

## What are the risks of having an abortion?

Abortions are usually very safe, and most women do not have problems. But an abortion is a medical process, so there are some risks of complication. Potential complications include the continuation of pregnancy, infection, excessive bleeding, and injuries to the stomach, bladder, or womb. These complications are very rare, but if you have any symptoms or concerns, contact your doctor as soon as possible.

## Is an abortion painful?

You may have bleeding or cramping after an abortion, but it should only last a few days. The medicine the doctor gives you can also cause dizziness, nausea, headaches, diarrhoea, or hot flashes, but these symptoms should not last long.

**Medical Abortion** – you will have heavy bleeding and cramping for a few hours after taking the second medication.

**Surgical Abortion** – the doctor will give you medication so you do not feel pain during the surgery, but you may feel sore after.

## Will I be affected emotionally after having an abortion?

Most women do not experience long-term emotional problems, but the decision to have an abortion is not easy. The more confident you are in your decision, the better you will feel after.

It is normal to feel lots of emotions after having an abortion. You can receive post-abortion counselling from any crisis pregnancy counselling agency. You can use these services at any time, even if you had an abortion many years ago.

## Will having an abortion affect my future pregnancies?

As long as there were no complications, the abortion will not affect your chance of getting pregnant in the future or increase your risk of complications in future pregnancies.

You can become pregnant very soon after having an abortion. If you do not want to get pregnant, always use a method of contraception when you have sex. Ask your doctor if you have questions about which method of contraception to use.

## Who will know if I have an abortion?

Besides the doctor who provides the abortion, the only people who will know are the people you choose to tell.

If you do not want your GP to know about your abortion, you can have an abortion at a family planning or women's health clinic. You can also contact the HSE My Options Helpline to find other GPs who provide abortion services.

The GP or doctor has to give HSE your PPS or Medical Card number, but they will not give HSE your name or any other personal details. HSE needs this number to pay the GP or doctor for the abortion services they provide.

## Free and Confidential Abortion Counselling Services:

**My Options Helpline** – HSE Service that offers information, support, counselling, and medical advice

Tel: 1800 828 010      Web: [www.myoptions.ie](http://www.myoptions.ie)

## Ireland Family Planning Association (IFPA)

Face-to-pregnancy counselling at 10 locations across Ireland  
24-hour helpline: 1850 49 50 51      Web: [www.ifpa.ie](http://www.ifpa.ie)

## Dublin Well Woman Centre

Face-to-face pregnancy counselling at 3 locations in Dublin  
Tel: 01 874 9243      Web: [www.wellwomancentre.ie](http://www.wellwomancentre.ie)

\* You can find other free and confidential counselling services throughout Ireland on the HSE website: [www2.hse.ie/abortion](http://www2.hse.ie/abortion)

## Clinics in Dublin that provide abortion services:

### The Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA)

Dublin Clinic – 018 72 7088

Tallaght Clinic – 014 59 7685

Web: [www.ifpa.ie](http://www.ifpa.ie)

### Dublin Well Woman Centre

Pembroke Road Clinic – 01 660 9860 or 01 668 1108

Liffey Street Clinic – 01 872 8051 or 01 872 8095

Coolock Clinic – 01 848 4511

Head Office: 01 874 9243      Web: [www.wellwomancentre.ie](http://www.wellwomancentre.ie)

\* If you do not live in Dublin, call the HSE My Options Helpline (Tel. 1800 828 010) to find the clinics providing abortion services that are closest to where you live.

## GPs that provide abortion services:

There are more than 270 GPs in Ireland who provide abortion services. Contact the HSE My Options Helpline to find a GP close to you who offers abortion services.      Tel: 1800 828 010

## Hospitals in Ireland that provide abortion services:

**National Maternity Hospital** – Dublin 2

**Rotunda Hospital** – Dublin 1

**Coombe Women & Infants University Hospital** – Dublin 8

**Midland Regional Hospital Mullingar** – Co. Westmeath

**Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda** – Co. Louth

**University Hospital Galway** – Newcastle Road; Galway

**Mayo University Hospital** – Castlebar; Co. Mayo

**University Maternity Hospital Limerick** – Ennis Road; Limerick

**Cork University Maternity Hospital** – Wilton; Cork

**University Hospital Waterford** – Dunmore Road; Waterford

## Tusla Child and Family Agency:

Go to this website to find the telephone number for your local office:

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/adoption-services/adoption/adoption-offices/>

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# Abortion in Ireland:

*How does it work, and is it the right option for me?*



**Cairde**  
Challenging ethnic minority health inequalities

Health Information and Advocacy Centre

19 Belvedere Place  
Dublin 1, Ireland

Phone: 01 855 2111  
healthworker@cairde.ie

www.cairde.ie  
www.facebook.com/CairdeCentre

## I tested positive on a pregnancy test, what are my options?

In general, you have three options:

1. Parenting
2. Adoption
3. Abortion

The decision is completely up to you. It may help to talk with close friends or family, but you should not feel pressured to do anything you do not want to do. No one can force you to continue the pregnancy, and no one can force you to end it.

\*If you are considering adoption (allowing your child to be given to a different family), you should contact Tusla, the Child and Family agency. You can also ask to talk with a social worker about adoption when you see your GP or when you are at the hospital.

## What is abortion?

An abortion is a medical process to end a pregnancy. It is also known as "termination". It is generally a safe process, but there are some risks associated with abortion. The earlier you have an abortion, the safer and simpler the process will be.

## Who can have an abortion?

Any pregnant woman can have an abortion in Ireland if she is less than 12 weeks pregnant.

A woman who is more than 12 weeks pregnant can only have an abortion under **exceptional circumstances**:

1. If there is a risk to the life of the pregnant woman.
2. If there is a risk of serious harm to the health of the woman.
3. If there is a condition affecting the foetus that will likely cause the foetus to die before birth or within 28 days of birth.

## How do I know how pregnant I am?

You can figure out how pregnant you are by counting the number of days since the first day of your most recent period. If it has been 63 days since the first day of your most recent period, then you are 9 weeks pregnant. If it has been 84 days since the first day of your most recent period, then you are 12 weeks pregnant.

If you do not remember when you had your last period, you will need to have a GP or doctor refer you for an ultrasound scan.

## I am more than 12 weeks pregnant. Can I have an abortion?

If you do not have exceptional circumstances (described above), you cannot have an abortion in Ireland.

You may be able to travel abroad to have an abortion. If you wish to do so, contact the Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA). They can provide you with information and support if you wish to travel for an abortion.

## I am under 18 years old. Can I have an abortion?

Yes, you can have an abortion. It may be helpful to talk with a parent or guardian about your pregnancy, but you do not have to. If you are 16 or 17 years old, you can have an abortion without telling your parent or guardian, but the doctor has to be sure you understand the process and are confident about your decision.

If you are 15 years old or younger, you need the permission of your parent or guardian to have an abortion, unless you have exceptional circumstances.

It is important to know that your GP or doctor may have to contact Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, if you are under 15 years old or if they think you are at risk of harm.

## I do not know if I want to have an abortion. Is there someone who can help me decide?

It is normal to feel worried or confused when you experience a crisis pregnancy. There are many places that provide free counselling services. The professionally-trained counsellors can help you cope with your feelings about your pregnancy.

The counsellors can help you decide which option is best for you, and they will support any decision you make. They can also help you tell your friends and family about your pregnancy, if you want to tell them. Your partner can use the counselling services for support too.

The counselling is confidential. This means all of the information about you or your pregnancy will be kept private, unless the counsellors believe you are at risk of harm.

## What happens if I do not speak English very well?

The HSE My Options Helpline has interpreters for 240 different languages. The interpreters can translate for you when you are talking with the counsellor on the phone.

When you call the My Options Helpline, you will tell them which language you speak and give them your phone number. An interpreter will call you back with a counsellor.

## How do I know which services to trust?

You should only contact or visit agencies that are recommended by the HSE. There are several websites and advertisements that are unreliable. They may provide false information or try to unfairly influence your decisions.

The HSE MyOptions helpline provides reliable information, support, and counselling. The helpline also has a nursing team who can provide medical advice to women who are experiencing symptoms after an abortion.

## How much does it cost to have an abortion?

Abortion services are free for all women living in Ireland.

## Where can I have an abortion?

Places that provide abortion services include GP surgeries, family planning clinics, women's health clinics, and hospitals.

**See the back of this leaflet to learn more about where to go for abortion services.**

You must have the abortion in a hospital if you are more than 9 weeks pregnant. If you need to have the abortion in a hospital, the GP or doctor will refer you to a hospital.

## Do all GPs provide abortion services?

No, not all GPs provide abortion services, but they should refer you to a different GP or doctor who can provide the service.

## How do I get an abortion?

First, you must schedule an appointment with a GP or clinic that provides abortion services. This appointment is called a "Pre-Abortion Consultation". You should make the appointment as soon as possible because it may take time to get an appointment or to get an ultrasound scan if you need one.

At the appointment, the doctor will explain the process and the potential risks. The doctor will ask if you want to talk with a counsellor and if you are sure about your decision. Then the doctor will certify that you are less than 12 weeks pregnant. If you are more than 7 weeks pregnant, the doctor will take a blood test. If your blood is rhesus negative, you will receive a special injection before the abortion.

If you decide to have an abortion, the doctor will schedule an appointment for at least 3 days after your Pre-Abortion Consultation. This means that if you see the doctor on Monday, you cannot have the abortion until Thursday. The purpose of this 3-day-wait is to give you time to decide for sure whether you want to have an abortion.

## What does an abortion involve?

There are two different ways to end a pregnancy.

**Medical Abortion** – you will take two medications to end the pregnancy. If you are less than 9 weeks pregnant, you can take the first medication at the clinic and then take the second one at home 1–2 days later. If you are between 9 and 12 weeks pregnant, you must take both medications at the hospital, but you can go home in between. You cannot have a Medical Abortion if you are more than 12 weeks pregnant.

**Surgical Abortion** – you will have a small surgical procedure to end the pregnancy. This procedure must happen in a hospital, but it should only take 5-10 minutes. You will have to sign a consent form to show you understand the potential risks.

Remember, you can change your mind at any time. If you enter the room for the procedure and then decide you do not want an abortion, you can tell the doctor you changed your mind.