

18



# Surgical abortion

Unwanted pregnancy

Since 1973, all women in Denmark have had the legal right to have an abortion. The law states that this has to take place within the first 12 weeks of gestation.

There are many reasons that you may be considering or wanting to have a pregnancy terminated. Whatever the reason, it is always a difficult decision that requires much thought. That is why it is important that you discuss it in depth with those closest to you, as well as a doctor, such as our specialised doctor of gynaecology, before you make your decision.

The specialised doctor can counsel you on your decision and advise on the options available to you, whether you choose to continue with the pregnancy or induce an abortion.

## Surgical or medical abortion

An abortion can be carried out surgically or medically. A surgical abortion is performed under full sedation, by means of a curettage or suction of the uterus. A medical abortion involves taking medication to terminate the pregnancy.

If your pregnancy is not further along than 9 weeks, calculated from the first day of your last normal period, you can induce an abortion with medication. We will exercise the utmost degree of discretion throughout the process.

## Pre-abortion exam

Initially, you will come in for an appointment with the specialised doctor, who will carry out a gynaecological exam and perform an ultrasound to determine how far along you are in your pregnancy. If your own GP has not tested you for chlamydia, this will be done. You will also have a blood test in order to determine your blood type.

During this appointment, the specialised doctor will talk you through the possibility of abortion as well as advising you on the possible help available to you, should you choose to continue with the pregnancy. You will also be counselled on your choice of contraception in the future. If you agree to carry out a surgical abortion, the specialised doctor will go over the process with you as well as the related risks. You will also have to fill in the "Request for abortion" form from the Danish Health Authority.

## What to expect

You should expect to have period-like pain and bleeding in the days after the procedure. You may also experience a psychological reaction.

Possible pregnancy-related nausea and vomiting will decrease after a few days.

## Preparation

We recommend that you read this folder before the surgery, as well as the "General guidance - Regarding your surgery".

### Fasting

During the surgery, you will be fully sedated, so you cannot eat or drink beforehand.

### Pausing medication

See the "General guidance - Regarding your surgery" folder for further information, or the "Regular medication - In connection with surgery" folder.

### Bathing

You should shower at home before coming in for the surgery.

### Cervical ripening

You will have been given 2 Cytotec tablets during your pre-examination. You should insert these deep within the vagina  $\frac{1}{2}$  - 2 hours before coming in for the surgery.

Cytotec softens the cervix and makes

the surgery more gentle. Once Cytotec has been administered, it is not possible to change your mind about having the abortion.

## Day surgery (out-patient care)

The surgery will be carried out as day surgery, and you can expect to be ready and discharged home after a few hours on the same day.

## The surgery

You will be fully sedated during the surgery, which will last approximately 10 minutes.

You will be placed on your back with your legs in stirrups (like a gynaecological exam). You will be sedated by means of a needle in the back of your hand, where the sedative will be injected.

Then the uterus will be emptied by means of suction. If you are more than 8 weeks pregnant and your blood type is Rhesus negative, you will have an injection with antibody (anti-D) to avoid you creating Rhesus antibodies and thereby preventing complications in future pregnancies.

## After surgery

After surgery, you will talk to the specialist or the nurse, who will inform you of the post-surgery plan and precautions.

You may need to take some pain-relief medicine.

## After being discharged

### Pain

It is common to feel light pain in your abdomen for the first 24 hours. In order to relieve this pain, we recommend you take over-the-counter pain-relief medicine at fixed intervals 3-4 times a day.

### Bleeding

You may experience period-like bleeding that can last up to 1-2 weeks. We recommend that you use sanitary towels and not tampons to reduce the risk of pelvic infection.

You will normally have your next period 4-6 weeks after the surgery.

### Bathing

You may shower, but you should avoid taking baths, going to a swimming pool or into the ocean, until the bleeding has stopped – at least two weeks after the procedure.

### Sex life

You should avoid having sexual intercourse until the bleeding has stopped.

### Contraception

If you want to use birth control pills, you should take your first pill on the same day that you had the procedure or no later than the following day.

### Follow-up appointment

If you wish, you can come in for a follow-up appointment with the specialised doctor.

It might also be possible to be referred to a psychologist via your own GP.

### Sick leave

It is recommended that you stay home from work for a few days after the surgery.

# Possible side effects and complications

## Bleeding

In some cases, there might be continuous heavy bleeding for a few days after the abortion. You may also pass blood clots then experience pain. This may be due to the uterus not being completely emptied, and it might be necessary to carry out a further curettage or suction aspiration.

## Pelvic infection

Very rarely, women may develop a pelvic infection after a surgical abortion. This will require treatment with antibiotics.

## If you experience:

- Very heavy bleeding.
- Strong pain.
- Smelly vaginal discharge.
- Fever above 38 degrees, you must contact us, own GP or a medical emergency service.

## Sedation

There is always a risk related to being sedated, even though it is small.

## Perforation of the uterus

In very rare cases, you may experience a perforation of the uterus. If this should happen, it might be necessary to perform an operation, and this may mean that you need to be admitted for a few days and stay home from work for a few weeks.

## Notes

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