

Surgical Abortion

Surgical Abortion

What are the differences between surgical and medical abortions?

	Surgical abortion	Medical abortion
How it works	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A doctor will gently open your cervix (the opening to the uterus or womb) with dilators that gradually get bigger.• A cannula (straw-like tube) is inserted through the cervix into the uterus.• Suction (like a vacuum) is used to remove the pregnancy from the uterus.• The procedure usually takes 3-10 minutes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You take two medications. The pregnancy will end and the uterus will push out the tissue (like a miscarriage).• The first pill stops the pregnancy. The second pills are taken 24-48 hours (1-2 days) later, at a convenient time for you.
Advantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very low risk of continuing pregnancy (less than 1 in 100).• High success rate (about 99%).• Only needs one clinic visit.• Procedure is finished within minutes.• Sedation can be used if you wish.• Can be used early or later in pregnancy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High success rate (95-98%).• The pregnancy is expelled (pushed out of the body) within 24 hours of using misoprostol in 90% of women.• It is more private, since it is done at home.• You can choose to have someone with you for support.• Can be used very early in pregnancy.• Similar to a natural miscarriage or a heavy menstrual period.

	Surgical abortion	Medical abortion
Disadvantages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medical instruments enter the uterus. • May feel less private. • You can't have someone with you for support, as partners and loved ones are not allowed in the clinic. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uterine cramping may be very painful. • About 2-5% of women will need a uterine aspiration procedure (D&C) after medical abortion. • Bleeding after medical abortion may last longer than after uterine aspiration. • You may see blood clots and pregnancy tissue. • Needs 2 clinic visits. • You may not know if the abortion was successful until the followup appointment 1-2 weeks later. • Risk of continued pregnancy is 1 in 20.

What is a surgical abortion?

A surgical abortion uses suction to remove pregnancy tissue during a very short procedure, as described in the table above.

Am I eligible for a surgical abortion?

A surgical abortion may be performed if your pregnancy is up to 15 weeks and 6 days from the first day of your last menstrual period.

What happens during a surgical abortion?

If your pregnancy is between 6 to 12 weeks:

- The doctor will gently open your cervix (the opening to the uterus or womb) with dilators that gradually get bigger.
- Once the cervix is open, the doctor will insert a hollow straw-like tube (called a cannula) which is attached to an aspirator. This machine uses gentle suction (like a vacuum) to clean out the contents of the uterus, including the fetus and placenta.

- The doctor will then use a spoon-shaped instrument (called a curette) to check the walls of the uterus for any tissue that may remain. The procedure takes about 5 to 10 minutes.

If your pregnancy is between 13 weeks to 15 weeks and 6 days:

- You will be given a medication called misoprostol before the procedure. Misoprostol softens the cervix and makes dilation (opening the cervix) easier.
- Misoprostol takes 1½-2 hours to work. After this, you will have the procedure described above, which will last about 5-15 minutes.

What are the possible risks?

- Infection may occur in 0.1-2% of cases. You will be given antibiotics to help prevent this.
- There is a very low risk (less than 1 in 1000) of:
 - › injury to your uterus
 - › remaining tissue requiring a second aspiration
 - › excessive bleeding

Please see the pamphlet, *After Your Procedure*, for more information:
www.nshealth.ca/patientinformation/1509

What are your questions? Please ask. We are here to help you.
In Nova Scotia you can call 811 to talk with a registered nurse about your health care questions 24/7.

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 Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
 For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>
 Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>
 Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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