

RIGHT TO KNOW



Hands up if you've heard this before:
"Abortion is a safe, simple
medical procedure"

Imagine if your sister or a close female friend was about to have an operation. This operation isn't necessary to save her life, and its effects can never be undone once it is carried out. She goes to a clinic where she is told that this operation will be a quick fix and that it will provide a good outcome to the problem she is facing. But she isn't told the full facts about her condition, or about the risks associated with this operation.

Imagine if those who were responsible for providing your sister or friend with full and frank information about the risks of that operation didn't seem too bothered about the fact that your sister or friend wasn't being provided with this important information.

In addition, let's imagine your sister or friend wasn't provided with adequate information about alternatives to this operation- and there was also no cooling off period for her to pause and think properly through all of the irreversible outcomes associated with this procedure.

Would we think this was ok?

Wouldn't you want her to have all the important information she needed before going ahead with this irreversible, life changing procedure?

Our medical system, policy makers, and health code, under right 6¹, all recognise the importance of making truly informed and free decisions in healthcare. However, when it comes to the issue of abortion, these minimum standards are often not enough.

Many NZ women often end up making this life altering decision without having access to all of the important information they deserve to have.

Abortion isn't a risk-free procedure, and for many women it certainly isn't the quick fix it's often perceived to be, with a range of serious risks associated with it.

Terminating pregnancies can lead to reproductive problems, which can include subsequent premature births², miscarriages or even infertility.

In the worst case scenario abortion can even cause death to the woman - Australia recently experienced its first adult death as a result of medical abortion, which is supposed to be one of the safer methods of terminating a pregnancy.

Although this tragic scenario is something we have not yet seen in New Zealand, recent figures, obtained from the Ministry of Health under the Official Information Act, show that almost 900 New Zealand women were admitted to hospital between 2009 and 2011 for the treatment of complications following their abortions.

Women who obtain abortions are at increased risk of subsequent mental health issues, including major depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and drug and alcohol related problems³. Studies also indicate that post-abortive women are three times more likely to commit suicide⁴. This indicates that, for some women, an abortion causes severe and long-lasting psychological suffering.

Women are also more likely to experience severe emotional distress after having an abortion. Such emotional stress may not diminish with time – instead it may actually increase in many cases⁵.

Although every woman's experience is different, for a significant number of women the negative emotions following an abortion may not even manifest until many years after the event.

This unresolved emotional stress may negatively impact a woman's self-esteem in relationships and in parenting. In addition, women may not even realise that the abortion is the source of these negative emotions, and this can prolong the pain they experience, or even prevent them from properly resolving this pain in their lives.

Women have the right to know about all of the reasonable risks associated with abortion, and the harms that could result. They have the right to full and frank information, so that they can be empowered to make a free and fully informed choice.

Women also have the right to know about all the different options, not just that of abortion, that are available to them - options which, on discussion, may be more beneficial to their personal situation. This shouldn't be about the politicisation of information.

Instead women should be trusted with all of the available facts, and then allowed the freedom and space to make a properly informed decision. Let's trust women, and not hide important facts and information from them when they are faced with one of the most difficult and life altering decisions they will ever have to make.

To find out more information about the risks of abortion, visit our website: www.prolife.org.nz/righttoknow



[PROLIFE.ORG.NZ/RIGHTTOKNOW](http://www.prolife.org.nz/righttoknow)

ProLife Auckland | LifeChoice Vic | LifeChoice Canty

1. [http://www.hdc.org.nz/the-act--code/the-code-of-rights/the-code-\(full\)](http://www.hdc.org.nz/the-act--code/the-code-of-rights/the-code-(full))

2. Moreau C. et al. Previous induced abortions and the risk of very preterm delivery: results of the EPIPAGE study. *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology*. 2005 Feb 19; 112(4): 430-437.

3. Fergusson D. Abortion and mental health disorders: evidence from a 30-year longitudinal study. *The British Journal of Psychiatry* (2008) 193: 444-451

4. Suicides after pregnancy in Finland, 1987-94: register linkage study. *BMJ*. 1996 Dec 6; 313:1431

5. Major B, Cazzarelli C, et al. Psychological responses of women after first-trimester abortion. *Archives of General Psychiatry*. 2000 Aug; 57(8): 777-784.

