<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Myth</th>
<th>Facts</th>
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<td><strong>Myth:</strong> Having an abortion has higher health risks than continuing a pregnancy and going through childbirth.</td>
<td><strong>Fact:</strong> 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.</td>
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<td><strong>Myth:</strong> Abortion affects future fertility.</td>
<td><strong>Fact:</strong> Safe, legal abortion performed by qualified practitioners is very rarely associated with any future risk to fertility.</td>
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<td><strong>Myth:</strong> Abortion causes emotional/mental harm.</td>
<td><strong>Fact:</strong> 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:</td>
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<td>- Women who did not make their own decision.</td>
<td>- Women who have been or felt coerced/pressured into having an abortion.</td>
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<td>- Women who hold strong cultural or religious beliefs that abortion is wrong.</td>
<td>- Women who have a history of severe diagnosed mental health conditions.</td>
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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 ‘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.

**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.

REFERENCES:
- National Collaborating Centre for Mental Health for the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges (2011) Induced Abortion & Mental Health: A systematic Review of the mental health outcomes of induced abortion, including their prevalence & associated factors.
- 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

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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