

Termination of pregnancy



Department of Health



HOSPITAL
AUTHORITY
醫院管理局

Termination of pregnancy

When facing an unplanned pregnancy, you have the following options:

1. **You can continue with the pregnancy and rear the child with or without help from your partner.**
2. **You can continue with the pregnancy and have the baby adopted.**
3. **You can terminate the pregnancy.**

The Birthright Society and Mother's Choice provide support to women who prefer to keep their pregnancies, and help them to arrange for adoption after delivery if they have decided to do so.

Deciding on whether or not to terminate an unwanted pregnancy is perhaps one of the most difficult decisions to be made. Involvement of at least the significant other in the decision process would likely to be a wise first step.

In Hong Kong, termination of pregnancy is legal under two situations:

1. If continuation of pregnancy would involve risk to the life, physical or mental health of the pregnant woman greater than if the pregnancy were terminated.
2. If the child to be born would be severely handicapped as a result of physical or mental abnormality.

The procedure cannot be performed after 24 weeks unless it is necessary to save the life of the pregnant woman.

Where can I terminate the pregnancy?

The assessment would have to be made by two doctors. If they both agree that abortion is done in good faith on behalf of the woman or the fetus, termination of pregnancy can be done. Currently, legal abortion can only be performed at the Family Planning Association or hospitals as published in the Gazette. You can attend the following clinics for help or referral.

1. Family Planning Association, telephone **2575 4477**
(<http://www.famplan.org.hk/en/default.asp>)
2. Maternal & Child Health Centres, Department of Health
(http://www.fhs.gov.hk/english/centre_det/maternal/maternal.html)
3. Private Hospitals

Support for continuation of pregnancy

1. The Birthright Society can be contacted by calling **23375551**
2. The Mother's Choice can be contacted by calling **28682022**
(http://www.mchoice.org/html/1_what_is_mc/pregnant.html)

How to terminate a pregnancy?

In general, abortion can be performed surgically or medically .

In surgical abortion, the cervix will first be dilated by medication. Evacuation of the womb is done with a narrow suction cannula to remove or suck out the pregnancy. The procedure can be performed under local or general anaesthesia. Variable degree of pain may be experienced after the procedure, in which case painkillers can help.

Medication may also be used to evoke contraction of the womb to expel the tissues of pregnancy. However, very often only part of the tissues of pregnancy may be expelled out. Evacuation of the uterus may need to be performed as just described in order to complete the procedure.

You can discuss with your doctor the most suitable method.

What are the complications of induced abortion

Induced abortion, when performed legally, is safe and complications are indeed uncommon. However, complications can still occur occasionally:

- **R**eaction to the drugs used
- **C**omplication related to the anaesthetic technique
- **T**ear of the cervix
- **I**ncomplete abortion
- **B**leeding
- **U**terine perforation or rupture
- **I**nfection and adhesion inside the womb

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The procedure may fail or incomplete, necessitating further intervention:

- If infection occurs, future fertility may be affected.
- Surgical abortion may also affect future pregnancy. The cervix may be too loose to keep the pregnancy and lead to miscarriage or preterm delivery. There may also be difficulty in the delivery of the placenta.

In general, the risk will be higher the more advanced the pregnancy.

The risk of illegal abortion is much higher. All of the above complications can occur with a much higher frequency. It may even lead to death! In a report recently published by International Planned Parenthood Federation, 13% of maternal death worldwide is due to unsafe abortion.

Most important of all, the adverse psychological effect after induced abortion should never be overlooked.

How to avoid all these complications?

The best way to prevent complications related to induced abortion is to practice effective contraception, including postcoital contraception. Family planning should be discussed with the partner and made beforehand.

Insertion of intrauterine contraceptive device and tubal sterilization can be performed during termination of pregnancy. Please discuss with the doctor concerned.

Where can I get Contraceptive Counselling?

1. Hong Kong Family Planning Association,
Telephone: **2575 4477**
(<http://www.famplan.org.hk/en/default.asp>)
2. Maternal & Child Health Centres, Department of Health
(http://www.fhs.gov.hk/english/centre_det/maternal/maternal.html)
3. Private Doctors