



Position Paper # 20

After Your Abortion (*aftercare, side-effects*)

Note: Some of the information in this paper may vary slightly depending on the clinic, doctor, hospital, or person. Please contact the clinic or hospital in your area to confirm any information you need clarified, and to obtain more details.

Today, terminating a pregnancy is a safe medical procedure with very few complications. As well as being fully informed about your options and abortion procedures, people should also know what to expect physically and emotionally after an abortion.

An abortion in a clinic that uses conscious sedation requires very little recovery time. You should be ready to leave within an hour after the procedure. Procedures done in a hospital or under general anesthetic will require a slightly longer recovery time. However, physical recovery time and emotional recovery time can vary per individual.

Aftercare and Follow-up

Most people feel physically fine very shortly after an abortion and experience few difficulties. Anxiety is greatly reduced when the patient knows what might be experienced and understands the difference between what is normal and what may indicate a need for further medical assistance.

Following an abortion, you will be given aftercare instructions. It is important to follow these instructions and to take any prescriptions given. Most clinics provide an emergency contact number to call if there are any concerns in the days following an abortion.

A few simple precautions will reduce the risk of infection:

- Wear pads for the first week if still bleeding and avoid putting anything into the vagina. This means no tampons, no vaginal sex or insertions, and no public hot tubs. Personal baths and pools are fine.

- During the second week vaginal sex or insertions, condoms, and tampons during the day (pads are recommended at night), are permissible. It is possible to get pregnant right after an abortion, so it is important to use adequate birth control if you feel it necessary.
- If you experience any of the following symptoms, do not hesitate to contact the abortion provider, your physician, or health care professional; or visit the nearest hospital emergency room:
 - Severe cramps
 - Chills, or fever of 37.5 degrees or more on two consecutive readings, twelve hours apart
 - Bleeding that soaks through more than two maxi-pads an hour for more than two hours
 - Foul-smelling discharge from the vagina
 - Vomiting or persistent nausea
 - Continuing symptoms of pregnancy

Emotional Well-Being

Although the most common emotion following an abortion is relief, you may also experience feelings of loss or sadness. Mood swings or emotional upsets are also affected by the drop in pregnancy hormones.

Some people experience difficulty after an abortion because of the obstacles encountered while trying to obtain abortion care, feeling alone while making an important decision, or living in an environment where abortion is stigmatized. Talking with a caring and supportive person such as a friend, partner, family member, clergy, abortion doula, therapist, or someone else you trust that gives positive support and does not judge, can be helpful and comforting.

If you feel the need for professional counseling, contact your abortion provider for a referral to an accessible pro-choice counselling service. Many abortion clinics provide counselling or post-abortion therapy.

Try to avoid anti-choice agencies that are opposed to abortion. They may have names like “pregnancy care centre” or other names that sound helpful and unbiased.¹ But they promote “Post Abortion Stress Syndrome,” which is not an actual psychological condition and is not recognized by any medical or psychological association.

¹ For a list of anti-choice “crisis pregnancy centres” (CPCs) across Canada, see: <http://www.arcc-cdac.ca/CPC-study/list-anti-choice-groups-province-city.pdf>