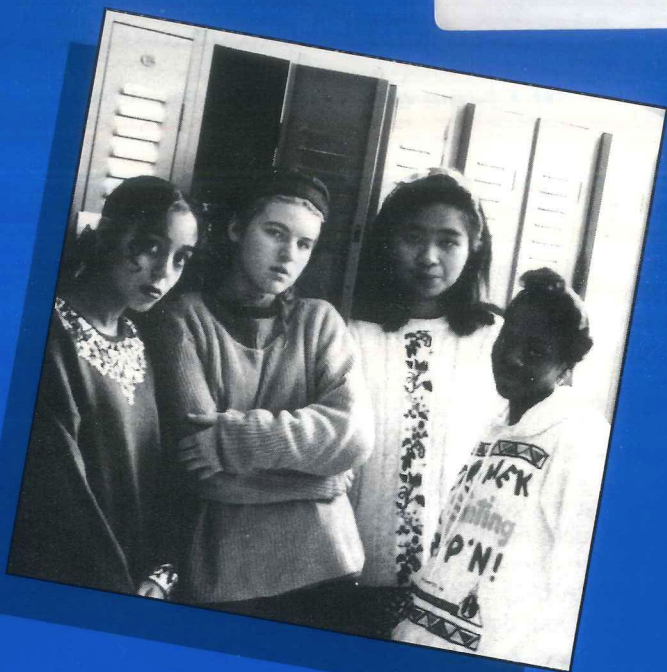


AB 28



Information for Teens about Abortion

As a teenager,
you may have some questions
about abortion such as . . .

“How safe is an abortion?”

“If I have an abortion, can I still have children later on?”

“What happens during an abortion?”

“Are abortions legal?”

“How much do abortions cost?”

This pamphlet will answer many of your questions. If you want more information, talk with your local Planned Parenthood Association, a birth control centre, a women's health centre at a hospital, the public health department, or your local chapter of the Canadian Abortion Rights Action League (CARAL). You could also contact your school nurse or your doctor.

What is an abortion?

An abortion is the ending of a pregnancy. In an abortion, the embryo or fetus is removed from the woman's uterus. The embryo or fetus is what gradually develops into a baby.

An abortion is only done when the fetus is in the early stages of development. In an average abortion, the fetus is about 3 cm long. Scientists tell us that the fetus has no awareness (including no awareness of pain) until sometime after the 5th month of pregnancy.

How late in a pregnancy can an abortion be done?

An abortion should be done as early as possible. Most abortions are done during the first 12 weeks of pregnancy because they are safest then. Sometimes abortions are done as late as 20 weeks, but this is very rare.

How safe is an abortion?

Abortions are very safe. They are now one of the safest operations of all. And, the earlier the abortion, the lower the chance of any complications.

If I have an abortion can I still have children later on?

Yes. Women who have an early abortion are just as likely as women in general to have a healthy baby in the future.

What happens during an abortion?

In an abortion, the woman must lie on an examining table so the doctor can see into her vagina to find her cervix, which is the opening to her uterus. Then the doctor will either use a local anesthetic to freeze the cervix, or a brief general anesthetic to make her unconscious for a short time.

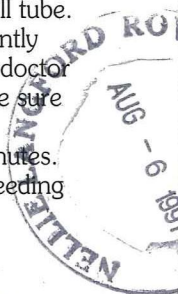
To remove the contents of her uterus, the doctor gradually opens the cervix and inserts a small tube. This tube is attached to a machine which gently suctions the inside of the uterus. Then, the doctor carefully checks the inside of the uterus to be sure no tissue remains.

The entire procedure takes about 10 minutes. Afterwards, the woman usually has some bleeding like a menstrual period.

Is an abortion painful?

Local or general anesthetics are used before an abortion to control pain.

Most women feel cramps (like strong period cramps) for a short time. If a woman needs it, the doctor will give her extra medication for any pain.



How do women feel after an abortion?

In general, women consider abortion because being pregnant at that time is in some way wrong for them. Most women feel relief after their abortion and are satisfied that they have made the right decision for themselves.

Some women feel sad or emotional for a few days or weeks afterwards and may find a supportive friend or counsellor very helpful at this time.

Researchers have found that having an abortion does not make women feel bad about themselves years later.

What else could I do besides have an abortion?

If you decide not to have an abortion, you could continue the pregnancy and have the baby. Then you could either keep it, or place it for adoption.

If you decide to have the baby, there are maternity homes for pregnant teenagers, and single teenage mothers can usually get welfare or mother's allowance. If you decide to place the baby for adoption, you may be able to choose the family you want to adopt your child. The Children's Aid Societies are good sources of information and support if you decide to continue the pregnancy.

Remember, it is your decision — not your boyfriend's or anyone else's. Try to get some support to help you make the best decision for you.

Do many teenagers have abortions?

Yes. About 2 out of every 5 pregnant teenagers choose to have an abortion. More than 14,000 teenagers have abortions in Canada each year.

Unfortunately, teenagers often decide to have an abortion too late in their pregnancies. Either they don't realize that they are pregnant, or they don't know what to do about it.



Is it wrong to have an abortion?

While some religions think that abortions are wrong, other religions teach that abortion is a woman's choice. Many people believe that abortion is a responsible decision when a woman cannot handle the pregnancy or properly take care of a child.

Women who decide to have an abortion take motherhood seriously. Most Canadians agree that women faced with an unplanned, unwanted pregnancy should be able to choose an abortion.

Is it legal to have an abortion?

YES. Abortions are legal in Canada. You can have an abortion at either a hospital or an abortion clinic.

How much does an abortion cost?

Abortions at a hospital are free if you are covered under government health insurance. Abortions are also free at abortion clinics in Ontario and B.C. At abortion clinics in other provinces, you must pay some part of the cost.

Do I need a parent's consent to have an abortion?

It depends. For instance, in Ontario and B.C., teenagers are considered able to consent to an abortion. In other provinces, the age when hospitals require a parent's consent varies.

An abortion can be performed at a clinic without a parent's consent, if it is clear that the teenager understands what she is doing. Doctors often encourage teens to tell a parent or another important adult.

Hospitals, clinics, and health insurance plans are obligated to keep the names of teenagers who have abortions secret.

Where can I go for more information or counselling?

Here are some people you could ask for information about pregnancy or abortion:

- Planned Parenthood Association
- a birth control centre
- a women's health centre at a hospital
- your city or county health department
- your school nurse or family doctor
- Canadian Abortion Rights Action League

The more questions you ask, the better informed you will be.

How do I get an abortion?

Ask any of the people listed here to help you. If you live in a city with an abortion clinic, or if your hospital has a women's health centre, you could call them directly for an appointment.



WARNING:

There are some people (even some doctors and nurses) who don't want anyone to have an abortion, for any reason whatsoever. Some pregnancy centres exist to try to talk young pregnant women out of having an abortion. The information they provide about abortion cannot be trusted. So, be careful. Do not let anyone pressure you into making a decision that is not right for you.

Make sure you get the facts you need from people you can trust.

Childbirth by Choice Trust

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