



Government of Western Australia
North Metropolitan Health Service
Women and Newborn Health Service



Abortion:

An information booklet
for consumers





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What is this booklet about?

Many women experience an unintended pregnancy. Some will choose to have an abortion. 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.

This booklet provides general information about abortion and encourages you to talk to your health care provider about your options. It is best to approach a health care provider as early in pregnancy 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 can become pregnant such as girls and those who are gender diverse.

What is abortion?

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 20 weeks 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 are covered later in the booklet.

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. This is why it is important to discuss your pregnancy and 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. This will depend on your specific circumstances.

How do I access an abortion?

You will need to make an appointment with your health care provider who will:

- Confirm the pregnancy
- Discuss the medical risks of abortion and pregnancy
- Offer an option of referral to free counselling to assist with decision making, information and support
- Inform you that counselling is also available after an abortion. You can decide if you want to take up the counselling services that are offered
- Refer you to an abortion provider.

Most health care providers will discuss this with you. However, some may not provide consultation and referral on abortion. In this case, you can:

- Approach a different health care provider
- Seek help from one of the Women's Health Services (see list on page 13) or
- Contact Sexual Health Quarters on (08) 9227 6177 for information and referral options.

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 King Edward Memorial Hospital (KEMH).

What happens before an abortion?

Before an abortion, you will need to give your informed consent for 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, which can include blood tests, screening for sexually transmitted infections and an ultrasound to confirm how many weeks pregnant you are.

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). Most women will generally be able to choose between these; however, this will also depend on how many weeks pregnant you are and your individual circumstances.

Medical abortion

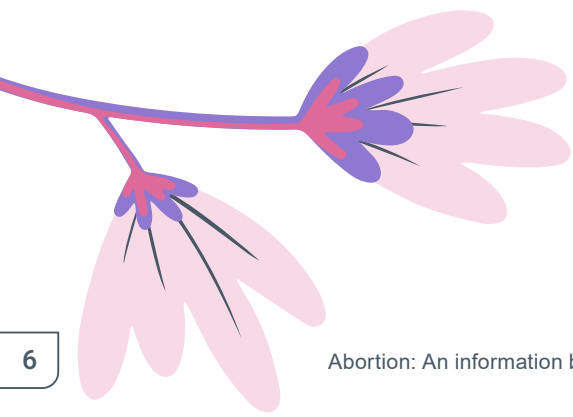
Medical abortion uses a combination of two medications to end a pregnancy. It is available up to 63 days of pregnancy via a general practitioner or community abortion provider. After 63 days it is only available in a hospital setting as per legal requirements.

The first tablet (Mifepristone) is usually taken when you are at the clinic with your health care provider. It blocks a pregnancy hormone. To complete the abortion, you will be given a second tablet (Misoprostol) to take 36 to 48 hours later. It causes the womb (uterus) lining to break down and you will start to bleed, usually within two hours. The pregnancy ends with cramping and bleeding similar to a miscarriage. This usually happens within four to six hours of taking the second tablet but may be quicker or take longer.

There is a known small risk that a medical abortion may not be fully completed, and a further surgical termination may be required. This may involve further costs. The abortion service will provide you with information and contact details so you can access help if there are any complications.

Surgical abortion

A surgical termination usually involves a vacuum aspiration and will be done at a clinic or hospital. The day procedure is performed under anaesthetic. Occasionally women do not have sedation and instead a local anaesthetic may be used to numb the cervix (neck of the womb). For women over 13 weeks, a slightly different process is used to ensure all the products of pregnancy are removed.

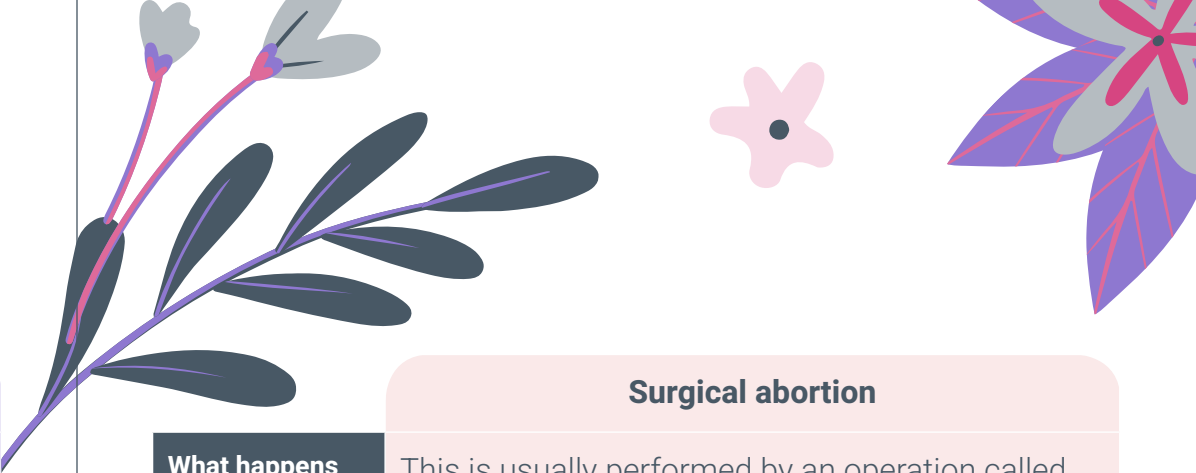


Abortion overview

The table below provides a summary of medical and surgical abortion. You should talk to your doctor or health care provider before deciding which one is right for you.

	Medical abortion
What happens in this type of abortion?	This procedure uses medication, given in doses over two or more days that induce miscarriage-like symptoms.
Where will the abortion take place?	It can take place in a clinic or at home.
How long does it take?	You pass the contents of pregnancy within four to six hours of taking the second medicine. Bleeding may take several days to settle.
Is the abortion painful?	You may have some pain (mild to severe) and bleeding or clotting (like a heavy period). Pain relief medication, as ordered by your health care provider, should help with any discomfort.
How much bleeding will there be?	You will have vaginal bleeding during a medical abortion. This is usually heavier than your normal period. After passing the pregnancy, bleeding can last for about 12 days but should get lighter day by day.

	Surgical abortion
What happens in this type of abortion?	This is usually performed by an operation called a suction curette under anaesthetic as a day procedure. In more advanced pregnancy (after 13 weeks), the procedure is technically different, called dilation and evacuation.
Where will the abortion take place?	It will take place in a clinic or hospital as a day procedure.
How long does it take?	It usually takes less than 20 minutes, depending on how far along your pregnancy is. However, you should expect to spend up to several hours for the whole process if your care is in a clinic. If your care is in a hospital, you may need to stay for several hours or overnight on a ward.
Is the abortion painful?	Some cramping or mild abdominal pain after the procedure is normal and pain relief medication (ordered by your health care provider) or a hot pack should help with any discomfort.
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.



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.

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 on your behalf for abortion at 20 weeks and over to the Ministerial Termination Panel, which oversees this process.

Counselling and other support

The decision to have an abortion is yours alone. It can be helpful to talk to someone supportive and unbiased. The unplanned pregnancy counselling services listed in this booklet offer counselling to assist with decision making and post-abortion counselling. These services are free.

Research shows that the majority of women cope well after an abortion. Some women may find the experience stressful or difficult. However, for most women there are no long term psychological or mental health impacts.

Domestic and sexual abuse

There are some circumstances where seeking an abortion might be linked to other distressing events, such as pregnancy through unwanted sexual contact and domestic violence. You can discuss these issues with your health care provider or women's health service.

Contacts

Abortion providers

Clinics have different criteria, eg: pregnancy weeks and medical or surgical. The specific type of abortion provided (medical or surgical) will be determined by individualised assessment.

You may wish to visit your preferred health care provider (eg: General Practice/primary healthcare provider) at first instance as they may provide a medical abortion service.

Metropolitan (the following is not a complete list of providers)

Fremantle Women's Health Centre

(Medical)

114 South Street
Fremantle WA 6160
Phone (08) 9431 0500
www.fwhc.org.au

MSI Australia Midland

(Medical and surgical)

Free for patients in the St John of God Midland Public Hospital catchment.

8 Sayer Street
Midland WA 6056
Phone 1300 003 707
www.msiaustralia.org.au

Nanyara Medical Group

(Medical and surgical)

2 Cleaver Terrace
Rivervale WA 6103
Phone (08) 9277 6070

Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ)

(Medical)

70 Roe Street
Northbridge WA 6003
Phone (08) 9227 6177
www.shq.org.au

Women's Health and Family Services

(Medical)

227 Newcastle Street,
Northbridge, WA 6003
Phone (08) 6330 5400
1800 998 399
(freecall outside Perth metro area)
www.whfs.org.au

Metropolitan Public Hospitals

Fiona Stanley Hospital

(Medical and surgical)

Provides abortion services to women who are unable to access private abortion services

11 Robin Warren Drive
Murdoch WA 6150
Phone (08) 6152 2222

King Edward Memorial Hospital

(Medical and surgical)

Provides abortion services to women who are unable to access private abortion services

274 Bagot Road Subiaco WA 6008
Phone (08) 9340 2222

Country WA

MSI Australia

(Medical)

Via telehealth 1300 405 568

Abortion services are available at some private General Practices and medical centres throughout country WA. The following health regions provide medical or surgical abortions usually with a referral from a General Practitioner.

Kimberley Health Region

Broome Hospital

(Medical and surgical)

Robinson Street Broome WA 6725
Phone (08) 9194 2222

Derby Regional Hospital

(Medical and surgical)

67 Clarendon Street Derby WA 6728
Phone (08) 9193 3214

Kununurra Hospital

(Medical and surgical)

96 Coolibah Drive Kununurra WA 6743
Phone (08) 9166 4222

Pilbara Health Region

Hedland Health Campus

(Medical and surgical)

2-34 Colebatch Way South Hedland WA 6722
Phone (08) 9174 1000

Mid West

Geraldton Health Campus

(Surgical)

51 Shenton Street Geraldton WA 6530
Phone (08) 9956 2222

Goldfields

Kalgoorlie Health Campus

(Surgical)

15 Piccadilly Street
Kalgoorlie WA 6433
Phone (08) 9080 5888

South West

Choices South West

(Medical and surgical)

Dunsborough Medical Centre
4/54 Dunn Bay Road
Dunsborough WA 6281
Phone (08) 9746 3300
www.choicessw.com.au

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
Phone (08) 9202 1688
yls@youthlegalserviceinc.com.au
www.youthlegalserviceinc.com.au

Free unplanned pregnancy counselling

Please advise the service if you are requesting unplanned pregnancy counselling so that your appointment is prioritised, or if you need an appointment for counselling following an abortion.

Desert Blue Connect (Geraldton)

Phone (08) 9964 2742
www.desertblueconnect.org.au

Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre (Kalgoorlie)

Phone (08) 9021 8266
www.gwhcc.org.au/services/unplanned-pregnancy-counselling

Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ)

70 Roe Street
Northbridge WA 6003
Phone (08) 9227 6177
www.shq.org.au

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

Freecall 1800 673 350
Phone (08) 9791 3350
www.swwhic.com.au/services

Other support services

Sexual Assault Resource Centre (SARC)

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)

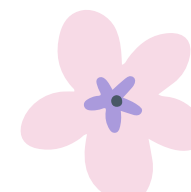
Phone (08) 9964 2742
www.desertblueconnect.org.au

Fremantle Women's Health Centre

Phone (08) 9431 0500
www.fwhc.org.au

Goldfields Women's Health Care Centre (Kalgoorlie)

Phone (08) 9021 8266
www.gwhcc.org.au



Hedland Well Women's Centre

Phone (08) 9140 1124

www.wellwomens.com.au

Ishar Multicultural Women's Health Services (Mirrabooka)

Phone (08) 9345 5335

www.ishar.org.au

Nintirri Centre (Tom Price)

Phone (08) 9189 1556

0456 802 061

www.nintirri.org.au

South Coastal Women's Health Services (Rockingham)

Phone (08) 9550 0900

www.southcoastal.org.au

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

Phone (08) 9791 3350

Freecall 1800 9791 3350

www.swwhic.com.au

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

Phone (08) 6330 5400

1800 998 5400

(freecall outside Perth metro area)

www.whfs.org.au

Women's Health and Wellbeing Services (Gosnells)

Phone (08) 9490 2258

www.whws.org.au

Mental Health Services**Beyond Blue**

Phone 1300 224 636

www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/get-immediate-support

Lifeline

Phone 13 11 14

www.lifeline.org.au

Diverse sexualities and genders**Another Closet**

www.ssdv.acon.org.au

Living Proud

www.livingproud.org.au/about

Qlife

Phone 1800 184 527

[www.qlife.org.au/get-help](http://www qlife.org.au/get-help)

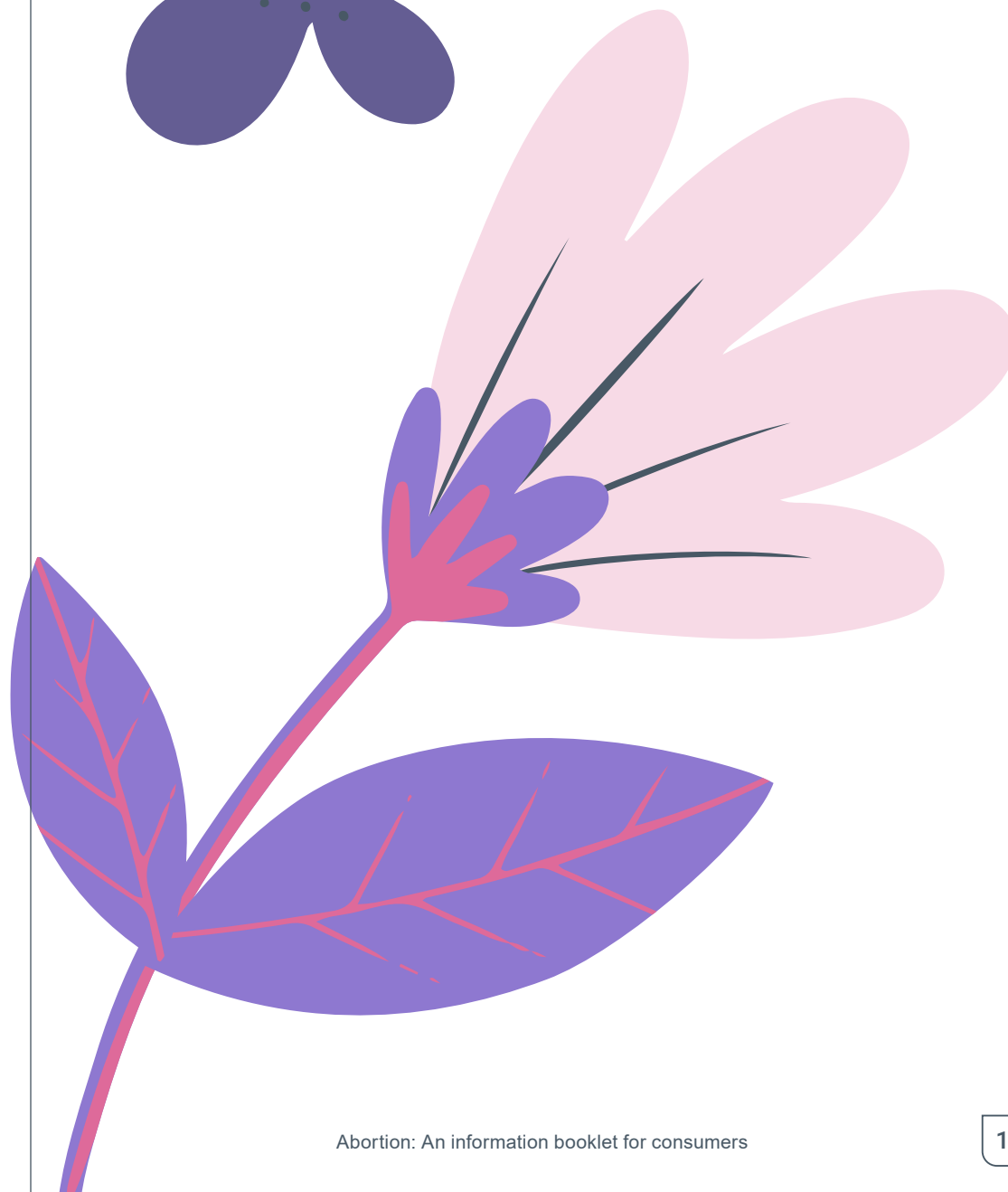
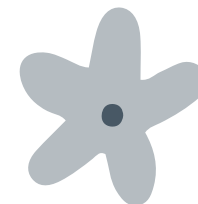
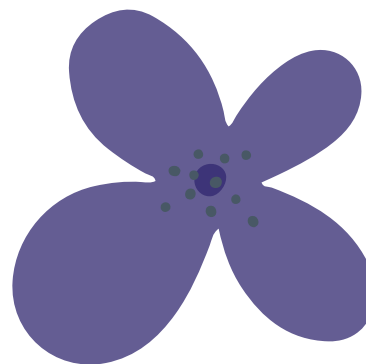
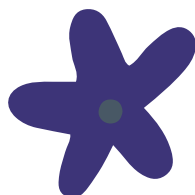
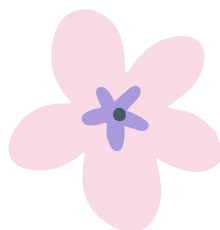
Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ)

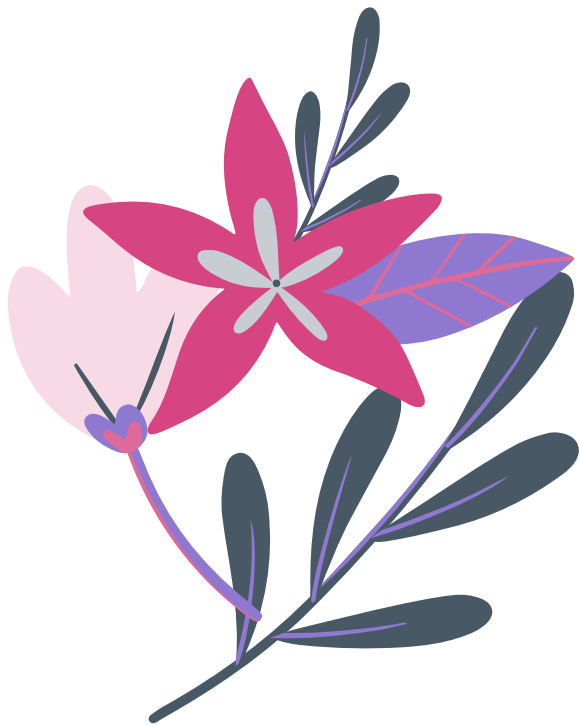
70 Roe Street

Northbridge WA 6003

Phone (08) 9227 6177

www.shq.org.au





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Ask a staff member about free nicotine therapy
to help your cravings during your hospital stay.

Women and Newborn Health Service
King Edward Memorial Hospital
374 Bagot Road, Subiaco WA 6008
📞 (08) 6458 2222
🌐 wnhs.health.wa.gov.au

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in alternative formats on request.

