



**Information regarding abortion up
to the 12th week of pregnancy**

Pregnant - What next?

Are you pregnant and considering a termination? We have compiled the following information. You alone decide whether or not to have an abortion. No one can decide for you! Abortion is legal in Germany as long as you observe the following:

- A pregnancy can be terminated up to the 12th week of pregnancy.
- You are required by law to first receive counselling from a state recognised provider. The counselling is free and anonymous.
- Following the counselling you will receive a certificate to prove your attendance. This is a so called "Beratungsschein". In order to receive this certificate, bring your passport or identity card with you to the counselling center.
- In the counselling center you will receive the addresses of doctor's practices or clinics which perform abortions.
- There must be a three day waiting period between the consultation and the abortion which. An abortion can be performed on the fourth day after the consultation at the earliest.

The consultants are bound by confidentiality. You will have a safe space to consider your options.

The three day waiting period. A time for reflection.

During this time you can reflect on your decision and undergo further counselling if required. If you are sure of your decision, you can make an appointment for a preliminary consultation in a doctor's practice or clinic of your choice.

Cost of the abortion

If you have a regular income, you have to bear the costs of the abortion procedure yourself. In the event that you have no income or a low income, you will have to apply to the statutory health insurer to cover the costs of the procedure. If you qualify for cost coverage, you must provide proof of this before the procedure. This can be done with the help of a “Kostenübernahmebescheinigung” (cost coverage certificate) issued by your statutory health insurance provider.

To be eligible for this coverage, you are required to provide documentation of your place of residence and income. The income of your partner is not taken into account.

The costs of the preliminary examination and follow up appointment, as well as any further treatment in case of complications, are covered by the insurance provider.

Preliminary consultation in a doctor's practice or clinic

You are required to bring the following documentation to your first appointment in a doctor's practice or clinic:

- Proof of counselling attendance (“Beratungsschein”)
- Cost coverage certificate from your statutory health insurer, if available (Kostenübernahmebescheinigung)
- Health insurance card or medical treatment certificate and, if possible, a referral.
- If available, your blood-typing.

At this preliminary consultation you will discuss with a doctor how an abortion is performed and what the risks are. Always ask for clarity if you do not understand something or if something worries you!

If you have trouble understanding German, bring an interpreter with you to every appointment. You have to be able to understand the preliminary consultation. You will be required to sign a consent form before the procedure. In further appointments, you will also have to be able to understand the doctor/s, as your health is at stake.

The procedure

It is your choice to decide between two different abortion methods. However, a medication abortion is only possible up to the seventh week of pregnancy. After this, an surgical abortion has to be performed.

Medication abortion

With the assistance of a doctor, a pregnancy may be terminated in the early stages by means of medication. This method is without surgery or anaesthesia, but is a longer process. Not all doctor's practices offer this method. Doctors who offer a drug-induced abortion do so in different ways. You will either have to visit the practice three times or you will receive the medication with the second active ingredient to take home with you. You will receive a phone number to call if you have any questions during the process. The abortion begins by taking the active ingredient mifepristone (brand name: Mifegyne®) under medical supervision at the doctor's office. After this step, you can go home. You may experience side effects such as nausea, vomiting and pain. If necessary, get a doctor's certificate to excuse you from work. The details will not be provided to your employer. The active ingredient mifepristone prevents further development of the pregnancy. In addition to this, the uterine lining and the gestational sac

with the embryo detach. The cervix opens and the uterus contracts. After approximately 24 hours you will begin to bleed, similar to a menstrual period. Very few women experience heavy bleeding. Only use sanitary pads for hygiene during the abortion. 36 to 48 hours after taking mifepristone, you will take another medication. Either at the doctor's practice or you have been given the medication to take at home.

The second medication contains prostaglandins, which allows the uterine lining and the embryo to be expelled by bleeding. It also enhances the effects of mifepristone. You will additionally receive medication to combat side effects such as nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea and pain. It is advised that you take good care of yourself and rest throughout the entire period.

Surgical abortion

This method is performed under general or local anaesthetic, usually by removing the pregnancy tissue with the suction method; the suction curettage. Some doctors perform a curettage with a curette - a spoon-like instrument with blunt edges. Please note: If the procedure is performed under general anaesthetic, you are not allowed to eat, drink, smoke or chew gum for several hours prior to the procedure. This is very important! You might receive a pill during the preliminary consultation which you have to take a few hours before the procedure. This pill makes the cervix softer and easier to stretch. At the doctor's practice, you will receive general or local anaesthetic. The cervix is then carefully stretched a few millimetres so that a suction curettage can be inserted to remove the pregnancy tissue and end the pregnancy. Afterwards, a check is performed to ensure that the procedure was carried out successfully. The entire procedure is over in about 15 minutes.

When it is complete, you can rest and recover in a designated room until your circulation returns to normal. It is necessary for someone to accompany you on the way home, as you will not be fit to drive home on your own. You should ensure that you will be looked after for the next 24 hours. This person can assist you or call for help should any complications arise. In the days following the abortion, there will be changes to your hormones, and your breasts and abdomen may feel different. You may also experience a negative change in your mood. It is advised that you take it easy after the procedure and stay home from work if necessary. Details of your condition will not be put on your doctor's certificate.

Freedom of choice

You have the right to change your decision and continue the pregnancy at any time up to the point at which the abortion begins, possibly with the medication you are taking before the surgical abortion.

If you do not wish to undergo the procedure, remember to cancel your appointment at the practice or clinic.

After the abortion

Allow yourself some rest in the first few days after the procedure. Bleeding and abdominal pain are normal after abortion. Take medication to relieve the pain if necessary. If you have a fever above 38.5° C (100° F) or have foul-smelling discharge, go see your doctor. There may be signs of inflammation. Regarding hygiene, only use sanitary pads and water to wash yourself. Refrain from sexual intercourse in order to reduce inflammation. Do not forget your follow-up appointment! Look after your health responsibly!

Contraception

Your next menstrual cycle will begin directly following the abortion. This means you can get pregnant again. Should you not want to get pregnant, start using a safe method of contraception that suits you. If you are unsure which contraception to use, or your partner doesn't agree with it, visit our contraception counselling center.

Further information

Criminological indication

If, from a medical perspective, there is reason to believe that the pregnancy was caused by rape or sexual abuse, the pregnancy can be terminated up to the 12th week after conception. In order for this to occur, a doctor has to issue a criminological indication. The statutory health insurer will then cover the costs of the abortion. There will be no obligation to attend counselling, but a reliable counselling service is, of course, still offered to those who need to discuss their situation in a safe space. It is not always necessary that an indication is reported to the police. However, for girls who are under 15 years of age, a criminological indication always applies.

Abortion in a foreign country

If you are planning to have your abortion performed in a foreign country, the legal requirements of that country will apply. Your insurance provider will not cover the costs in this instance. According to German law, you will not be punished if you have evidence of attending mandatory counselling in a state-recognised center before the procedure.

Counselling offer

The decision about whether to continue or terminate the pregnancy is one that only you can make - no one is allowed to make the decision for you or force you to make a decision! Take as much time as you need to decide. This serious decision deserves careful consideration. This also applies to minors: neither continuing the pregnancy nor having an abortion can be imposed against their will. A minor is also capable, based on their subjective value system, of deciding for or against an abortion and thus for or against motherhood.

Important: Minors are allowed to attend counseling sessions by themselves to discuss their situation. The counselors, who are bound by confidentiality, support and assist minors in all matters related to pregnancy.

Contact details for the counselling center:

Imprint:

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Markmannsgasse 7
50667 Köln

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