

A termination of pregnancy (or abortion) is when a pregnancy is ended using surgical or medical methods. It is only legal if two doctors decide that the mental or physical well being of the mother would be harmed if the pregnancy was to continue. Your doctors believe that you have valid reasons for this termination but only you can make the final decision to go ahead with the procedure or not.

Before the termination

You will be seen by a doctor who will perform a scan to ascertain how many weeks pregnant you are and that the pregnancy is in the womb. He will also take swabs to check for infections and Chlamydia and a blood test to check your blood group.

The doctor will discuss with you your plans for contraception and this can be prescribed for you to take straight after the termination.

On the day of the termination

As the termination is carried out under a general anaesthetic you must not eat or drink anything for six hours before the operation. You will be admitted to a ward (Tavistock or Orchard Gynae) as a day case.

Three hours before the operation you may be given a prostaglandin tablet, this is inserted by a nurse into your vagina to help the cervix to soften and dilate. This is usually only given if you have not had a baby before.

During the operation

The procedure involves dilating your cervix (neck of the womb) and removing the pregnancy by using a special suction tube. It is usual to get some discomfort and bleeding after the procedure – like a heavy period.

Any fetal tissue that is removed is treated respectfully and cremation is arranged by the hospital. If you would like to discuss this further please speak to one of the nurses on the ward.

Risks

We try to make sure that your operation is safe. This may include prescribing medication to reduce the risk of complications.

Most operations are successful with few complications. However, every procedure has risks and potential complications. Those most relevant to this operation are listed below.

Complications of anaesthesia: your anaesthetist will be able to discuss with you the risks of having an anaesthetic

General complications of any operation:

- Pain: this happens with any operation but it is usually only mild pain. Nursing staff will be able to give you pain killers if required.
- Bleeding: after the operation.

Specific complications of this operation:

- This operation carries a small risk of damage to the uterus.
- Infection: this is unlikely but does happen. You will know if you have developed an infection as you will have an offensive discharge.

After the operation

After you have woken up in the recovery room you will go back to the ward and later be discharged home

Advice on discharge

As with all day case procedures you must ensure that someone is available to stay with you overnight. You will have some bleeding after the operation and you should wear sanitary towels and not tampons for this. If you have any abdominal pain you can take your usual painkillers. If you develop heavy bleeding or an offensive discharge please contact us.

You will need to rest for a day at home to recover from the anaesthetic. If you have any concerns following your operation please contact your GP or Orchard Gynae ward on 01234 792219.

Further Information

www.fpa.org.uk

www.bpas.org

www.mariestopes.org.uk

www.rcog.org.uk

www.careconfidential.com

Reference: RCOG, Clinical based guideline No 7, 2000