

# Care after a termination of pregnancy

This information sheet aims to answer some commonly asked questions about self-care after a termination of pregnancy/

**IMPORTANT:** This is general information only.  
Ask your doctor or midwife about what care is right for you.

A medical termination is when you take tablets and a surgical termination is when you have an operation to end (terminate) your pregnancy. Whether you had tablets or an operation you may have questions about what is 'normal' afterwards. The answers to many common questions are similar for both types of termination.

## Is infection common?

Less than 1 in 100 women get an infection after a termination of pregnancy. Signs of infection include a fever, chills, feeling unwell or having a vaginal discharge that smells bad. If you experience any of these contact your healthcare provider. There are simple things you can do to help prevent infection.

- Use sanitary pads rather than tampons
- Do not put anything in your vagina—including not having sex for at least 2 weeks
- Avoid vaginal douching (flushing water, or any other fluid, inside your vagina)
- Avoid baths or swimming (you can shower as normal)

## Is breast soreness 'normal'?

Some women have tender breasts after a termination of pregnancy. The further along the pregnancy was, the more likely you are to experience this. You may even have a small amount of milk coming from your breasts. The pregnancy hormones that cause the tenderness and milk production will gradually decrease over a few weeks.

To help with the symptoms you can:

- Avoid stimulating your nipples
- Wear a firm and supportive bra
- Use cold packs on your breasts
- Take simple pain medication (e.g. paracetamol or ibuprofen)

If these simple tips do not help, then talk to your GP about medications that can help stop your breasts producing milk.

## What is 'normal' bleeding?

Some vaginal bleeding is normal after a termination. The amount of blood and the time bleeding lasts is different for everyone. Bleeding usually decreases/slowly over a few weeks. Your first period usually comes 4 to 6 weeks after your termination. If bleeding is continuous and heavy (more than 3 soaked maxi pads within 3 hours) go and see your health professional urgently.

Normal bleeding can:

- Last up to 2 weeks after a surgical termination and up to six weeks after a medical termination
- Have clots or there may be no clots
- Stop and start
- Be bright red or brownish in colour
- Be not very much at all

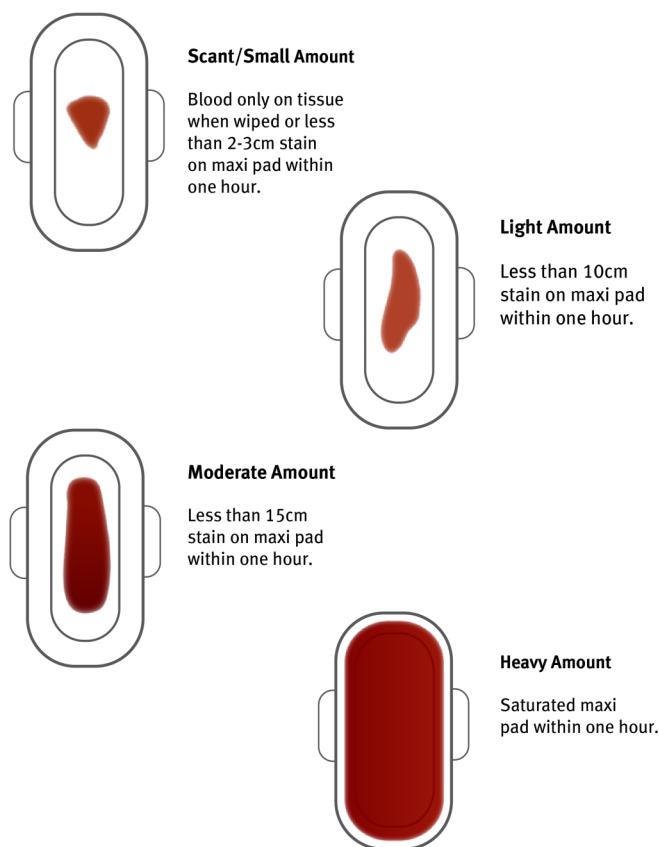


Diagram of estimated blood loss after termination of pregnancy



## How much pain is normal?

Mild pain, similar to period pain and cramping, is normal. If it does not improve with simple pain relief medications or techniques seek help from your health care professional.

To help with pain you can:

- Take over the counter pain medicines (analgesia) such as paracetamol and/or ibuprofen
- Use hot packs or hot water bottles
- Gently massage your lower abdomen in a circular motion while sitting on the toilet (this may also help to pass any blood clots)



Picture of circular abdominal massage for blood clot expulsion and pain relief.

## When can you have sex again?

Avoid vaginal intercourse while you are still bleeding. This helps prevent infection. Aim to wait until at least 2 weeks after the termination before having sex again.

## When can you start contraception?

You can get pregnant immediately after a termination so if you are not ready for another pregnancy, start contraception immediately. You can start any method of contraception straight after your termination. Talk to your health care provider about the type of contraception that is right for you.

## What about having a child in the future?

Having a termination of pregnancy does not affect your ability to get pregnant in the future.

## When can you return to normal activities?

Most women can return to their normal activities the day after the termination. Avoid heavy lifting or tiring exercise for at least one week. Remember to eat a diet with a wide variety of fruit and vegetables and aim to have at least 6–8 glasses of water each day. Take any antibiotics, contraception, or other medicines prescribed for you.

## Is it normal to feel sad after a termination?

Women experience a variety of emotions after a termination and they are all normal. There is no 'right' way to feel. Feelings of relief, elation, sadness, anxiousness and depression are common. Some of these emotions may be stronger due to the hormonal changes which occur during the first week after a termination. If you feel that you need support, or you are struggling to cope, it may be helpful to talk with someone. This may be someone close to you, or you might want to talk with your healthcare provider or a counsellor.

### Comfort, counselling, support & information

**13HEALTH** (13 432584) is a phone line that provides health information, referral and services to the public.

[www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health](http://www.qld.gov.au/health/contacts/advice/13health)

**Pregnancy, Birth & Baby Helpline** 1800 882 436 (free call) offers free, confidential, professional information and counselling for women, their partners and families relating to issues of conception, pregnancy, birthing and postnatal care.

[www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline](http://www.health.gov.au/pregnancyhelpline)

**Lifeline** 13 11 14 Lifeline offers a telephone crisis support service to anyone. [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

**Children by Choice** 1800 177 725 (free call) provides free, confidential and non-judgmental pregnancy options counselling, information and referrals across Queensland, including post-abortion counselling [www.childrenbychoice.org.au](http://www.childrenbychoice.org.au)

**Marie Stopes Australia** 1300 401 926 (free call) for 24 hour aftercare advice, nursing support, counselling referral and contraception provision and advice

**1300MHCALL Mental Health Access Line** 1300 642 255 (free call) will link you confidentially to your nearest public health mental health support service in Queensland

**Pregnancy Counselling Link** 1800 777 690 (free call) offers a free 24 hour counselling support service [www.pcl.org.au](http://www.pcl.org.au)

**Harrison's Little Wings** 0408 648 759 offers information and support, resources and peer support for women and families with a high risk pregnancy [harrisonslittlewings.org.au](http://harrisonslittlewings.org.au)

**Family Planning Alliance Australia** provides comprehensive information on family planning contraceptive options available in Australia [www.familyplanningallianceaustralia.org.au](http://www.familyplanningallianceaustralia.org.au)