

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. Sometimes if you are very early in a pregnancy the test will be negative. You should repeat the pregnancy test if your period is more than 1 week late to make sure it is accurate. If your periods aren't regular you can repeat the test 3 weeks after you last had unprotected sex.

Home pregnancy testing kits are available at pharmacies and some supermarkets. SHINE SA and the Pregnancy Advisory Centre provide a pregnancy testing service.

The decision is yours

If you are pregnant you have three options:

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

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 14 weeks of pregnancy.

How is an abortion done?

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

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 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?

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

Surgical abortion can be done simply up to 14 weeks. It can safely be performed after 14 weeks to approximately 22 weeks but it

requires more involved medical intervention than an earlier abortion. For this reason, later abortions are mostly done at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre.

Which method should I choose?

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 more 'natural' and non-invasive
- there is no need for anaesthetic
- there is more privacy than a surgical termination
- you are at home

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

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 don't need a referral from a GP to access abortion services in Adelaide; some regional services may need a referral. 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.

You may 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 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?

Abortions performed before 14 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 most public hospital services.

Abortions later than 14 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).

If you are an overseas student with Overseas Student 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 done before 14 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 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 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.

There are no long-term health issues after having either a medication or surgical abortion. There is no effect on future ability to become pregnant.

What happens after the abortion?

Most people 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.

Ongoing contraception may 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 7 days after an abortion, so you should use condoms or avoid sex until you have effective contraception.

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

Pregnancy Advisory Centre

Tel: 8243 3999

Toll free (country callers): 1800 672 966

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/AbortionSupportServices

CONTACT
SHINE SA

SHINESA

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

Clinic & Counselling Appointments and General Enquiries

Tel 1300 794 584

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)