

Women's Health



# Unplanned pregnancy

Information for you

**Self-referral 01563 827025**



Follow us on Twitter @NHSaaa



Find us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/nhsaaa](http://www.facebook.com/nhsaaa)



Visit our website: [www.nhsaaa.net](http://www.nhsaaa.net)



# Unplanned pregnancy

Information for you

## Self-referral 01563 827025

This information is for you if you have an unplanned pregnancy. It gives you information about your treatment options and lets you know what to expect when you attend the Women's Health Department. Unplanned pregnancy is very common. We recognise that the decision to have an abortion can be very difficult. If you are not sure what to do you can discuss your options at your appointment. Options include continuing with your pregnancy, adoption or abortion.

## What to do if you think you are pregnant

You should take a pregnancy test. You can buy a pregnancy test in any supermarket or pharmacy and carry out the test at home. You can also get a free pregnancy test from your family doctor (GP) or any Sexual Health Clinic. Sexual health clinics and opening times can be found at [www.shayr.com](http://www.shayr.com)

## Abortion and the law

Abortion in the United Kingdom is available up to 24 weeks of pregnancy, provided certain criteria are met. Abortion is available in Ayrshire and Arran up to 20 weeks of pregnancy. At 20 weeks and above you will be referred to the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS). In the UK all abortions are carried out under The Abortion Act. Two doctors must agree in writing that going ahead with abortion would cause less harm to a woman's (or her existing children's) physical or mental health than continuing with the pregnancy.

## Data protection and privacy assurance

Information regarding your treatment is used to prepare statistics on patients undergoing abortions in Scotland. These statistics are necessary to monitor service delivery and ensure this can help to improve services available to patients in the future. To do this, data is provided in strictest confidence to the Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland (also known as Common Services Agency) and to the Chief Medical Officer. This information is shared in accordance with the requirements of the Abortion Act 1967 and the Abortion (Scotland) Regulations 1991. All personal data is processed and stored securely in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation and all other relevant data protection

laws. Personal data regarding your abortion treatment is never shared with any other organisation.

## **How do I go about getting an abortion?**

You will need an appointment at an abortion assessment clinic at Women's health. You can self-refer by contacting us on **01563 827025** Monday to Friday 10am to 1pm (except public holidays). Your GP, practice nurse, community midwife or sexual health staff are also able to refer you to these clinics.

### **What if I am not sure what to do?**

If you are unsure about your decision to have an abortion you may find it helps to talk to our counsellor. Appointments with the counsellor are available via Sexual Health on **01294 323228**. Keep your appointment with Women's Health.

### **Does anyone have to know?**

We won't telephone or write to your house without your permission.

Your GP is usually sent a letter after your abortion. This helps them give you the best possible care. Please tell us if you do not want your GP to be informed.

If you are under 16 years we will encourage you to tell a parent or supportive adult. If this is not possible, a responsible adult that you feel able to trust, should come with you.

Our service is confidential, but if the staff are concerned about you (for example, sexual, emotional or physical abuse) they are obliged to involve the child protection team / social services. Usually this is only done after discussing it with you.

## **Gender Based Violence**

Between one in three and one in five women will experience emotional, physical and/or sexual abuse from a current or ex-partner. Research suggests that one in three women seeking an abortion may have experienced abuse from a current or ex-partner. If you are currently in an abusive relationship, or you have experienced abuse in the past, contact the National Domestic

Abuse Helpline on 0800 027 1234 (24 hours) for information on support services in your area. Calls to this number are free and are not traceable on your telephone bill.

## **The Assessment**

Your first assessment is usually by telephone. You will be given a date and time for this when you are referred / self-refer. Please ask us if you require an appointment in person. This consultation usually takes about 20 to 30 minutes. Please make sure you are able to speak at your appointment time. The call will come from a 0800 telephone number. If you have concerns about your safety when we call you, tell us when you book your appointment. During your telephone assessment your options will be discussed. You will be asked about your medical history and you will be able to ask questions. You will be given a time to attend the Gynaecology Outpatient

Department either the same afternoon or at a later date. You must attend this appointment on your own. The assessment clinics are in the Gynaecology Outpatient Department within Ayrshire Maternity Unit, Crosshouse, Kilmarnock, KA2 0ES.

## **What happens at the clinic?**

### **Ultrasound**

We may need to do an ultrasound scan to check how many weeks pregnant you are. Most scans are abdominal (tummy) scans, but if you are very early in the pregnancy you may need a vaginal (internal) scan. We don't show you the scan picture. If you wish to see the scan picture please tell the staff member.

### **Sexual Health Screen**

You will be offered a test for chlamydia and gonorrhoea because they can lead to complications after the abortion. You will be asked to take a swab. We also recommend women attending have a blood test for HIV and Syphilis.

### **Blood test**

You may be offered a blood test to check you are not anaemic and to check your blood group. If you are a Rhesus negative blood type you may need to have an injection called Anti – D on the day of your abortion. Not all patients that are Rhesus negative need Anti – D, this will be discussed with you on the day of your abortion.

### **Consent**

If you want to have an abortion, the details and risks of your procedure will be explained. You will be asked to sign a consent form / give verbal (spoken) consent to say that you wish to have an abortion and that you understand what it involves and the small risks associated with it. You will be able to ask questions throughout the consultation and before giving consent and you will receive a copy of the consent form. Please note your abortion may not take place on the same day as your assessment appointment.

### **Risks**

- Failed abortion and continuing pregnancy; one in 100 women
- Risk of heavy vaginal bleeding; two in 1000 women
- Possibility of some retained tissue; less than five in 100 women
- Risk of infection; two in 1000 women

Abortion can be performed by taking tablets (medical abortion) or by an operation under local or general anaesthetic (surgical abortion). Both methods are safe and effective. The method you are offered will depend on the stage of pregnancy that you are at and also your general health. We are only able to offer the option of a surgical abortion under limited circumstances.

## Methods of abortion

### A. Medical abortion

This is available in Ayrshire and Arran up to 20 weeks of pregnancy. There is no surgery so the risks of an operation and a general anaesthetic are avoided. This method involves taking two types of medication on different days.

**Day one Mifepristone:** You take the tablet by mouth. This tablet blocks the pregnancy hormones and prepares your womb for the next part of the treatment.

**Day two Misoprostol:** You put four small Misoprostol tablets into your vagina 24 to 48 hours later. Misoprostol stimulates your womb to expel your pregnancy. This is like having a medically induced miscarriage. The amount of pain, bleeding and blood clots usually depends on how advanced your pregnancy is. We usually ask you to insert another 2 tablets 4 hours later.

### Early medical abortion

This is for women who are under nine weeks plus six days pregnant. Some women will be suitable to have an early medical abortion at home up to 11 weeks and six days. We will usually offer you the choice of having this procedure at home (EMAH) or in Women's Health if you do not meet the criteria for an EMAH.

### Early medical abortion at home (EMAH)

You will be given the first tablet (Mifepristone) in the clinic or in some circumstances we can post all medication out to you with a dedicated courier. If you attend the clinic you will be given a medication pack to take home. This pack contains the vaginal tablets (Misoprostol) you will insert two days later. You will also be given painkillers to take home. Contraception will also be supplied. You will have heavy bleeding with clots and pass the pregnancy at home. You must only use sanitary pads for the bleeding.

This short video courtesy of NHS Lothian explains what happens when opting for an early medical abortion.

<https://vimeo.com/403649900>

To be suitable for EMAH you will need to meet certain criteria:

- Pregnancy under nine weeks plus six days gestation
- Be 16 years or above, unless appropriate supports are in place.
- Have no significant medical conditions or contraindications to medical abortion.
- Be resident in Scotland.
- Be able to understand all information given, and follow instructions to take Mifepristone and Misoprostol.
- Have a telephone that can call and receive calls.
- Agree to do a special follow up pregnancy test after three weeks.

If you choose an EMAH we give you a 24 hours direct telephone number so you can contact us for advice if required.

Women's Health 01563 825329

Out of hours (evenings / Friday / weekends) 01563 825300

## **Day case medical abortion**

If EMAH is not suitable for you, you will attend the Women's Health Department for six to eight hours on the day for Misoprostol. You will be looked after by the nursing team and you will usually pass the pregnancy whilst you are in the department.

## **Later medical abortion**

If you are 10 weeks to 19 weeks plus five days pregnant we will offer you will be admitted to Women's Health. In most cases the treatment is complete in one day. Some people need to stay in overnight. You are given the same drugs used for an early medical abortion, but you will be given Misoprostol every three hours until you pass the pregnancy.

When the pregnancy is over nine weeks plus six days, abortion is potentially more painful and with more bleeding. We are here to support you. If your blood group is Rhesus Negative you will be given Anti - D.

The placental tissue usually passes at the same time as the pregnancy, or shortly afterwards. Sometimes the placenta does not come away; you may need to go to theatre for a small operation to remove the placenta.

## **B. Manual Vacuum Aspiration (MVA)**

MVA is a suction procedure that is used to remove the pregnancy tissue in your womb while you are awake, as a day case. This method is used from six weeks up to nine weeks plus six days gestation.

At your assessment appointment you will be given instructions about how to prepare for your procedure.

When you are admitted you will be given two Misoprostol tablets to insert into your vagina. These tablets help your cervix (neck of the womb) to soften to reduce the risk of injury.

You will be given pain killers to take and a local anaesthetic drug will be injected around your cervix. A small tube is passed into your womb and the pregnancy tissue is removed using gentle suction. A contraceptive coil can be inserted after your abortion has been performed.

Most women can go home one hour after the procedure.

If your blood group is Rhesus Negative you will be given Anti – D.

## **C. Surgical abortion**

This method is used from seven weeks up to 12 weeks of pregnancy. It is an operation and is usually carried out under general anaesthetic as a day case. You will be given a date and time to come into the Gynaecology Ward at Ayrshire Maternity Unit. At your assessment appointment you will be given written instructions about how to prepare for your admission.

When you are admitted you will be given two Misoprostol tablets to insert into your vagina. These tablets help your cervix to soften to reduce the risk of injury. Once asleep, a small tube is inserted into your cervix and womb and suction is used to remove your pregnancy. A contraceptive coil can be inserted after your abortion has been performed.

If your blood group is Rhesus Negative you will be given Anti – D.

You should expect to be in hospital for between six to eight hours and you will need to have an adult to take you home and stay with you overnight.

Please note that there is no accommodation within the unit or Gynaecology Ward for family or friends to stay on the day of your admission.

### **What happens to the pregnancy tissue after abortion?**

All pregnancy tissue passed on NHS Ayrshire and Arran premises is dealt with sensitively. It is NHS Ayrshire and Arran's policy to dispose of this tissue by joint cremation. If you are to be admitted to Women's Health to pass your pregnancy or to the Gynaecology Ward for a surgical procedure, you will be asked to sign a consent form, to state that you are agreeable to cremation of any tissue that is passed during your admission. If you prefer, you can make your own arrangements for sensitive disposal. A member of the clinic staff can speak to you about the options.

### **Aftercare**

**What symptoms will I have after the abortion?** Most women bleed for one to two weeks. On the day of Misoprostol, bleeding can be heavier than a period and you will pass some blood clots. There may be spotting until your next period. After surgical abortion, a few women will not experience bleeding until their next period.

You can usually return to normal activity as soon as you feel comfortable doing so. This includes bathing or showering, using tampons, exercising, heavy lifting and sexual intercourse.

### **You should contact Women's Health or your own GP if:**

- If you have any other concerns
- You generally feel unwell
- Your bleeding becomes heavier

- If you still feel pregnant after about a week
- Your period type cramps become very painful / or you have a foul smelling discharge

## Contraception

You will be fertile immediately after your abortion. We recommend you start contraception on the day of your abortion.

We offer the full range of contraceptive methods. The most effective methods of contraception are LARC (Long Acting Reversible Contraceptive) methods. LARC are the medicated coil or copper coil and the contraceptive implant (Nexplanon); we aim to provide these methods at the same time as the procedure or we will arrange an appointment for you. We can give you the contraceptive injection or the contraceptive pill to start on the day of your abortion.





## **Women's Health 01563 825329**

Monday to Wednesday 9am to 5pm

Thursday 9am to 4pm

Friday / Saturday and Sunday Ward closed

Other times

## **Call the assessment unit on 01563 825300**

### **Other questions you may have**

**Does having an abortion increase my chance of getting breast cancer?** No, scientific studies have found no link between breast cancer and abortion.

#### **Will having an abortion cause problems with future pregnancies?**

There is no proven connection between abortion and future infertility. Abortion can be associated with future pregnancies ending before the due date; this risk increases with each abortion.

#### **What if I change my mind, or wish to cancel / rearrange my appointment?**

You can change your mind at any time, we want you to be sure of your decision.

**Call 01563 827025** to cancel or rearrange your appointment so the appointment isn't wasted.