



Surgical Abortion

Surgical abortion is safe, quick and effective. Unlike medical abortion it involves a minor operative procedure.

There are two types of surgical abortion:

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1. Vacuum aspiration up to 15 weeks of pregnancy

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2. Dilatation and Evacuation – between 15 and 24 weeks of pregnancy

Vacuum aspiration may be done using a local anaesthetic (as in the dentist), with mild short sedation, or rarely general anaesthetic:

* The pregnancy is removed using gentle suction, through a narrow tube inserted through the vagina and in to the cervix (neck of the womb)

* The procedure is simple and complete

* Depending on the type of anaesthetic, the patient can leave unaccompanied

Dilatation and Evacuation applies to pregnancies later than 15 weeks:

* Medication is prescribed to prepare the cervix (neck of womb) and used the day before surgery or on the day of the procedure

* The procedure is carried out under general anaesthetic

* The pregnancy is removed using narrow forceps (like a long tweezers) through the neck of the womb (cervix)

The advantage of surgical abortion is that it is immediate, it takes between 3 and 5 minutes with little after effects, whereas medical abortion may result in unpredictable bleeding and takes 2-3 days in total from the time the first tablets are taken.

* Surgical abortion is more expensive than medical abortion as a procedure is involved.

Ultimately the type of procedure to have, that is medical or surgical abortion, is the woman's decision and both options should be offered and available.





IRELAND

Of the women from Ireland who travel to the UK to access abortion care, the majority who give Republic of Ireland addresses have surgical abortions.

In 2016, 78.1% of women who gave Republic of Ireland addresses at abortion care providers in England and Wales, accessed surgical abortion, whereas just 21.9% had a medical abortion¹.

This is usually attributed to the fact that women from Ireland have to travel to access these services legally, and there are constraints on the amount of time they have available to complete the procedure.



@Doctors4Choice

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References:

1. UK Department of Health, Abortion Statistics, England and Wales: 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/652083/Abortion_stats_England_Wales_2016.pdf



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