

Abortion: Supporting your partner or friend



the women's
the royal women's hospital

Your partner or friend has decided to have an abortion. There are a number of things you can do to support them at this time.

We asked patients of the Abortion and Contraception Service at the Women's what practical support they found useful or helpful following their decision to have an abortion. The following is based on their responses.

Practical support you can offer

- Drive your partner or friend to hospital and pick them up after the procedure - talk with them about these arrangements before the procedure day.
- Help or take on extra responsibilities after the procedure - childcare, cooking, etc.
- Help with expenses including surgery fees, blood tests, hospital costs etc.

Emotional support you can offer

- Let your partner or friend know that you will support them before and after the abortion.
- They may still want to talk about the decision to someone who can listen and not judge, so if you can support this and provide reassurance, they may find this supportive.
- As it is a medical procedure, they may feel anxious and so could benefit from having a caring person there for them.

What the Women's can offer

At the Women's we aim to fully inform people about the procedure at their medical consultation. This gives them the opportunity to ask questions or express any concerns they have and to be treated with respect and dignity.

If your partner or friend has specific fears or worries that persist and you do not feel able to help, then you may encourage them to contact Social Work for more support.

Support after the abortion

- Be ready to pick them up from hospital after the procedure - the hospital will call you when they are ready to go home.
- Arrange to stay with them, preferably overnight. This is important if they have had a general anaesthetic.
- Read the medical information sheet given by staff about post-abortion care; keep it in a handy place.
- Ask your partner or friend what they would like to do that evening - sleep, relax, talk?
- They may feel sick or tired afterwards - help by doing household tasks.
- Just like before the abortion, offer to discuss any concerns or feelings they may have. They may not want to talk straight away so let them know you are around to talk to at any stage.
- Accept that they may have mixed feelings about the abortion - relief, some sadness or curiosity about what happens next. This is normal. If they want to talk further to someone or if either of you begin to worry that feelings are becoming more intense and less manageable, consider talking with friends, family, unplanned pregnancy social workers, private counsellors, or psychologists.

More about how some people feel after an abortion

Your partner or friend may experience a range of positive and negative reactions after an abortion. They may have:

- a re-enforced sense of control over their life
- a sense that it has made your relationship stronger
- improved knowledge and understanding about fertility and contraception
- discovered that they might want to have a child, when it is the right time
- improved their ability to make important decisions
- mixed feelings and a range of emotions
- a sense of relief that they have made the decision and can begin to move on.
- feel sad at having decided to have an abortion, particularly if they felt attached to the pregnancy or to the idea of having a child. Feeling sad might not mean they have made the wrong decision but that they recognise they have made a very difficult decision.

Other feelings your partner or friend may experience include:

- worry about their health or the effect the decision has had on your relationship
- guilt because they feel that they have done something that society or someone they know might disagree with
- anger if they feel they carried more of the responsibility for the decision or towards themselves for getting pregnant
- disappointment if they felt there was a lack of support from others.

Being able to express these feelings in a safe and supportive environment can be helpful. They may need reassurance that they made the right decision, based on the circumstances at the time. Counselling after the abortion may help to remind them that they made the best decision they could in a difficult situation.

If your partner or friend had their abortion at the Women's, you can contact the Abortion and Contraception Social Workers if you think counselling after the abortion or a referral to another appropriate counsellor could be helpful.

If you or your partner or friend are concerned about their recovery from the abortion, for example, if they have bleeding or extreme pain, it is important to see your local doctor or go to your nearest hospital emergency department as soon as possible.

For more information

If your friend or partner had their abortion at the Women's:

Abortion and Contraception Service

The Royal Women's Hospital
(03) 8345 2831

www.thewomens.org.au/pv-abortion-contraception

Other support services

1800MyOptions

1800 696 784

www.1800myoptions.org.au

Sexual Health Victoria

(03) 9257 0100

www.shvic.org.au

MensLine Australia

24hour Telephone and Online Counselling Service

1300 78 99 78

www.mensline.org.au

Useful websites

The Women's website

www.thewomens.org.au

Children by Choice

www.childrenbychoice.org.au

Better Health Channel

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your or your baby's healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you or your baby require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.
© The Royal Women's Hospital 2022