

# INFORMATION ON ABORTION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

## FACT SHEET

### How do you know you're pregnant?

Possible signs include:

- missed period
- late period or lighter and shorter period
- tender and/or bigger breasts
- tingling or tender nipples
- feeling sick and/or tired
- need to pass urine more often

### Pregnancy testing

Your urine can be tested to determine if you are pregnant, and this result is available straight away. If your period is at least one week late, most pregnancy tests will work.

Home pregnancy testing kits are available at pharmacies and some supermarkets. SHINE SA and some agencies listed in this Fact Sheet provide a pregnancy testing service.

### The decision is yours

If you are pregnant you have three choices:

- continue the pregnancy and become a parent
- continue the pregnancy and consider adoption or alternative care
- have an abortion to end the pregnancy

Whatever you decide, the choice is yours. It's important to understand the issues involved in each option before you make your final decision. You may want to talk it over with people you are close to, or someone experienced in this area, before you decide. A social worker, nurse, doctor or counsellor can provide this information and support. You can contact SHINE SA for advice and support.

Abortions are most commonly performed in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.

### How is an abortion done?

In South Australia there are two methods available, medication and surgical.

**Medication abortion** involves taking medication to cause a miscarriage. This causes cramping and bleeding like a period. This method needs follow-up with blood tests and/or an ultrasound scan to check it has worked. In 2–5% of cases an operation may be required.

**Surgical abortion** is an operation done under anaesthetic. This can cause some cramping and bleeding afterwards.

### When can I have an abortion?

Medication abortion can be done from 4 weeks up to 9 weeks after your last period.

Surgical abortion can be done simply up to 14 weeks after your last period. However, abortions from 14–20 weeks are more complicated and in South Australia most are done at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre.

### Who has to know about the abortion?

All information about you will be treated in confidence by the health care staff involved in your care, unless child abuse or sexual assault is suspected. You may find it comforting to confide in a friend, family member or partner regarding your decision, but you don't have to if you don't want to.

However, you will need someone to go home with you and be with you for 24 hours in case of 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 South 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 discuss this with a doctor, social worker or counsellor at one of the agencies listed in this Fact Sheet.

### Where can I have an abortion?

Abortions performed before 12 weeks of pregnancy are available at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre and most public hospitals, including some country hospitals. A doctor's referral is not needed for the Pregnancy Advisory Centre or public hospital service.

Abortions later than 12 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 small cost for a medication abortion. You will need a Medicare card and a health care card (if you have one).

Surgical abortions may be available through the private system at varying costs. If you have private health insurance check to see whether part or all of the costs will be refunded.

If you are an overseas student with Overseas Student Health Cover, abortions can be covered. If you are under 12 weeks you will be advised to attend one of the following hospitals for your treatment: Women's & Children's; Lyell McEwin; Flinders Medical Centre. If you are 12–14 weeks you can attend Flinders Medical Centre. If you are over 14 weeks you can attend the Pregnancy Advisory Centre.

## What are the risks?

The majority of women have no complications. Abortion performed before 12 weeks of pregnancy 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 further treatment may be required.

### Infection

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

### Other risks

Damage to the uterus or cervix is very uncommon. Continuing the pregnancy (incomplete abortion) is rare. Reaction to anaesthetic drugs is also rare.

If you have any concerns, get medical advice immediately.

## What happens after the abortion?

Most women recover quickly after an abortion. A routine follow-up appointment 2 weeks after the abortion is recommended to ensure you are feeling well and to discuss any concerns. This service is available at your doctor, SHINE SA, Pregnancy Advisory Centre or the hospital.

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

## Services providing pregnancy testing, abortion referrals or information

### Pregnancy Advisory Centre

21 Belmore Terrace, Woodville Park 8243 3999  
Toll Free (country callers) 1800 672 966  
[www.pregnancyadvisorycentre.com.au](http://www.pregnancyadvisorycentre.com.au)

### Women's Health Service

- 47 Dale Street, Port Adelaide 8444 0700
- GP Plus Centre  
16 Playford Boulevard, Elizabeth 7485 4000
- GP Plus Super Clinic  
Alexander Kelly Drive, Noarlunga Centre 8444 0700  
[www.whs.sa.gov.au](http://www.whs.sa.gov.au)

### Metropolitan Youth Health Service

- The Parks Community Centre  
Trafford Street, Angle Park 8243 5637
- 6 Gillingham Road, Elizabeth 8255 3477
- 50a Beach Road, Christies Beach 8326 6053

### Public hospitals

#### Flinders Medical Centre

Women's Health Clinic  
Flinders Drive, Bedford Park 8204 5197

#### Lyell McEwin Hospital

Family Advisory Clinic  
Haydown Road, Elizabeth Vale 8282 0255

#### Noarlunga Hospital

Family Advisory Unit  
Alexander Kelly Drive, Noarlunga Centre 8384 9233

#### Women's & Children's Hospital

Family Advisory Unit  
72 King William Road, North Adelaide 8161 7580

### General practitioners

Your general practitioner can provide pregnancy testing, counselling, referral and post-abortion check.

CONTACT  
SHINE SA

SHINE SA

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## Clinic & Counselling Appointments and General Enquiries

Tel 1300 794 584

Clinics are located throughout the metropolitan area.

### Sexual Healthline

Tel 1300 883 793

Country callers (toll free) 1800 188 171

Email [sexualhealthline@shinesa.org.au](mailto:sexualhealthline@shinesa.org.au)

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

Available 9am – 12.30pm, Monday – Friday

### National Relay Service

[www.relayservice.gov.au](http://www.relayservice.gov.au)

133 677 (TTY/Voice)

1300 555 727 (Speak & Listen)

0423 677 767 (SMS Relay)