

Surgical abortion in Tasmania

What is a surgical abortion?

Sometimes abortions are called termination of pregnancy in English. An abortion is a medical procedure to intentionally end a pregnancy. Abortions are legally available in Tasmania up to 16 weeks of pregnancy.

A surgical abortion is usually done under a general anaesthetic in a hospital.

Can I have a surgical abortion in Tasmania?

Yes. In Tasmania, surgical abortions are available up until 16 weeks of pregnancy in a local hospital. Some hospitals only offer abortions up to 14 weeks.

If you are considering an abortion, talk to your regular doctor as soon as possible. They will be able to discuss your options and help organise an ultrasound and blood test to confirm how many weeks pregnant you are. Your doctor will also do an assessment to determine which local hospital you can attend.

Can I have a phone interpreter when I see the doctor?

Yes, it is important for you and your doctor to have a phone interpreter. When you call to make the appointment, tell the doctor that you need a phone interpreter. The doctor can organise a phone interpreter by calling the Translating and Interpreter Service on 131 450.

What if I don't have a Medicare Card?

You can still access a surgical abortion. Your doctor will refer you to the appropriate local hospital.

How much does it cost to have a surgical abortion?

If you have private health insurance which covers this procedure, and it doesn't cause you problems to use it, you might be asked to use the insurance to cover your costs.

If your insurance doesn't cover the cost of an abortion, you will not have to pay for the procedure.

My insurance does not cover this. I need financial assistance, where does it come from?

The Women's Health Fund and Youth Health Fund are schemes that can cover the costs of an abortion and long-acting contraceptives, including any scans and blood tests you might need. Talk to your doctor about this or call the organisation which manages the Fund directly.

The Women's Health Fund is for women aged 25 years or older. It is managed by Women's Health Tasmania, 1800 675 028.

The Youth Health Fund is for women aged under 25 years. It is managed by The Link Youth Health Service 6231 2927.

When you call let the organisations know if you need an interpreter.

What happens before the surgical abortion?

If you decide to have a surgical abortion, your GP will refer you to a gynaecologist. You will meet with the gynaecologist for a medical consultation to:

- confirm if this procedure is suitable for you
- explain the process of having a surgical abortion
- arrange ultrasound and blood tests (if required)
- complete a consent form if you decide to go ahead with the procedure
- make the arrangements for the abortion.

What happens during the surgical abortion?

In most surgical abortion procedures, the gynaecologist completes a suction curette, and the procedure takes less than 15 minutes.

Usually during the procedure:

- You are given a general anaesthetic, so you are not conscious during the procedure.
- Your cervix opening is gradually widened.
- A slim tube is inserted into your uterus.
- The pregnancy is withdrawn with gentle suction.
- A surgical instrument called a curette is used to check if the uterus is empty.

What happens after the surgical abortion?

To reduce the risk of infection, for two weeks after the procedure (or a few days after bleeding has stopped) it is recommended that you:

- Shower instead of taking a bath
- Do not have sexual intercourse
- Do not go swimming
- Use sanitary pads instead of tampons.

What are the possible complications?

Complications are rare but occur in around 3% of surgical abortions. Complications can include haemorrhage, infection, injury to the uterus, injury to or weakening of the cervix.

When should I seek medical advice after a surgical abortion?

See a doctor or go to the hospital emergency department immediately if:

- Your bleeding becomes heavy
- You develop a fever
- You experience severe cramping or abdominal pain.

More information about surgical abortions

The Family Planning website has more information about surgical abortions.

<https://fpt.org.au/advice-and-information/abortion-of-pregnancy-abortion/surgical-abortion-of-pregnancy-stop/>

Counselling and support

Free, confidential counselling through an interpreter is available to you at Women's Health Tasmania – call 1800 675 028.

Acknowledgements

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