

Myths and Facts About Abortion

There are many myths circulating in our society about the effect of abortion on women's emotional and physical health. Here are facts to dispel some common myths:

Myth: Having an abortion has higher health risks than continuing a pregnancy and going through childbirth

Fact: Abortions are very safe when performed by qualified practitioners. Reputable research confirms that continuing a pregnancy and going through childbirth has greater risk to a woman's health than having a first trimester abortion.

Myth: Abortion affects future fertility

Fact: Safe, legal abortion performed by qualified practitioners is very rarely associated with any future risk to fertility.

Most women return to their pre-pregnancy fertility immediately following the abortion procedure. A small number of women have a delay in the return of normal menstrual cycles.

We recommend the use of contraception soon after the abortion procedure.

For information about contraception: *SHine SA*
<http://www.shinesa.org.au/go/information-and-resources/choose-a-topic/contraception>

Myth: Women use abortion instead of contraception

Fact: Abortion is safe and used by women when the use of contraception fails or other factors that make using contraception difficult. The majority of women experiencing unplanned pregnancy are using some form of contraception, yet we know that:

- No form of contraception is 100% effective, including sterilisation
- All 'modern' methods of contraception have some associated risks/ side effects
- Finding suitable contraception is very difficult for some women
- Sexual behaviour is not always consensual or predictable
- Violence/abuse/control in relationships can make it difficult for women to use/access contraception

Myth: Abortion causes emotional/ mental harm

Fact: Unplanned pregnancy does cause emotional distress for some women, however research shows that for most women abortion causes no long lasting psychological consequences. Women who make their own clear decision about abortion generally find it a health enhancing experience. Having an abortion is not inherently traumatic; however, every step of the process to accessing abortion services can be made traumatic by judgemental or undermining treatment by others. Studies do highlight risk factors, which

can increase the likelihood of a woman experiencing longer lasting emotional distress:

- Women who did not make their own decision
- Women who have been or felt coerced/ pressured into having an abortion
- Women who hold strong cultural or religious beliefs that abortion is wrong
- Women who have a history of severe diagnosed mental health conditions

A consistent opinion has emerged within the medical profession that the psychological effects of abortion are benign or positive and that serious adverse effects are rare. No reputable articles conclude there is any evidence to support the term nor condition of 'Post Abortion Syndrome'.

Myth: All religious groups oppose a woman's right to choose

Fact: There is no one clear position or understanding about abortion and religion. Many religions and religious groups do not support a woman's right to be in control of her body (are opposed to contraception and abortion), however a number do support a woman's right to make decisions about her body including the use of contraception and abortion.

See Children by Choice: Facts about Abortion:
<https://www.childrenbychoice.org.au/factsandfigures/safetyofabortion>

Pregnancy Advisory Centre

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Myth: Adoption is better than abortion

Fact: This view claims that there are infertile couples wanting children then women with unwanted pregnancies should be encouraged to relinquish their offspring for adoption and some women can feel pressured by this. For many women the choice to have an abortion is because they do not want to be pregnant, or continue to be pregnant, or to give birth or to relinquish a child. What is clear is that the choice remains with women on the best option. Women's decision to choose for adoption or abortion requires services to be supportive in a non-judgemental, pro-choice approach.

Myth: Only young and/or irresponsible women choose abortion

Fact: Women of all ages in their fertile years approximately 12 years to 50+ years of age have decided to have abortions throughout the centuries for many different and similar reasons. The belief that only 'irresponsible' women choose abortion suggests that 'real' women are selfless and nurturing above all other costs and a woman who chooses abortion is wilful, careless, promiscuous and selfish in not accepting their 'biological destiny'. The consistent finding of the many studies about women's experience of abortion suggests that women of all ages, with or without children, in all occupations, religions, education levels, contraceptive practices, and marital status and seek abortions.

Myth: Abortion causes breast cancer

Fact: Abortion does not increase the chances of being diagnosed with breast cancer.

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- www.guttmacher.org
- www.childrenbychoice.org.au

For more information

Pregnancy Advisory Centre

21 Belmore Terrace

Woodville Park SA 5011

Telephone: (08) 8243 3999

Fax: (08) 8243 3998

SA Country Free Call 1800 672 966

<http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/AbortionSupportServices>

Non-English speaking: for information in languages other than English, call the interpreting and Translating Centre and ask them to call The Department of Health. This service is available at no cost to you, contact (08) 8226 1990.



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