

## Information on termination of pregnancy (abortion)

A series of information leaflets on  
termination of pregnancy services  
in Greater Glasgow

Your first doctors appointment

The assessment clinic

Early medical termination

**Surgical termination**

Medical termination

## Surgical termination of pregnancy (7- 12 weeks)

If you have been offered a surgical termination of pregnancy you should have been given some verbal information about the procedure and what to expect during your admission. This is a written copy of that information for you to keep. Please read it carefully. We will be happy to answer any questions you have.

- It is important that you arrive on the ward at the stated time. Failure to do so may result in your operation being cancelled or postponed.
- As you will be having a general anaesthetic you will have been told not to eat or drink for a time before your admission.
- As with any operation it will not be possible for anyone to be with you during the procedure.
- You will need to make any necessary arrangements (such as childcare) prior to your admission.
- You will also need to arrange for someone to accompany you home after the operation and stay with you overnight.
- Very rarely you may need to be kept in hospital overnight.

### What happens during the operation?

The operation is completed under a general anaesthetic. This means that you will be given medication so that you are asleep and do not feel anything. During the operation the neck of the womb (cervix) is opened using dilators and then the contents of the womb (the pregnancy) are removed using slight suction through a thin plastic tube. One hour prior to the surgery, 2 tablets may be inserted into the vagina, which will soften the cervix and make it easier to perform the operation.

### What are the risks involved?

Surgical termination of pregnancy is a very safe procedure.

However every form of surgical treatment has some potential risk or side effect. With this operation the main risks, although very small, are:

- Haemorrhage (excessive bleeding). (around 1.5 cases per 1,000 procedures).
- Infection (up to 10% of all procedures) In Glasgow antibiotics are given as routine which reduces this figure.
- Failure of method requiring a further procedure (around 6 cases per 1,000 procedures).
- Perforation of the uterus (i.e. a small hole is punctured in the womb) (1-4 cases per 1,000 procedures).

- Damage to the neck of the womb (cervix) (less than 1% of all procedures).

**There is no evidence to suggest that having an induced termination of pregnancy (abortion) affects a woman's future fertility or ability to have children.**

### **What will happen to me before my operation?**

- The nurses will help to prepare you for your surgery and complete a checklist. You will be transported to theatre on your bed and transferred over to the care of the theatre staff.
- In the anaesthetic room you will be given a light anaesthetic, which ensures that you are asleep and that you do not feel anything during the operation. The operation lasts about 15 minutes.

### **What will happen after my operation?**

- Once the operation is complete you will wake up in the recovery room and a member of the nursing team will take you back to the ward.

### **Will I have any pain?**

- Most women have some period cramp type pain for a few hours following the operation. In a few women the pain may last for a few days.
- Painkillers such as paracetamol or

brufen may be used to relieve the pain.

- If the pain is severe and not relieved with these painkillers you should contact your GP or the ward.

### **When will I be able to eat and drink after the operation?**

- After about 30 – 45 minutes you will be given something to drink and eat. If you feel nauseous or if you vomit the nurse caring for you may give you an injection to help stop this.

### **How long will I bleed for after the operation?**

- Most women lose red blood from the vagina and may pass small clots following the operation. A few women do not bleed at all. After a few days the loss will become darker. In some women the bleeding comes and goes. In most cases bleeding has stopped by ten days.
- You should NOT use tampons until the bleeding has stopped. This prevents the introduction of infection. You can use tampons again when your next period comes.

### **When will I be able to go home?**

- You will usually go home by the end of the day.
- Occasionally some women need to

stay in hospital overnight following this operation. Please be prepared for this and make any necessary arrangements (such as childcare) prior to your admission.

- As you have had surgery under a general anaesthetic someone will need to accompany you home and stay with you overnight.
- You must not drive a car, operate machinery or drink alcohol for the next 24 hours.
- If your blood group is Rhesus negative you will need an injection. The nurse will be happy to explain this to you.
- You will be given a 7-day course of antibiotics to take to help prevent infection.

### **When can I resume sexual intercourse?**

- We advise you that you should not resume sexual intercourse until you have stopped bleeding.
- It is possible to become pregnant again shortly after the operation and for that reason it is important to use contraception immediately. The nursing staff will discuss future contraception with you before you go home. If you are starting on the contraceptive pill it is important you should use condoms for the first 7 days or until bleeding has stopped.

## Do I need to contact the ward following discharge?

You will not need to contact the ward routinely, however if:

- You have severe pain which is not relieved with mild pain killers
- You feel feverish
- You have excessive bleeding
- You have a smelly vaginal discharge
- If your period is later than expected and you still feel pregnant

It is important that you contact either the ward, your local Accident and Emergency Unit or your GP within 24 hours.

## How will I feel after the termination?

Women experience a wide range of emotions after a termination of pregnancy and sometimes a mixture of different feelings at different times. Each woman is unique and her feelings are personal to her. Most women find these feelings resolve themselves over time.

- Feelings of loss or sadness are common even though a woman knows she has made the right decision for her. This does not mean the decision was wrong but that it was a very hard decision to make.
- Feelings of anger sometimes surface and these might be directed at others for example if a woman feels she has not been supported.

- Feelings of guilt or self-blame also occur for example feeling that she may have not taken enough care or that other people are judging her.
- Some women feel a strong sense of relief and a sense of being unburdened.
- Many women feel isolated following a termination as it is usually a very private experience. It can be hard to talk about it to other people.

If you wish to discuss your feelings following from a termination please contact the ward or the Sandyford Initiative who will be able to arrange someone for you to talk to.

**Should you need to ask any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact:**

### The Ward

Telephone details can be written down in the space at the end of this leaflet.

### The Sandyford Initiative

[www.sandyford.org.uk](http://www.sandyford.org.uk)

2-6 Sandyford Place

Glasgow G3 7NB

- **Family Planning and Reproductive Health**  
**Tel: 0141 211 8130**  
Based within the Sandyford Initiative  
Family Planning and Reproductive Health

provide contraception, reproductive and sexual health services. These include referral for termination of pregnancy, pre and post termination counselling and someone to talk to whether your termination was a recent event or a long time ago.

**Services are also offered from a network of community clinics.**

**Please contact for details**

- **Centre for Women's Health**  
**Tel: 0141 211 6700**

As part of the Sandyford Initiative, the Centre provides information, support and counselling on all aspects of women's health.

## fpa Scotland (The Family Planning Association)

[www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk)

Provides confidential advice and support on all aspects of sexual and reproductive health including termination of pregnancy.

**Confidential helpline on 0141 576 5088**

**Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm**

**Friday 9am - 4.30pm**

**What if I am not happy with the service I have received and wish to make a complaint?**

Sometimes things go wrong. When they do, those working in the NHS must know so they can put them right for you and also learn from

your experience to provide a better service in future.

The NHS Complaints Procedure (1996) aims to make this process more simple, open and fair.

### Who do I complain to?

Where possible you should tell the staff involved and they will try to sort out the problem straight away.

### What if I prefer to talk to someone who is not involved in my care?

- You can phone or write to the Complaints Manager of the service. They will try to find out what has happened and decide what to do. Contact details must be provided by the Practice, Hospital or Health Board.
- If you wish to complain about a GP and do not wish to deal with the Practice directly then you can contact the Complaints Manager at Greater Glasgow Primary Care Division on 0141 211 0683 who will help you.
- The usual time limit for placing a complaint is a maximum of 6 months from the event but this may be extended in some circumstances.

### Where can I get more information on complaints procedure?

Your local Health Council are an independent organisation set up within the NHS to repre-

sent patient's interests and to give you information, advice and support.

**Complaints Officer**  
**Greater Glasgow Health Council**  
**[www.show.scot.nhs.uk/gghc](http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/gghc)**  
**44 Florence St**  
**Glasgow G5 0YZ**  
**Tel: 0141 429 7698**

## Notes and Contact Details

Hospital .....

Address .....

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Ward/clinic .....

Telephone .....

### Appointment

Date .....

Time .....

