



# **Information guide**

## **PREGNANCY TERMINATION BY SURGERY**



Clinique des femmes  
de l'Outaouais

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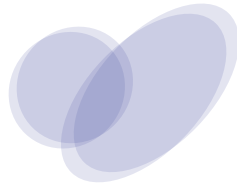
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You can call the Clinique des femmes at 819 778 2055 Monday to Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. If you have any medical concerns outside these times, contact Info-santé by dialling 811, option 1.



## INTRODUCTION

You have decided not to go on with this pregnancy. You have the right to make that choice, abortion being legal in Canada since 1988.

For some people, the decision is relatively easy to make; for others, it is more difficult.

Your decision will be respected by all the staff here at the Clinique des femmes. We are skilled at our jobs and will treat you with care and understanding.

Our role is to provide you with an abortion in the very best of conditions, both medically and for you as an individual. All our services are strictly confidential.

We will call you by your first name in order to create a respectful and equal exchange. If you wish to be addressed differently, please inform the receptionist. You may also indicate your pronouns and we will abide by your wishes.

We offer abortions by surgery and by medication. You have received this guide because you have decided on a surgical abortion or because the medical team suggested this method.

This guide will provide you with the information you need to properly prepare for your abortion. Please keep it to refer to in case you have any doubts about what is or is not normal after the procedure. A full version of the pamphlet is also available on line at [www.cliniquedesfemmes.com](http://www.cliniquedesfemmes.com).

If you have any questions or concerns, we prefer that you call us at the clinic first, since abortion is our specialty.

We are here for you, at every stage of the process, from making your decision, to prior, during and after the procedure. If you are worried or have any questions, do not hesitate to call us.

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La Clinique des femmes de l'Outaouais is a non profit feminist organization founded in 1981. It offers health services in family planning, in particular, pregnancy termination and contraception.

We offer a wide range of care, information, awareness, education and referral services. We work with health and community organizations to ensure a continuum of sexual and reproductive health services. In addition, we defend freedom of choice in exercising a monitoring role, in collaboration with organizations that share similar objectives.

Our philosophy is expressed in four main principles:

- Accept every person unconditionally by recognizing and respecting their personal circumstances.
- Support people in their choices and the course they take.
- Ensure that our services are fully accessible.
- Adapt our services to the needs of each person.

We are concerned about creating a safe and inclusive environment for all people who could benefit from our services.

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Two appointments are necessary for the procedure:

### **3.1 Initial appointment**

On this first visit, you will meet with a nurse, who will complete your medical file, take a blood sample to determine your blood type and do an ultrasound to assess the stage of pregnancy. It is not necessary to drink water or to have a full bladder for the ultrasound. The ultrasound image cannot be given to you at this appointment because it has to be read and signed by a doctor.

The nurse will first see you in private. Afterwards, if you wish, the person accompanying you can be present for part of the meeting.

This first visit will last approximately 45 minutes. The nurse will explain how the pregnancy is terminated and the risks associated with the procedure. You will have the opportunity to discuss contraception and to talk about your decision, if you want to. For many people, this is a chance to speak to a neutral, understanding person.

Feel free to ask us any questions that you have and let us know about any concerns you may have. Any question is a good one!

You will get to know who the staff are and the layout of the clinic, and this should help you be more relaxed on the day of your procedure.

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If you are more than 12 weeks pregnant, your cervix will need to be prepared with laminaria tents or misoprostol tablets. This may entail an additional appointment prior to the procedure.

If you are ambivalent or feel the need to talk to someone about your decision, you can ask for another appointment.

### **3.2 Day of the procedure**

Plan on being at the clinic for 1 to 2 hours. You can have a light meal up until 6 hours before the procedure. You can drink water, apple juice, clear tea or black coffee (no milk) up to 2 hours before your appointment time.

You must be accompanied by someone on the day of the procedure. The person accompanying you will have to stay in the waiting room until you leave the clinic. To comply with medical standards and confidentiality, that person is not allowed in the procedure or recovery rooms.

A nurse will be with you all the time to take care of you, help you relax and explain what is going on.

Before the procedure, the nurse will check your medical file. She will review and have you sign our consent form and will give you an antibiotic and an anti-inflammatory medication. She will help you get positioned on the examining table. She will do an ultrasound and take your blood pressure. An IV line will be inserted and will remain in place until you leave.

You will then meet the doctor who will be performing your procedure. You will have the opportunity to ask the doctor questions and ask for a prescription for a method of contraception.

You will receive two intravenous medications. They are very effective painkillers and relaxants. Because of the strong effect of these medications, you will need to be accompanied by an adult for 24 hours following the procedure. Make sure that you are not alone with young children.

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You must not drive a vehicle or sign important documents during the 24 hours following the procedure.

The procedure takes about 10 minutes. To begin, the doctor will do a gynecological examination to determine the position and size of your uterus. Then a speculum will be inserted to gently open the vagina and permit visual inspection of the cervix.

The doctor will take a swab for chlamydia and gonorrhea screening, two sexually transmitted infections. We do not test for any other sexually transmitted diseases such as AIDS or hepatitis.

The doctor will then proceed to administer the local anesthetic by injecting Xylocaine into the cervix. You will not (or hardly) feel these injections.

The doctor will then gradually dilate the cervix. At that point, you may feel cramps similar to menstrual cramps. They will not last long and will be quickly eased by the medication.

Next, the contents of the uterus will be aspirated. A light curettage may then be done, depending on the technique used.

The procedure is then over. You will no longer be pregnant. If you like, the doctor can insert an intrauterine device (IUD) or a contraceptive implant immediately after the procedure.

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If your blood type is negative, a vaccine will be administered to avoid problems in subsequent pregnancies. An information leaflet on Anti-D RH Immunoglobulin can be provided to you if you require more information on this topic.

All our instruments are sterilized. There is no risk of contamination from one patient to another.

### Recovery room

You will walk to the recovery room. You may sit or lie down there. A nurse will monitor you and make sure that you are comfortable. You will then be able to eat and drink.

You will remain in the recovery room for at least 30 minutes before you can leave the clinic. This is when the person accompanying you will take over and look after you.

You will probably be able to resume your normal activities the next day. If you have a physically demanding job, it is recommended that you take an additional day off.

The doctor can give you a note to justify your absence from work or school for up to three days.

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## POTENTIAL RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS

We use a technique that is recognized as being very safe. However, as with all medical procedures and treatments, there are possible complications. Complications related to abortions are very rare and generally easy to treat. We tell you about these risks for legal reasons so that you can sign an informed consent, as with any medical procedure.

Here are the complications that may occur, in order of frequency:

### **Retention and incomplete abortion:**

Placental tissues or membranes may remain in the uterus despite the quality of the procedure. This is called “retention.” In very rare cases, a pregnancy may continue after the procedure. You can do a pregnancy test 4 weeks after the procedure. If you are worried, call us.

### **Infection:**

Despite all the precautions, people sometimes spontaneously develop an infection of the uterus or fallopian tubes. If you develop one or more signs of infection, that is, fever, abdominal pain or odorous vaginal discharge, call us or see your doctor. An infection treated rapidly with antibiotics is generally of no consequence.

### **Hemorrhage:**

It is unlikely that a hemorrhage will occur during the procedure with the aspiration method. If it were to occur, we have medication to quickly stop any abnormal bleeding. In the following days, if you fill a maxi pad every half hour for three consecutive hours, go to the emergency department at a hospital right away.

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### **Damage to the uterus or cervix:**

Damage to the uterus or cervix, such as perforations or lacerations, are rare and generally of no consequence. This complication may necessitate a stay in hospital for observation. Healing is usually spontaneous without any surgical intervention.

### **Allergic reaction to medication:**

You must tell us of any drug allergy or intolerance. We will also question you about this. The risk of a reaction to the pharmaceutical products we use does exist, just as it does for any medication available from a pharmacy. In the event of an allergic reaction, we will be able to intervene.

### **Danger of infertility:**

An untreated complication could cause a fertility problem. These days, the risk is very low. However, be sure to watch out for any signs of infection.

An abortion, provided under safe conditions by a trained physician, includes a minimal risk of death.

We will not take any risks with your health or safety. This is why some people with particular problems will have to be referred to a hospital for their abortion.

If you have any questions or concerns, do not hesitate to call us.

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## AFTER THE PROCEDURE AND IN THE DAYS THAT FOLLOW

### 5.1 Advice for when you are back at home

- If you have young children, plan on having someone look after them for 24 hours.
- Eat whatever you like, and drink lots.
- You can resume your normal activities the next day.
- Avoid overly intense physical activities for a few days.
- Take a rest if you feel the need for it.
- Avoid alcohol, narcotics and drugs for 48 hours following the procedure to avoid any reaction to the medications used.

### 5.2 Prevention of infection

If you were to contract an infection, it would be in the days following the procedure.

To reduce the risk of infection, for a period of 7 days:

- Do not put anything in your vagina:
  - No sexual relation with penetration
  - No tampon or keeper
  - No vibrator
  - No douche or vaginal deodorant
- Use sanitary pads only.
- Do not go swimming in a pool or lake.
- Do not go in a whirlpool or hot tub.
- You can take a shower or bath at home.

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### 5.3 Bleeding

Bleeding varies with each person and from one procedure to another for the same person.

- It usually starts after the procedure or in the next 3 or 4 days.
- It may be heavy for a few days and then continue for up to 3 or 4 weeks, rarely longer.
- It may come and go.
- Clots may be passed, and the discharge may be red or brownish in colour.
- It may seem heavier when you get up in the morning, when you go to the toilet or if you are very active physically.
- Heavy bleeding may be caused by overly intense physical activity, lifting heavy items, consumption of alcohol or drugs, or taking medications containing acetylsalicylic acid, such as Aspirin or Midol.

- People who are accustomed to using tampons may think that they are bleeding more heavily when using sanitary pads.
- Some people do not bleed at all.

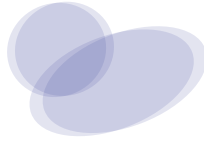
If you are worried, call us.

### 5.4 Cramps

It is normal to have cramps after an abortion. It may worry some if they have never felt them before. Cramps can occur for 2 to 3 weeks after the procedure and be stronger than menstrual cramps. Many people complain about an increase in cramps between the 3rd and 5th day after the procedure.

Some people will not have any cramping, while others may feel pressure in the lower abdomen or pain in the lower back or thighs.

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To ease cramping:

- Take two tablets of ibuprofen every 4 to 6 hours, or one tablet of naproxen every 8 to 12 hours if you have no contraindications to taking these medications. Be sure to follow the dosage indicated on the medication bottle. Avoid medications containing acetylsalicylic acid, such as Aspirin.
- Apply heat to your lower abdomen using a hot water bottle, a heating pad or a magic bag.
- Do light physical activity. For example, you could go for a walk or climb stairs.
- Stretch out by bending your knees and bringing them up close to your body.
- Drink warm liquids.

If the cramping persists despite these remedies or if you are concerned, call us.

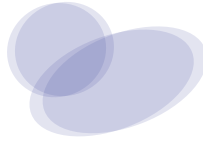
## 5.5 Hormonal changes

The first 2 or 3 days after the procedure may be easy, but then you may experience a period of greater discomfort.

Between the 3rd and 5th day following the abortion:

- Cramps may become more intense.
- Bleeding may be heavier and you may pass clots.
- Your breasts may become engorged and may leak a bit for a few days.
- You may feel bloated.
- You may become constipated.
- Your temperature may go up slightly to 38.5 °C or 101.3 °F for 24 hours.
- You may be a little depressed or feel like crying.

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These symptoms should not last more than 48 hours and should be relieved if you do the following:

- Rest.
- Apply heat to your abdomen.
- Take 2 tablets of ibuprofen every 4 to 6 hours or 1 tablet of naproxen every 8 to 12 hours if you have no contraindications to taking these medications. Be sure to follow the dosage indicated on the medication bottle. Avoid medications containing acetylsalicylic acid, such as Aspirin.
- Wear a tight fitting bra and avoid massaging your breasts.

Every person is different, and every abortion a person has is different. Some will have no problems whatsoever after the procedure; others will find it more difficult even when there are no complications.

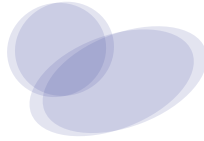
If you are worried, call us.

## **5.6 Pregnancy symptoms**

Most pregnancy symptoms will disappear in the first week.

- Nausea and vomiting should stop within 24 hours.
- Your breasts may remain sensitive and swollen for up to 1 week.
- Your abdomen may get bigger before it gets smaller. This may take up to 2 weeks.
- Some people are tempted to take a pregnancy test after the procedure. Normally, a pregnancy test becomes negative 4 weeks after the procedure. It is unusual, but tests may remain positive for up to 6 weeks after the procedure. If the pregnancy symptoms continue and the pregnancy test remains positive beyond 4 weeks, it is very important to call us.

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If the pregnancy symptoms continue or you are worried, call the Clinique des femmes right away.

### **5.7 Next menstrual periods**

If you are not taking hormonal contraception, menstruation should resume 4 to 6 weeks after the procedure. Your first period may be different from your regular periods. Cramps may be stronger, and you may pass clots or the discharge may be brownish in colour. This is normal.

You are fertile immediately after the procedure, even before your next period. Therefore, there is a risk of pregnancy if you have intercourse without using some method of contraception.

### **5.8 Follow-up appointment**

If you have a family doctor, we recommend that you go for a follow up 4 to 6 weeks after the procedure. We will give you a form that you can give to your doctor during the follow-up appointment.

If you do not have a family doctor or if you do not want to talk to him or her about your abortion, you can schedule a checkup here at the Clinique des femmes 4 to 6 weeks after the procedure. Call us 1 week after your abortion to make the appointment.

### **5.9 Problems can occur**

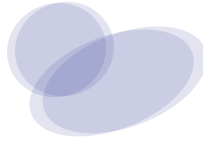
As with any medical procedure, there is a risk of complications with the termination of pregnancy. They are rare and usually easy to treat.

You need to call the Clinique des femmes or see a doctor if you experience any of the following problems:

- High temperature (above 38.5 °C or 101.3 °F) for a few hours. It is very important to take your temperature if you feel feverish because feeling warm does not necessarily mean that you have a fever.

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Severe and persistent pain in the lower abdomen not relieved by taking analgesics at regular intervals.

You need to go to the emergency department at a hospital if you have: Very heavy bleeding, such as a super absorbent sanitary pad that is soaked every half hour for more than 3 hours.

If you have any complications after your procedure, we want to know about it.

### **5.10 Take care of yourself**

Your emotions

You are likely experiencing some strong emotions at times. Every person may experience different emotions, and this is normal. Many people feel relieved after the procedure, which does not mean that they might not feel sad, disappointed, guilty or alone or have a feeling of loss.

Some people will go through a period of mourning. Sadness is a healthy emotion, and it will subside with time.

You may also feel that you are more mature and more responsible or even feel proud for making an important decision.

For many people, this experience is an opportunity to think about their life, to get to know themselves better and to become more assertive.

If you want to talk about what you are feeling, whether now or later on, do so. It is good to share with someone you trust. Your emotional health is just as important as your physical health.

You can also call us, and we can set up an appointment or refer you to other services that could help you. We offer individual and group support appointments.

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## Your sexuality

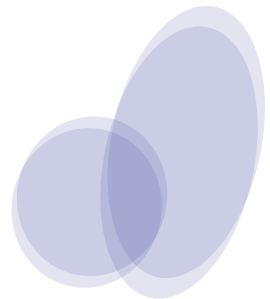
You can resume sexual activity after 7 days. Some people, however, may experience cramps and bleeding during penetration for up to 1 or 2 months after the procedure.

Remember that you are fertile immediately after the abortion and that you need to take precautions by using some form of contraception.

After a pregnancy termination, you may notice changes in your sexual activity, for example, you may not have any desire to make love for a period of time even though there is no medical contraindication.

Listen to your body, and take time to regain your sexual desire.

If you are unhappy with any aspects of your sexuality, here too, take the time to talk about it and find a solution.



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## WHAT YOU NEED TO DO ON THE DAY OF YOUR PROCEDURE

It is very important to be on time for your appointments. If you are unable to do so, let us know in advance by calling 819 778 2055, extension 122.

Your appointments are:

\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.

Have nothing to eat after \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m. (Only water, apple juice, black coffee and clear tea (no milk) are allowed after that time.)

Have nothing to drink after \_\_\_\_\_ a.m./p.m.

Bring with you:

- Your valid medical insurance card, your temporary certificate or your proof of coverage by the Interim Federal Health Program for refugees. If you do not have it with you, you will have to pay for the cost of the procedure.
- Comfortable clothing. Be sure the top has short sleeves.
- Sanitary napkins and underwear suited to holding a pad (no g strings or thongs).
- Your pumps if you are asthmatic.
- If possible, a donation to the Clinique des femmes (cash, Visa or Interac). It is a show of solidarity toward other people who might not otherwise have access to the clinic's services.

Instructions:

- You can have a light meal, for example, toast and a clear liquid up until 6 hours before the procedure.
- You can drink water, apple juice, clear tea or black coffee (no milk) up to 2 hours before your appointment time.
- You must have someone accompany you home because of the medication you receive during the procedure. However, no one can accompany you in the procedure room or the recovery room.
- Avoid alcohol or street drugs for 48 hours before the procedure in order to prevent serious complications.
- Do not take Aspirin within 3 days of the procedure and 7 days afterwards. If you need to take Aspirin every day for medical reasons, let the nurse know at your initial appointment.
- Take your usual medications on the morning of the procedure with a sip of water.
- Do not drive a vehicle or sign any legal or important documents for 24 hours after the procedure. Make sure that you are not alone with young children for 24 hours after the procedure.

If you are worried or have any questions, call us. We are here to help.