

Support after Choices Clinic

Chalmers Centre offers support for individuals or couples who wish to explore their feelings following an abortion.

Women who have had an abortion may experience a range of feelings. While many feel relief, others have feelings that can include emptiness, sadness, guilt or loss. These feelings may come immediately, or they can surface months or even years later. It can be difficult to talk to friends and family about this for fear of being judged or because of thoughts like 'I should be over it by now'. Being unable to express these feelings can lead to feelings of isolation and depression.

An unintended pregnancy and an abortion can be a testing time for couples. While relationships can be strengthened by sharing the experience, some couples can find it hard to communicate afterwards and may need support to maintain their relationship. Men may also experience difficulties following their partner going through an abortion and may struggle to know how to deal with these feelings.

The post abortion support service is provided by a health advisor, and offers women, men, or couples a safe environment in which to talk about their feelings and difficulties associated with the abortion. The service can help you clarify and express how you feel and find ways to help you cope. It can also help to identify whether you may need more intensive support such as therapy or counseling, and guide you towards services that can offer this.

You can be offered up to six 45 minute support sessions. Some people find they only need one session, while others find it helpful to have several. Your requirements will be discussed with you at your first session. We recommend waiting a minimum of 6 weeks following abortion before contacting the support service to allow time for your hormones to return to baseline.

You can refer yourself to this service by **phoning 0131 536 2105** and asking for a **post termination of pregnancy support appointment**. You will be contacted as soon as an appointment is available. There is a waiting list for this service, so if you are struggling to cope you should inform your GP.

Clients are asked to let the service know if they wish to cancel their appointment.



After care advice and support

Information for patients



Choices Clinic at Chalmers

Choices Mobile: 07765 395 887

If you have any questions or concerns, please call this number.

You will be able to speak to a nurse Monday-Friday 8:30am-4pm

If your call is not answered, please leave a message with your name, date of birth, telephone number and brief explanation of your concern and we will call you back as soon as possible.

Choices Secretaries: 0131 536 2105

Please use this number to change/cancel an appointment, or to book for ongoing contraception or for support after Termination of Pregnancy (TOP)

What to expect afterwards

Bleeding: This is variable and may last from a few days (minimum of 4 days) to a few weeks (up to 4 weeks). The bleeding may become spotting or be heavier than a normal period. We would advise against the use of tampons as there is a slight risk of introducing infection. Please use sanitary pads until the bleeding stops.

Most women with regular periods should expect to have their next period at one month after treatment. However this may not be the case dependant on your contraceptive choice. If your next period has not arrived by one month after treatment or if you are using a progestogen only method and are concerned that you may still be pregnant then please contact us.

Pain: Pain is subjective and varies between individuals. Usually the pain is mild to moderate and in the majority of cases can be relieved by paracetamol.

Discharge: If you have a smelly vaginal discharge this may be a sign of an infection. In most cases no abnormality is found. If you were offered a home sampling kit you can call for your results after 7 days. If you would like a home sampling kit to test for Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea please contact us on the mobile number above.

Pregnancy tests: Remember to do your low sensitivity pregnancy test (provided in your pack) 2 weeks after your treatment. Please follow the instructions, ensuring it is your first urine sample in the morning and you wait the full 5 minutes to read.

Unless you have specifically been advised by a nurse/doctor please **do not perform a shop bought pregnancy test for 6 weeks** following your abortion. It is likely to remain positive. If you are concerned about an ongoing or new pregnancy please call us.

Resuming sexual intercourse: We recommend avoiding sexual intercourse until your bleeding has stopped to reduce the risk of infection. Please make sure you have started using your chosen contraception (see next page).

Contraception

The majority of women are fertile immediately after this treatment and so you should start contraception on the day of/after the treatment. This should have been discussed during your consultation and a plan made between yourself and the nurse.

POP - 'the Mini Pill': We can safely prescribe the progestogen only pill (POP) to the majority of people without needing a physical assessment. You may have chosen this as your contraception going forwards, or it may have been given as a 'bridging' method until your implant/coil/injection is fitted/given. You will have been given an additional leaflet with these pills. It is important to remember the POP is 99% effective if taken correctly, however with 'typical use' this drops to 91% (around 9 in 100 women will get pregnant in a year).

LARC - Long acting reversible contraception: These are all over 99% effective (fewer than 1 in 100 women will fall pregnant in a year)

- Contraceptive implant - 'the rod'
- Intrauterine system (IUS) - hormonal coil (i.e. Mirena)
- Intrauterine device (IUD) - copper coil.

If you have chosen a LARC method of contraception please call 07765 395 887 or 0131 536 2105 to book this appointment. An implant can be inserted anytime from the day of your treatment onwards (you will need to wait 7 days for it to become effective if inserted more than 5 days after your treatment).

You can call to book a coil appointment anytime after your consultation but the appointment day must fall on/after the day you are due to do your follow up pregnancy test. There can be no risk of a new pregnancy so please abstain/take the POP/use condoms. You will be informed at the insertion appointment when your coil is effective. **You will be given priority access to these appointments in the weeks following your abortion.**

Other options: You may have opted for the combined contraceptive pill/patch/ring, contraceptive injection (the jag/Depo) or barrier methods (condoms, diaphragm), this should have been discussed with the nurse and a plan made for how you will access these methods.

Remember, there is a risk of a new pregnancy immediately following an abortion if no additional contraception is used.