

ABORTION....YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED



I am unsure about my pregnancy.....

You are not alone – many women have mixed feelings when they find they are pregnant, even if they have been pregnant before. This is quite normal and understandable. One in three women in the UK will have an abortion by the age of 45 yrs.

Sometimes however there may be special reasons to do with the baby, or with your own health and circumstances or with the health of your existing family, which could make you even more uncertain.

Staff at the Choices clinic or your own G.P. will be pleased to discuss these factors with you in a non – judgmental, unbiased way, and help you make up your own mind on the right decision for your future.

What are my options?

- you may decide to continue with the pregnancy and become a parent; or
- you may decide to continue with the pregnancy and have the child fostered or adopted; or
- you may decide to end the pregnancy with an abortion.

How can I find out more?

The Abortion Law (Guernsey) 1997 allows abortion only in a number of clearly defined circumstances.

An abortion is the removal of the contents of your womb.

This can be achieved **medically** using tablets or **surgically** using gentle suction. It does not normally involve invasive surgery or stitches. In most cases an abortion has no effect on future pregnancies.

In every case two local doctors, acting in good faith, must agree that your case is covered by one of the sections of the Guernsey Abortion Law. These can be the clinic doctors or your GP.

Do I need to see a counsellor?

Many women considering abortion are sure of their decision, however other women can find it helpful to talk things through with someone not involved in the situation. A counsellor will help you to talk through your feelings and explore all the issues in a non-judgmental and unbiased way. They are not there to make up your mind, but to support you in making your own decision. A partner or friend may come with you.

The counselling service is **free and confidential** and is offered by the Committee for Health and Social Care (HSC) through **Choices** to all Bailiwick residents holding a GY social security number. Counselling is most helpful if accessed before an abortion but is also available at any time following the procedure, no matter how much time has elapsed. The counsellor's confidential 'help line' telephone number is: **07781 126 439**. Confidential voicemails may also be left on this number.

What next?

If you decide that you wish to proceed with an abortion, it is important that you see your own G.P. or the Choices doctor as soon as possible. You will need to see two doctors who will discuss this with you and arrange your **contraception** for afterwards. You will also be asked for a urine sample or swab to check for **chlamydia**. Once the two doctors have signed the legally required document, you will be referred to see the Gynaecologist. At the specialist centre you will have a gynaecological examination as well as an ultrasound scan to establish how many weeks pregnant you are. It is helpful to attend this appointment with a full bladder as it makes the scan easier. A routine blood test will also be carried out.

The Specialist will then discuss with you the best way of terminating your pregnancy. If you choose a surgical abortion you will also see the anaesthetist who will check that you are fit for an anaesthetic.

Some further legal paperwork about why you want an abortion now needs to be completed. If the Specialist feels that you meet requirements of the Guernsey Abortion Law, they will then make the arrangements.

Surgical abortion you will be admitted to the hospital early in the morning and discharged later the same day. Contraception can be started at this point.

Medical abortion takes a little longer as it occurs in 3 stages.

Stage 1

You attend the hospital where you will be given 3 tablets on the ward and asked to stay for approx. 30 minutes to ensure you have no adverse reactions to the medication.

Stage 2

You return to the ward 2 days later where you will be given a vaginal pessary (a tablet inserted like a tampon). This causes the foetus to be expelled. This may be uncomfortable with some cramping and bleeding. You should allow approx. 6 hours in hospital for this stage.

It is important to start **contraception** at this stage if you do not want to become pregnant again immediately.

Stage 3

You will be given a follow up appointment with the consultant on leaving hospital.

What are the risks?

There are always risks associated with this procedure. The main risk is infection; not using tampons or having sex for four weeks can reduce this. If you have a medical abortion there is a small risk of an incomplete abortion, which results in prolonged or heavy bleeding. If this happens it may be necessary to have a small operation under general anaesthetic to remove the retained products (D&C).

Will it hurt?

Everyone will experience some discomfort. This differs from each individual but there are different levels of pain relief available. You may also experience some sickness for which you can have an injection.

Can I change my mind?

The hospital staff will have time to listen to any worries you may have. You can change your mind at any time up until the treatment commences.

When can I go home?

You may go home following a surgical abortion 4 hours after return to the ward from theatre if the doctor and nurses are happy. A friend or relative should accompany you. You will be given a 'help line' number should you need any advice up to 48 hours following discharge.

How long will I need to take off work?

You should be able to return to work the next day.

When will I be able to have sex again?

We advise you not to have sex for at least four weeks following this procedure to reduce any risk of infection. During this time it is important to start your **contraception** if you wish to avoid an unwanted pregnancy.

Will I feel guilty about my abortion?

A few women do. You may feel a bit 'low' for a few days after your treatment though this generally passes within a couple of days. If you would like to talk to the counsellor again at any time following the abortion, or even weeks or months later, you are welcome to call her confidential help line number to talk to her on the phone or to arrange a free counselling session : **07781 126 439**

CONTRACEPTION

It is very important to think about this before your abortion as fertility returns to normal almost immediately. Your G.P. or the Choices doctor will discuss the different options available and make arrangements for you to start this soon after the procedure so that you will be protected straight away. If possible, please bring your chosen method with you to the hospital and the nurse will advise you when to start. The following is a brief guide as to what is available:

The pill / mini pill / EVRA patch / Nuvaring should be started on the 1st day after your treatment. These methods can also be used short term if there is a delay before a coil or implant can be fitted.

An Injection (Depo Provera) can be given at the time of your treatment and lasts 12 weeks.

An Implant is immediately effective if fitted up to 5 days afterwards.

A coil can be fitted either within 2 days or at your follow up appointment.

Sterilisation/vasectomy can be discussed at the follow up appointment.

Condoms are advisable if there is likely to be a delay starting your ongoing contraception and also to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STI's).

Emergency contraception can be taken if you have unprotected sex before you have started your chosen contraception. Please see your GP or attend Choices or the Orchard Centre as soon as possible as this needs to be taken within 72 hours. This is also available directly from pharmacies.

For further information about contraception, Choices or your G.P. will be pleased to advise you. Information is also available from www.fpa.org.uk

Your doctor's surgery (look in the yellow pages under 'Doctors' for all the contact numbers)

Choices Clinic 714954 or 07781 103434 email: info@choices.gg website: www.choices.gg

Private abortion information is available at www.bpas.org.uk and www.mariestopes.org.uk

Abortion Law (Guernsey) 1997

An abortion is only lawful in Guernsey and Alderney if two locally registered Medical Practitioners acting in good faith agree that:

- It is immediately necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman.
- It is necessary to prevent grave permanent injury to the physical and mental health of the woman.
- The pregnancy does not exceed its 24th week, and at the time of diagnosis there is substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.
- The pregnancy has not exceeded its 12th week and the continuance of pregnancy would involve risk greater than if the pregnancy were terminated, of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of her family.