

Englisch



**Information regarding termination
up to the 12th week of pregnancy**

Pregnant - What next?

Are you pregnant and considering a termination? This information is intended to help you make a well-informed decision.

It's your decision. Whether you want to continue or terminate the pregnancy is entirely up to you. No one is allowed to pressure you or influence you against your will.

Your right to self-determination is protected by law. Terminating a pregnancy is not a criminal offense in Germany if you follow these guidelines.

- A pregnancy can be terminated up to the 12th week of pregnancy after fertilization, which corresponds to the 14th week of pregnancy when calculated from the first day of the last menstrual period
- You are required by law to first receive counseling in a state-approved pregnancy counseling center. The counseling is free of charge and can be conducted anonymously upon request.
- Following the counseling, you will receive a certificate to prove your attendance, known as a "Beratungsschein". In order to receive this certificate, bring your passport or identity card with you to the counseling center.
- In the counseling center you will receive the addresses of medical practices or clinics which perform termination of pregnancy.
- There must be a three-day waiting period between the consultation and the termination. A termination of pregnancy can be performed on the fourth day after the consultation at the earliest.

The counselors are bound to confidentiality. They provide you with a safe environment that respects your decisions and supports you through professional counseling. This allows you to explore all your options openly and without any taboos and to obtain comprehensive information. This way, you can take your time to reflect on your personal situation and make an informed and independent decision.

The three-day waiting period. A time for reflection:

During the legally mandated three-day reflection period, you have the opportunity to carefully reconsider your decision and seek further counseling if needed.

Once you feel confident in your decision, you should schedule an appointment in a timely manner for a preliminary consultation at the practice or clinic of your choice. There, the procedure, potential risks, and necessary examinations will be discussed, any questions you may have will be answered, and all organizational arrangements will be made.

Cost of a termination of pregnancy

As a general rule, you must cover the costs of a pregnancy termination yourself if you have your own income. If you have little or no income of your own, you can apply for a certificate of cost coverage from your statutory health insurance provider. This also applies to those with private insurance; in that case, please contact any statutory health insurance provider.

The certificate must be obtained before the termination of pregnancy. To obtain it, you'll need to provide proof of your residence in Germany and your disposable income. Your partner's income is not taken into account; only your own financial circumstances are assessed.

The health insurance provider covers the costs of pre- and post-procedure examinations, as well as any necessary treatments in the event of complications.

Electronic patient file (ePA) and termination of pregnancy

The electronic patient file (ePA) makes it possible to store medical information digitally and allow doctors and other healthcare professionals in medical practices and clinics to view it. Patients can generally opt out of using the ePA by notifying their health insurance provider. In this case, no health data will be stored in the ePA.

Alternatively, patients can manage access to their ePA through an app. It is important to note that individual documents cannot currently be shared specifically with certain healthcare providers. If documents are hidden, they are no longer visible to any healthcare providers. Anyone who wants to decide for themselves which information is stored or visible in the ePA should check the ePA regularly after visits to medical practices or clinics and adjust the access and visibility settings as needed.

Special information for pregnant women considering a termination of pregnancy

- Information about a pregnancy termination can be stored in the ePA.
- These entries are not automatically protected by medical confidentiality, as they are stored in the system as personal medical data.
- Doctors remain bound by confidentiality and professional secrecy; other medical professionals may be able to access the entries under certain circumstances if you grant them access.
- For data protection reasons, some medical practices document termination of pregnancies only in very general terms, for example as a

“medical procedure.” However, even such entries can reveal certain information.

Note for pregnant minors

Children covered by statutory health insurance also receive an electronic patient file (ePA). For children under the age of 15, parents or legal guardians decide whether to object to the ePA or allow its use. During this time, they also manage access to the file and can view the information stored in it.

This access automatically expires when the young person turns 15. From that point on, young people can make their own decisions regarding their ePA and take over management of the file.

They can completely opt out of using the ePA; in this case, any data already stored will be deleted. If they wish to use the ePA, they must apply to their health insurance provider for their own login credentials in order to view and manage entries.

Young people can also choose to have a parent or legal guardian continue to manage the ePA. It is important to note that access can only be granted to one person at a time - not both parents and the child simultaneously.

If they do not set up their own access, medical data will still be stored, as doctors are legally required to document certain information. Personal access to and control over the stored data are only possible with their own access credentials.

In individual cases, doctors may decide to document certain information in very general terms if recording or disclosing it could jeopardize the child's well-being. This applies in particular to highly sensitive information such as a pregnancy or a termination of pregnancy.

Preliminary consultation in a medical practice or clinic

Please bring the following items to your first appointment at the practice or clinic:

- Proof of counseling from the counseling center (often referred to in German as a 'Beratungsschein')
- Cost coverage certificate from your statutory health insurance provider, if available (Kostenübernahmebescheinigung) or cash
- Your insurance card or medical treatment form and, if possible, a referral from the practice where the pregnancy was confirmed.
- If available, your blood-typing.

During this preliminary consultation, you will discuss with the doctor how the termination of pregnancy is performed and what risks are involved. Ask questions if there is anything you don't understand or if anything is causing you concern.

Bring an interpreter with you to every appointment at the medical practices or clinic if you have difficulty understanding German. You must be able to understand the preliminary consultation. Before the procedure, you will sign a consent form. You must also be able to communicate with the doctor during subsequent consultations, as your health is at stake.

The procedure of a termination of pregnancy

It is your choice to decide between two methods of terminating a pregnancy. However, a medical termination is only possible up to the 9th week of pregnancy, calculated from the first day of your last menstrual period. After that, the termination can only be performed surgically.

Medical termination of pregnancy

With the assistance of a doctor, a pregnancy may be terminated in the early stage by means of medication. This method does not require surgery or anesthesia, but it takes longer. Not all medical practices and clinics offer this method. Doctors who perform medical termination of pregnancy use different procedures. Either three visits to the medical practice or clinic are required, or you will receive the medication containing the second active ingredient, which you can take at home. In both cases, you will be given a phone number to call if you have any questions during the process.

The termination of pregnancy begins with taking the active ingredient mifepristone (brand name: Mifegyne®) at the medical practice or clinic in the presence of a doctor. Afterward, you will go home. Side effects such as nausea, vomiting and pain may occur. If necessary, get a doctor's certificate to excuse you from work. The doctor's certificate for your employer will not specify the reason for your absence.

The active ingredient mifepristone prevents further development of the pregnancy. In addition, the uterine lining and the amniotic sac containing the embryo are shed. The cervix opens and the uterus contracts. After approximately 24 hours, bleeding begins, similar to a normal menstrual period. In very few women, heavy or very heavy bleeding occurs. Use sanitary pads only for hygiene during the termination of pregnancy.

36 to 48 hours after taking mifepristone, you will take another medication. You will either take this medication at the medical practice or clinic or you may have been given it to take at home. It contains prostaglandins and causes the uterine lining and the embryo to be expelled through bleeding. It also enhances the effects of mifepristone. You will be given appropriate medication to treat side effects such as nausea, vomiting or pain.

It is recommended that you take good care of yourself and rest throughout the entire process.

Surgical termination of pregnancy

In this procedure, performed under general or local anesthesia, the uterine lining and the embryo are typically removed from the uterus using suction, a method known as suction curettage. Some doctors perform a curettage using a curette - a spoon-like instrument with blunt edges.

Please note: If the procedure is performed under general anesthesia, you are not allowed to eat, drink, smoke or chew gum for several hours prior to the procedure. This is very important!

You may be given a pill during the preliminary consultation that you must take a few hours before the procedure. This pill softens the cervix and makes it more easily dilated.

During the procedure, you will receive general or local anesthesia. The cervix is then carefully stretched a few millimeters so that a suction curettage can be inserted to terminate the pregnancy.

The doctor will then check to ensure that the uterine lining and the embryo have been completely removed. The actual procedure is completed in about 10 to 15 minutes. When it is complete, you can rest and recover in a designated room until your circulation returns to normal.

It is necessary for someone to accompany you on the way home, as you will not be fit to drive or to go home on your own. You must also ensure that you have someone to care for you for the next 24 hours. This person can assist you and call for help if you experience any complications following the procedure.

In the days following the termination of pregnancy, there will be changes to your hormones, and your breasts and abdomen may feel different. You may also experience a negative change in your mood. It is advised that you take it easy after the procedure and stay home from work. If necessary, get a doctor's certificate to excuse you from work. The doctor's certificate for your employer will not specify the reason for your absence.

Freedom of choice

You may change your decision at any time until the termination of pregnancy begins. In the case of a surgical termination, medical preparation often begins before the actual procedure with the administration of a medication (usually misoprostol). Therefore, before taking this medication, you should be certain that you wish to proceed with the termination.

If you decide against the termination, please inform the practice or clinic as soon as possible.

After the termination of pregnancy

Take it easy for the first few days after the procedure. Bleeding and abdominal pain are generally normal after a termination of pregnancy. Take pain relievers as needed for relief. If you have a fever over 38.5° C (100° F) or notice foul-smelling discharge, see your doctor. These could be signs of an infection.

To reduce the risk of infection after a surgical termination of pregnancy, it is advisable to avoid using tampons, having vaginal intercourse, taking baths, going to the pool, and using the sauna for the first few days. Your health is important. Be sure to keep your follow-up appointment and take good care of yourself.

Contraception

Your next menstrual cycle will begin directly following the termination of pregnancy. This means you can get pregnant again. Should you not want to get pregnant, start using a safe method of contraception that suits you. If you are unsure which contraception to use, or your partner doesn't agree with it, visit our contraception counseling center.

Special considerations

Criminological indication

If, from a medical perspective, there are compelling reasons to believe that the pregnancy was caused by rape or sexual abuse, the pregnancy may be terminated up to the 12th week after conception. To do so, a doctor must issue a medical indication. The costs of the termination of pregnancy are covered by health insurance.

There is no requirement to seek counseling. However, there are, of course, reliable counseling services available to discuss this life-changing situation in a safe environment. For a criminological indication, it is **not necessary** for the crime to have been reported to the police. For girls who have not yet reached the age of 14, the criminological indication always applies.

Termination of pregnancy in a foreign country

If you are planning to have your termination of pregnancy performed in a foreign country, the legal requirements of that country will apply. Your health insurance provider will not cover the costs in this instance. According to German law, you will not be punished if you have evidence of attending mandatory counseling in a state-recognized center before the procedure.

Counseling services

The decision about whether to continue or terminate the pregnancy is one that only you can make - no one is allowed to make the decision for you or force you to make a decision! Take as much time as you need to decide. This decision deserves careful consideration.

In principle, this also applies to minors: neither continuing the pregnancy nor having a termination of pregnancy can be imposed against their will. A minor is also capable, based on their subjective value system, of deciding for or against a termination of pregnancy and thus for or against motherhood. However, the law lays down specific provisions regarding the capacity to make decisions and give consent in the case of minors.

Important: Minors are allowed to attend counseling sessions by themselves to discuss their situation. The counselors, who are bound by confidentiality, support and assist minors in all matters related to pregnancy.

How to find us – counselling centres in North Rhine-Westphalia

Do you have questions about pregnancy and are you considering a termination? You can find our counselling centres in North Rhine-Westphalia here.



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