



conifer

Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare Services

City Health Care Partnership CIC

a co-owned business

Counselling and Support

Services available for women
with an unplanned pregnancy

This leaflet has been produced to give you general information. It is not intended to replace discussion between you and your doctor, but may act as a starting point. If after reading it you have any concerns or require further explanation, please discuss this with a member of the healthcare team who has been caring for you.

NHS

Making the decision

All women who access our pregnancy advisory services are offered information about the counselling and support services we offer. We understand the decision to end a pregnancy is not an easy one.

IF YOU ARE STRUGGLING WITH YOUR DECISION THEN ONE OF OUR SUPPORT STAFF MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU.

Some women are very sure about how they wish to proceed with their unplanned pregnancy, others may feel scared and confused and it is often one of the hardest decisions you will have to make.

Support staff are trained nurses, social workers and counsellors who will give you time and help to consider your choices so that you can make the right decision for you.

Support workers will:

- Listen to you
- Ensure that you have all the information you need to make your decision
- Support you through the decision you make
- Assist you if you need to access counselling before, during or following your procedure

After Termination Support

Following a termination, women can experience a variety of emotions and feelings, some of which can be very upsetting. Although you may have chosen to end the pregnancy, it can sometimes be a confusing and painful emotional experience. You may feel relieved but also quite sad.

It is important to remember that we are all in different situations and for some people it takes a long time for these feelings to settle down and for others it may take no time at all.

SOMETIMES THERE ARE FEELINGS OF LOSS, BUT THESE NORMALLY FADE OVER TIME.

Talking to someone:

After your termination, you may want to talk to someone who can listen and understand. It is often easier to talk to someone who you do not know and who you can be really honest with. This is how counsellors may be able to help.

The counselling service offers short-term counselling to support women before, during and following the procedure.

Your counsellor will:

- Listen to you with respect and without judging you.
- Offer you time and space.
- Use their skills to help you talk through and explore your thoughts and feelings, so that you can deal with the problems or concerns you are struggling with.

Your counsellor will not: offer you instructions or solutions.

Counselling may help you through a difficult time and give you the strength and support to make a very difficult decision.

The counselling service is based locally and most counselling sessions take place there. A venue will be arranged with you when counselling is offered.

If you require on-going and longer-term support we can arrange that.

How to contact the Counselling and Support Service

Counselling is not something that we force on you and what is right for one person may not be right for the next person. During your clinic appointment and at other times the staff will ask you if you would like to see/speak to our counsellor.

If you have any doubts or anxieties about your decision, please access counselling **(01482) 336338** before making any final decisions. Going ahead with the procedure when uncertain may affect you afterwards.

**COUNSELLING IS NOT
SOMETHING THAT WE
FORCE ON YOU**

If you wish to speak to a counsellor after you have had your procedure, please contact the service on **(01482) 336 338** and we will make a referral.

If at any time you need someone to speak to urgently for support, out of office hours ring **(01482) 617 560**

Some frequently asked questions

How will I feel after the pregnancy has ended?

Feelings following termination are different for everyone. Some women feel a sense of loss, even when they believe their decision was right. It is common for women to feel sensitive and irritable for a few weeks after the procedure.

Initially you may feel a sense of relief and then later other feelings may include a mixture of sadness, numbness, guilt, grief, anxiety and anger.

Some women may experience other problems for example:

- Not wanting to be near pregnant women or young babies
- Tension in their relationships
- Bad dreams or nightmares
- Wanting another baby straight away
- Avoiding baby pictures in magazines or on the television
- Loss of self esteem

These are common problems which usually subside with time. However, it is important that you seek help if you think they are becoming unmanageable for you.

There is a lot of discussion in the media about the effect of abortion on mental health. A large review of studies in 2011 reported the rates of mental health problems for women with an unwanted pregnancy were the same whether they had a termination or gave birth. The factors associated with increased rates of mental health problems for women in the general population following birth and following abortion were similar.

What if I change my mind?

Remember, even if you have booked a date for your procedure, you can still change your mind right up until the procedure is started. If you have chosen to have a medical procedure (tablet) you must be completely sure of your decision before swallowing the tablet. If you have chosen a surgical procedure, again you must be completely sure before swallowing the tablet given to you before theatre. If you do change your mind, it is important that you tell a member of nursing staff as soon as possible, in order to prevent these tablets being given. We say this because of the risk of the tablets causing an abnormality if the pregnancy continues after.

Should I tell my friends and relatives?

You may need time to think about whom to tell. Some women benefit from sharing feelings with friends and relatives. However, the choice is yours and you may prefer to keep these thoughts to yourself as sometimes it is a hard enough decision to make and not everyone can understand or maintain confidentiality.

How soon can I have sex afterwards?

It is important that sex should be avoided for about two weeks or until the bleeding has settled down. This is to reduce the risk of infection. However, if you choose otherwise please use a condom as this will reduce the risk of infection.

The termination is affecting my relationship, what can I do?

It can be very difficult to cope with an unplanned pregnancy, particularly if you both have different expectations from your relationship. One of the hardest situations can be when there is a difference of opinion over continuing the pregnancy. It may be helpful to seek professional help if you find that your relationship is suffering. 'Relate' offer counselling to couples experiencing problems in their relationship. They can be contacted locally on **(01482) 329621**.

If you think that you might prefer to discuss your problems on an individual basis then you can discuss the availability of counselling with your G.P. Alternatively you can contact our counselling service for information on services available locally.

Will the fetus feel any pain?

Research shows that the stage at which pregnancy is ended in the UK is too early in the development of the fetus for pain to be felt.

Will I know the sex?

Not in early pregnancies (under 12 weeks) and not in later pregnancies if the procedure is surgical.

I still have lots of unanswered questions - who can I ask?

There may be questions you didn't ask at the clinic, or questions you have thought of since. If these questions are playing on your mind then you are welcome to ring the service. If your question cannot be answered on the spot, we will get back to you. You will find the contact details for Conifer below:

The Sexual Health Unplanned Pregnancy Service,

Conifer, Wilberforce Health Centre,
6-10 Story Street,
Hull, HU1 3SA
(01482) 336338

Contact numbers and useful information

These websites publish a lot of information for women.

Conifer Sexual and Reproductive Health Service

www.conifersexhealth.co.uk

Family Planning Association

www.fpa.org.uk

British Pregnancy Advisory Service

Tel: **03457 30 40 30**

www.bpas.org/bpaswoman

Marie Stopes Organisation

Tel: **0333 331 5489**

www.mariestopes.org.uk

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

www.rcog.org.uk

Leaflets available here: 'Abortion care; information for you' and 'Abortion and mental health – the O&G perspective'

Information about you

As part of your care, when you come to the clinic, information about you is shared between members of a healthcare team, some of whom you may not meet. It may be used to help train any staff involved in your care. Information we collect may also be used after you have been treated to help us to maintain and improve the quality of our care, to plan services, or to research into new developments.

We may pass on information to other health organisations to help improve the quality of care provided by the NHS generally.

All information is treated as strictly confidential, and is not given to anyone who does not need it. If you have any concerns please ask your doctor, or the person caring for you.

Under the Data Protection Act (1998), CHCP CIC is responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of any information we hold on you.

References

Clinical information in this booklet is taken from:

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists Evidence-based Guideline No 7. **The Care of Women Requesting Induced Abortion.** February 2011.

Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. **Induced Abortion and Mental Health: A systematic review of the evidence.** December 2011

Download the FREE Conifer app. Look for 'conifer sex health.'

