that need to be met before an abortion can be considered (see page 5).

## How much does an abortion cost?

The cost of the abortion will depend on how far along you are in the pregnancy, whether you have a medical or surgical abortion and where you have the procedure. Some costs are covered through Medicare and the fees will be less if you are eligible for Medicare benefits. Talk to your health care provider if you are unable to afford an abortion, as you might be able to receive financial assistance via KEMH.

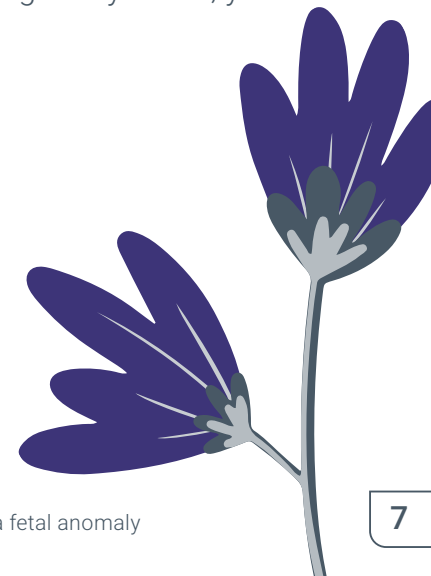
## What happens before an abortion?

Before an abortion, you will need to give your informed consent for a referral to an abortion provider. You will then be referred for an abortion. Your health care provider will ask questions about your medical history and may do some tests and screening.

You will be given information on the types of abortion available to you, what to do after the procedure and pain-relief options, as well as information on relevant support services.

## Types of abortion

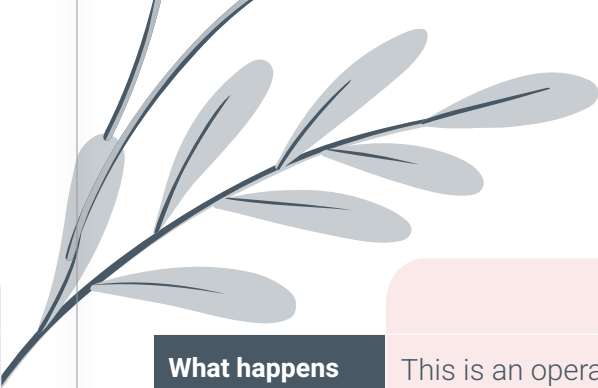
There are two types of abortion: medical (where medicines are used) and surgical (where an operation is performed). Your access to these will depend on how many weeks pregnant you are, your individual circumstances and preferences.



### Abortion overview

The table below provides a summary of medical and surgical abortion. You should talk to your doctor or health care provider when deciding which option is suitable.

	Medical abortion
What happens in this type of abortion?	This procedure uses medication, given in doses over two or more days. Your experience of medical abortion will depend on how many weeks pregnant you are. An early medical abortion can be like a heavy period or miscarriage, whereas at a later stage of pregnancy it has similarities to induced labour.
Where will the abortion take place?	It will take place in a hospital. You may be able to go home on the same day, but you may need to stay overnight.
Is the abortion painful?	<p>It will most likely be painful when you deliver the baby. The amount of pain will vary from woman to woman and will depend how far along you are in your pregnancy. You will be offered pain medication during the procedure.</p> <p>In the days and week after the procedure pain and cramping is common. Pain-relief medication and a hot pack can assist.</p>
How much bleeding will there be?	You will have vaginal bleeding during a medical abortion. This is usually heavier than your normal period. After delivering, bleeding can last for about 12 days but should get lighter day by day.
How likely am I to need another procedure to complete the abortion?	You are more likely to need another procedure if you choose medical abortion. The majority of women do not need a further procedure but at times a surgical procedure will be required to complete the abortion.



	Surgical abortion
What happens in this type of abortion?	This is an operation to remove the baby from your womb. There are different types of surgical abortion depending on how many weeks pregnant you are.
Where will the abortion take place?	It will take place in a clinic or hospital. You can normally go home on the same day, but you will usually need someone to accompany you.
Is the abortion painful?	<p>If you have had sedation, the procedure might feel uncomfortable. If you have had a general anaesthetic, you would not be aware of what is happening and will not feel any pain until you are awake again.</p> <p>Some cramping or mild abdominal pain after the procedure is normal and pain-relief medication or a hot pack should help with any discomfort.</p>
How much bleeding will there be?	You will have vaginal bleeding after surgical abortion. Bleeding can last for 10-14 days but should get lighter day by day.
How likely am I to need another procedure to complete the abortion?	You are less likely to need another procedure to complete the abortion if you choose surgical abortion. However, a small number of women will need a further surgical procedure.

## What if I am under 16?

If you are under 16 and still financially dependent on a parent/legal guardian, then your parent/legal guardian must be given the opportunity to participate in counselling and consultation about the proposed abortion with you and your health care provider. However, the decision on abortion will be yours.

If you do not want your parent/legal guardian to know about your pregnancy, you can apply for an order at the Children's Court. Legal assistance for this is free.

The legal service will help you with the application and putting your case to the Magistrate, who will make the decision on whether to involve your parent/guardian.

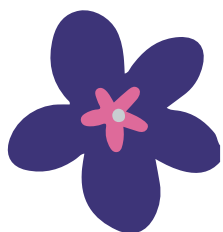
The Children's Court Protection Service, Legal Aid can be contacted on (08) 9218 0160.

## What if I am 20 weeks pregnant or more?

If your pregnancy is 20 weeks or more, abortion is unavailable except in specific circumstances, such as you or the fetus having a severe medical condition.

Your health care provider can discuss this with you. They can also request advice from King Edward Memorial Hospital to assist with making an application for abortion at 20 weeks and over on your behalf to the Ministerial Termination Panel, which oversees this process.

Abortions of 20 weeks gestation or more are only performed at KEMH and Broome Hospital.



## Following an abortion

The further along you are in your pregnancy the greater the impact the abortion will likely have on you and the more significant the aftercare.

Below are some aspects for you to consider.

- **Seeing your baby**

Depending on how many weeks pregnant you are, and the method of abortion used, you may have the option of spending time with your baby. If you have a medical abortion you can see your baby. However, if you have a surgical abortion this is unlikely to be an option. It is important for you to understand that the appearance of your baby may be different to how you imagined, in size, skin colour and condition or features. How far along your pregnancy was and fetal anomalies will impact on your baby's appearance. If you would like to discuss the appearance of your baby, you can do so with your health care provider.

- **What happens to the baby's remains?**

If your abortion was undertaken at a clinic or a hospital your baby's remains may be taken away under the Environmental Protection Act 1986 or sent to KEMH. You may request that your baby be sent to KEMH and, if your pregnancy is less than 28 weeks gestation and stillborn, be cremated and the ashes placed in the hospital's memorial garden (interment of ashes service) or returned to you.

If your pregnancy is more than 28 weeks gestation, or your baby was considered liveborn, a funeral will need to be arranged with a registered funeral director.





- **Post-mortem examination**

Your health carer may discuss the benefits of a post-mortem and placental examination.

This examination will only occur with your consent. A perinatal pathologist (doctor) will examine your baby to identify or confirm any abnormalities.

This examination may provide valuable information for you for this pregnancy and future pregnancy planning.

Results from the post-mortem are usually sent to your GP and hospital doctor within six to eight weeks.

- **Lactation**

You may experience breast changes and milk production. If your breasts are sensitive to touch or uncomfortable, you can apply cold compresses, take cooling and soothing (not hot) showers and wear a firm bra.

Your health carer can provide you with further information on reducing lactation and suggest other comfort measures or medicines for you to use.



- **When to seek advice**

If you have a temperature or fever your pain or bleeding does not get better within a few days or you are worried. If you experience any of these or you are worried, you should call the clinic or hospital where you had the abortion, or you may wish to visit your healthcare provider.

If you experience any of these or you are worried then you should call the clinic or hospital where you had the abortion, or you may wish to visit your healthcare provider.

- **Follow-up care**

You will need to arrange a follow-up appointment with your GP 14 to 21 days after an abortion to make sure there are no problems.

You may need to make an appointment earlier if you experience any problems as listed above.

Specialist follow-up appointments for information sharing and results will be arranged by the clinic or hospital staff.

This may include appointments with KEMH's Genetic Services, Maternal Fetal Medicine Service, Perinatal Loss Service, your obstetrician or GP.





## Support services available at KEMH

If you have had an abortion at KEMH for fetal anomaly the following services may be available to you:

### Perinatal Loss Service (PLS)

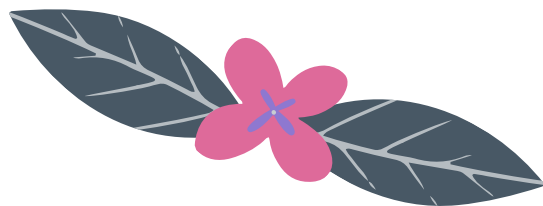
This service has been established to provide care for families who have experienced perinatal death and pregnancy loss at KEMH. This includes clinical care and counselling support. The PLS provides a state-wide consultancy service to support health-care professionals who provide clinical care to women experiencing perinatal and pregnancy loss. To contact the service, phone (08) 6458 2222 and ask to be put through to the PLS mobile phone.

### Social Work Department

Social workers provide support and short-term counselling to those experiencing a pregnancy loss. They also provide information on grieving, community supports and practical assistance. Phone (08) 6458 2777 (weekdays).

### Genetic Services of WA

This service provides information, counselling and support for individuals, couples and families following the diagnosis of a genetic condition in a family member, or when an abnormality is found in an unborn baby. A genetic counsellor/geneticist is available to discuss the possible causes of recurring miscarriages where one partner carries a chromosomal rearrangement. Phone (08) 6458 1525 (weekdays).



## Psychological Medicine Department

This department includes clinical psychologists, psychiatrists, medical officers and mental health nurses. They provide counselling and psychiatric services for mental health issues that may complicate the experience of a pregnancy loss. Ask your health care provider to arrange a referral or contact the department on (08) 6458 1521 (weekdays).

### Perinatal Pathology Department

When possible, perinatal pathology staff are responsible for the creation of mementos (photos, hand and footprints) of your baby and, if applicable, post-mortem examination and/or cremation. They can be contacted to arrange the collection of any mementos or request to have a report sent to your doctor by phoning (08) 6458 2730 or through the KEMH switchboard on (08) 6458 2222

### Rituals and ceremonies at KEMH

Pastoral Care Services offers an inclusive service for patients experiencing a pregnancy or baby loss, regardless of faith. Pastoral Care staff can complete the Consent for Cremation form with you, which includes options for Interment of Ashes, separate ashes and mementos.





## Pastoral Care staff also offer the following ceremonies:

- The Ritual of Remembrance for those experiencing an early pregnancy loss, on the second Monday of the month in the KEMH chapel
- A service of Naming and Blessing, an acknowledgement of the life of your baby
- The Interment of Ashes Service, a monthly gathering in the KEMH Memorial Garden to inter the ashes of babies who have been stillborn under 28 weeks gestation
- Helping parents with funeral arrangements - assistance with planning what is right for you and your baby

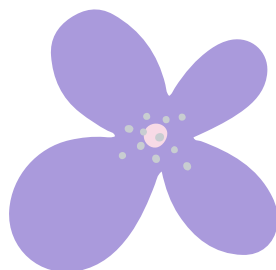
## Pastoral Care Services

A representative from Pastoral Care Services can offer support, spiritual care or counselling to patients and their families and advise on the Interment of Ashes Service and other rituals.

Phone (08) 6458 1036.

## Registration of a baby at KEMH

If the gestational age of the baby is over 20 weeks it is a legal requirement to register the baby with the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages. The required forms will be provided to you before leaving hospital.



## Counselling and other support

The decision to have an abortion is yours alone. It can be helpful to talk to someone supportive and unbiased. **Red Nose** and **SANDS** are the primary grief support services in the community for parents who have experienced the loss of a pregnancy, including those who have decided to terminate for medical reasons.

### Red Nose Grief and Loss

[Red Nose Grief and Loss | Supporting you on your journey after the death of a child](http://www.rednosegriefandloss.org.au)

[www.rednosegriefandloss.org.au](http://www.rednosegriefandloss.org.au)  
24/7 support line 1300 308 307

### SANDS

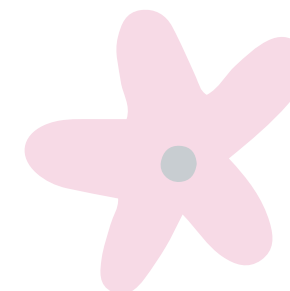
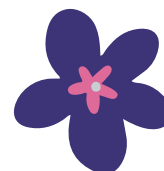
[Medical Termination | SANDS – Miscarriage, stillbirth & newborn death support](http://www.sands.org.au/medically-advised-termination)

[www.sands.org.au/medically-advised-termination](http://www.sands.org.au/medically-advised-termination)  
24/7 support line 1300 308 307

## Abortion providers

Women seeking an abortion due to fetal anomaly should talk to their health care provider about potential service providers.

- Abortion providers have different criteria such as types of abortion services provided (eg: medical or surgical abortion)
- Early medical abortion is only available in the community up to nine weeks pregnant.
- Only King Edward Memorial Hospital and Broome Hospital offer abortion after 20 weeks under certain circumstances. Please refer to [Abortion: An information booklet for consumers for further information.](#)



## Legal services

### Legal Aid

Children's Court Protection Service  
(for assistance with applications to  
the Children's Court)  
Phone (08) 9218 0160

### Youth Legal Service

Perth Metro (08) 9202 1688  
[yls@youthlegalserviceinc.com.au](mailto:yls@youthlegalserviceinc.com.au)  
[www.youthlegalserviceinc.com.au](http://www.youthlegalserviceinc.com.au)

## Other support services

### Sexual Assault Resource Centre

Crisis counselling over the  
phone from 8.30am to 11pm  
any day of the week  
You can also request a  
counselling appointment.  
Phone (08) 6458 1828  
1800 199 888

### Women's Domestic Violence Helpline

Support and counselling for  
women experiencing family and  
domestic violence, including  
referrals to women's refuges  
Phone (08) 9223 1188  
1800 007 339

## Women's Health Services

### Desert Blue Connect (Geraldton)

[www.desertblueconnect.org.au](http://www.desertblueconnect.org.au)  
Phone (08) 9964 2742

### Fremantle Women's Health Centre

[www.fwhc.org.au](http://www.fwhc.org.au)  
Phone (08) 9431 0500

### Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre (Kalgoorlie)

[www.gwhcc.org.au](http://www.gwhcc.org.au)  
Phone (08) 9021 8266

### Hedland Well Women's Centre

[www.wellwomens.com.au](http://www.wellwomens.com.au)  
Phone (08) 9140 1124

### Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Centre (Mirrabooka)

[www.ishar.org.au](http://www.ishar.org.au)  
Phone (08) 9345 5335

### Nintirri Centre (Tom Price)

[www.nintirri.org.au](http://www.nintirri.org.au)  
Phone 0447 151 031

### South West Women's Health & Information Centre (Bunbury)

[www.swwhic.com.au](http://www.swwhic.com.au)  
Phone 08 9791 3350  
Freecall 1800 9791 3350

### South Coastal Health and Community Services (Rockingham)

[www.southcoastal.org.au](http://www.southcoastal.org.au)  
Phone (08) 9550 0900

### Women's Health and Family Services (Northbridge and Joondalup)

[www.whfs.org.au](http://www.whfs.org.au)  
Phone (08) 6330 5400  
1800 998 5400 (freecall outside  
Perth metro area)

### Women's Health and Wellbeing Services (Gosnells)

[www.whws.org.au](http://www.whws.org.au)  
Phone (08) 9490 2258

## Mental Health Services

### Beyond Blue

[www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/  
get-immediate-support](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/get-immediate-support)  
Phone 1300 224 636

### Lifeline

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)  
Phone 13 11 14

## Diverse sexualities and genders

### Another Closet

[www.ssdv.acon.org.au](http://www.ssdv.acon.org.au)

### Living Proud

[www.livingproud.org.au/about](http://www.livingproud.org.au/about)

### Qlife

[www.qlife.org.au/get-help](http://www qlife.org.au/get-help)  
Phone 1800 184 527

### Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ)

[www.shq.org.au](http://www.shq.org.au)  
70 Roe Street,  
Northbridge WA 6003  
Phone (08) 9227 6177

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Ask a staff member about free nicotine therapy  
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## Women and Newborn Health Service

King Edward Memorial Hospital  
374 Bagot Road, Subiaco WA 6008

📞 (08) 6458 2222

🌐 [wnhs.health.wa.gov.au](http://wnhs.health.wa.gov.au)

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in alternative formats on request.

