



IN ORDER TO TERMINATE A PREGNANCY, THE PHYSICIAN REQUIRES:

1. A written confirmation of the abortion counselling interview (obligatory by law)
2. A document certifying the blood group, if available (e.g. pregnancy hand-held record – „Mutterpass“; bloodbank certificate, etc.)
3. Health insurance card
4. Request of transfer of the gynaecologist to a colleague for voluntary termination of pregnancy / or 10,- € medical consultation fees
5. Doctor's fees in cash (the amount will be communicated when taking the appointment) or in case of low income, declaration from the health insurance that fees will be covered (the written declaration should be obtained in advance).

More detailed information can be found in the brochure **Schwangerschaftsabbruch** published by **pro familia** (in German), also available and free to download on the Internet Web site:

www.profamilia.de

YOUR NEAREST PRO FAMILIA CONSULTATION CENTRE:



Brief information on pregnancy termination methods and risks

Landesverband
Nordrhein-Westfalen



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TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY BY MEDICATION (ABORTIVE PILL)

This technique uses a drug that blocks the action of hormones maintaining the pregnancy, and another drug that induces uterus contractions. The medicamentous interruption of pregnancy is only practicable until the end of the 9th pregnancy week (corresponds to the 63th day, calculated from the first day of the last menstrual period or 3 weeks of delayed menstruations). With this method, up to three medical consultations are required. During the first consultation, the intervention will be explained and a preliminary examination will take place, after which 3 abortive tablets will be given. Taking these pills could initiate bleeding. At the second visit, two days later, another medication will be given to induce contractions and bleeding, and terminate the pregnancy. In most medical centres/clinics, an observation period of 3-4 hours is required after having taken the second medication. The products of conception are usually expelled during this time. Abdominal cramps similar to menstrual pain may be present and can be relieved with analgesics. After the abortion, vaginal bleeding may persist for 7-10 days and is generally more abundant than menstrual bleeding. A control examination must be performed approximately 14 days after the termination of pregnancy to ensure that the abortion is complete. Rarely, incomplete termination (retained products of conception) may occur despite the above medication. When this is the case, a second dose of medication, and even a uterine aspiration might be required. Very rarely, complications such as excessive bleedings, circulatory problems or infection may occur.

INSTRUMENTAL TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

The softest and the most practiced instrumental abortion method is the vacuum aspiration (often referred to as surgical suction). It can be carried out under local or general anaesthesia, usually in day-care facilities. If practiced with a local anaesthetic, this is injected right and left from the cervix, and is hardly noticeable. In some centres, a mild sedative may be administered, which can cause light drowsiness. Should the intervention be performed under general anaesthesia, a sleep-inducing drug will be injected by an anaesthetist through a needle into a vein. The prerequisite to a general anaesthesia is a fast (no drinking, no eating, no smoking) for minimum 6 hours before the intervention. The cervix will be gently and progressively stretched open with metal wires. A thin cannula will then be eased into the uterus and the contents (mucous membranes and products of conception) will be carefully sucked into the tube. Generally, the whole procedure only takes 5-10 minutes. Abdominal cramps and bleeding are normal after the termination, but are not experienced by all women.

In some cases, it may be necessary to proceed to a curettage, by which remaining products of conception will be scraped out instrumentally (with a curette).

Normally, a voluntary interruption of pregnancy is conducted on an out-patient basis, i.e. it is possible to go back home, accompanied by someone (because you will not be in a condition to drive a vehicle), 1-2 hours after the intervention. In most centres, the person who accompanies is allowed to stay at your side. This method also requires a control examination around the 10 th day post-abortion.

Complications occur only rarely after an operative termination. The complication risk grows with the duration of the pregnancy (i.e. the

risk is minimal when the abortion is conducted between the 7th and the 9th week, calculated from the first day of the last menstrual period). Exceptionally, heavy and/or sustained bleeding or an infection may occur, and can normally be treated without problem. In case of strong bleeding, heavy abdominal cramps, fever ($>38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$) or malodorous vaginal secretions, you must immediately consult a physician. These are common signs of inflammation/ infection. If this is the case and it is not rapidly and completely treated, it may lead to the occlusion of uterine mucous membranes and/or of the Fallopian tubes and, later, to sterility. Very exceptionally, a uterine injury/perforation can accidentally occur. In some cases, it might happen that the pregnancy has not been interrupted and an additional intervention may be necessary.

AFTER THE ABORTION

Rest is imperious after the intervention, no matter what technique has been performed, as exhaustion predisposes to infections. To prevent any infection, many physicians advise against the introduction of something in the vagina during the first 2-3 weeks after the abortion. In order to avoid infection:

- you should use sanitary napkins/towels instead of tampons
- you should avoid sex
- you may shower or handwash, but not take a bath, swim or go in the sauna.

Psychological complications are quite unusual after an abortion, whereas emotions such as relief or sadness are normal. However, you may want to talk about other problems, or to share with someone your feelings and experience. For this purpose, we offer you the possibility of meeting a consultant. Please feel free to contact any pro familia family planning centre at any time.