



“What’s it really like after having an abortion?”

Choosing to have an abortion is an important decision. Making a decision may be stressful, even if you feel okay with the one you make. For some women, the biggest challenge is dealing with the opinions and ideas others may have about abortion.

While abortion is legal in Canada and many Canadians are pro-choice, messages about abortion from media, religious groups, politicians, or our families can shape how we think about it and what we believe. It might be difficult to know what you think or feel among all those other messages. Accepting your own feelings can be harder if they don't seem to fit with things you've heard about abortion.

Dealing with common abortion myths

There are many myths and misinformation about abortion – from safety concerns and stereotypes about who has abortions - to a made-up health concern called 'post-abortion syndrome'. Here are some facts:

- » While some women might wonder “what if?” (just as many people do after making a decision), serious regret after abortion is very rare.
- » There is no one type of woman who has an abortion. Any woman who has had sex may find herself needing one at some point in her life. Throughout history, women of all ages, backgrounds, cultural groups, and spiritual beliefs have had abortions.
- » Estimates say one in three women in North America will have at least one abortion in her lifetime.
- » Abortions are safe. The medical risks of continuing a pregnancy to term are up to 10 times higher than an abortion performed by a qualified professional. Scientific research also shows that abortion does not increase risk of breast cancer, infertility, or depression.

For more information about abortion myths and facts, please visit: www.prochoice.org/pregnant/common/myths.html

Whatever you decide, be kind and gentle with yourself. Trust that you've made the best choice for yourself at this time in your life.

How can I expect to feel after an abortion?

Your feelings after an abortion may depend on how you handle stress in your life. If you generally struggle with stress, your feelings now might be more intense. Hormone changes may also affect your emotions.

It's normal to have both positive and painful feelings about an abortion, sometimes at the same time. There is no right or wrong way to feel afterwards. It can help to know that sometimes people may feel sad about a situation even when making the best choices for their lives at the time.

Some possible positive feelings:

- » confident your decision fits with your plans and goals for your life right now and for the future
- » happy to be moving forward
- » relief to not be pregnant
- » grateful that abortion is available, legal, and safe in Canada

Some possible painful feelings:

- » anger about having to deal with an unplanned pregnancy
- » guilt about not being able to continue a pregnancy
- » sad that parenting or adoption don't fit for your life right now
- » feelings of loss

Whatever your feelings are, they're okay. At times you might feel fine and like you're moving forward. Sometimes painful feelings might return after you think you are over them. Be patient with yourself and try to accept your feelings as they come. Remember that emotions are always changing. Even the most intense ones will pass with time.

An abortion might also remind you of other losses in your life. Allow yourself the space and time you need to work through any feelings of grief you may have.

If you are troubled by your thoughts and feelings about an abortion, talk to a counsellor or someone you trust. Our counsellors are here to talk with you about any feelings, thoughts, and beliefs you may have. Please call us at 204.947.1517 and ask for the post-abortion counsellor at ext. 221.

If you feel overwhelmed by your feelings or thoughts, please call Klinik Crisis Line at 204.986.8686 (in Winnipeg) or toll free 1.888.322.3019 (outside Winnipeg). They have trained helpers 24 hours a day to listen and give information and support.

A counsellor can help you:

- » find compassion for yourself and others
- » let go of blaming yourself or others
- » accept your choices
- » move forward with your life

Remind yourself you have made the best decision for yourself at the time. Try to have compassion for yourself, just as you would with a dear friend. And remember, while it may be a meaningful experience, having an abortion does not define you. Your thoughts and feelings will evolve with time.

More Information

Please visit our website at www.womenshealthclinic.org for more information about abortion and links to online resources.