

# Kingston Health Sciences Centre

Centre des sciences de  
la santé de Kingston

## Welcome to the Women's Clinic



Hôpital  
Hotel Dieu  
Hospital



Hôpital Général de  
Kingston General  
Hospital

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## Welcome

Welcome to the Women's Clinic at Kingston General Hospital (KGH). Your decision to have an abortion may be very difficult. Staff at the Women's Clinic respect your decision. Our goal is to make you feel safe and comfortable while receiving the services that you need.

We are here to help you. If you have questions or want to talk to one of our staff members, including a social worker, call the Women's Clinic. You can call us Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

We book procedure appointments 3 days a week.

### Women's Clinic

Phone: (613) 548-2423

Hours: Monday to Friday 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

### This book explains...

- Who works in the clinic
- How abortions are done at KGH
- How to prepare for your abortion
- What happens during your visits to the clinic
- How to take care of yourself after the procedure

Take a few minutes to read this book. As you read it, you may want to make notes or write your questions on page 17.

## Meet your health care team

At the clinic, you will meet staff who have special training to help you. It is important that you make a decision that feels right for you. Please tell us if there is something you don't understand, or if you want more information.

### The secretary

- Takes patient referrals
- Arranges pregnancy tests as required
- Arranges ultrasound appointments, provides patients with results

### The nurse

- Provides emotional support
- Counsels you about your options by providing information about surgical and medical abortion
- Assists with the procedure
- Cares for you while you are recovering from the procedure
- Explains how to care for yourself after the procedure
- Counsels regarding future birth control
- Does a medical history and blood work

### The doctor

- Examines you to confirm that you are healthy enough for the procedure
- Tells you about the procedure and asks you to sign a consent form. This legal form gives the doctor your permission to do the procedure
- Orders blood tests
- Places misoprostol tablets in your vagina to open your cervix
- Counsels you about future birth control options and provides a prescription for the birth control method you choose
- Cervical swab for gonorrhea or chlamydia infections (if not already done)

### The social worker

If you need counseling at any time, the social worker is available to:

- Help you look at your options
- Provide emotional support for any feelings you may have about the procedure
- Help you and your family/support system handle conflict about your decision
- Counsel you if you have suffered sexual assault, physical assault, or sexual abuse
- Refer you to social or legal services, if needed

## Making your appointments

You can refer yourself or can be referred by a doctor.

### Referring yourself

You can make an appointment without seeing a doctor. Call the Women's Clinic at (613) 548-2423.

Please note that your age doesn't matter. Call the clinic with any questions or concerns surrounding your abortion.

### To change or cancel your appointments

If you need to change your appointment, call the Women's Clinic at (613) 548-2423.

All appointments are booked as soon as possible for patients.

You may also decide to change your mind about having an abortion. We will respect your decision. We ask that you let us know as soon as possible.

If you would like help with decision making, call the Women's Clinic. We can arrange for you to speak with a social worker.

### Referred by a doctor

Your own doctor, or a doctor from a community clinic or student health services can refer you to the Women's Clinic. If you aren't from the Kingston area, you can contact a Health Unit closer to your home.

Ultrasounds that are done outside of KGH should be sent to the clinic before your first appointment.

When you are referred by a doctor, we need to know:

1. That a pregnancy test has been done to make sure you are pregnant.
2. The date your last period started.
3. How many weeks pregnant you are. This is determined by sending for an ultrasound, which must be completed at 5 ½ weeks or later.
4. Your Ontario (or other provincial) health card number.

## How far along is your pregnancy?

To figure out how far along your pregnancy is, we use the number of weeks since the beginning of your last period.

### If you are 9 weeks pregnant or less...

If it is 9 weeks or less from the beginning of your last period, medical abortion may be an option. With a medical abortion, you are given medication that causes you to miscarry at home. If the medication does not work you may still need a surgical abortion.

### If you are less than 12 weeks pregnant...

Surgical abortion is an option at KGH until 12 weeks of pregnancy

### If you are more than 12 weeks pregnant...

We may not be able to do your abortion at KGH. If we can't, we will refer you to a clinic in Toronto or Ottawa where abortions are done for people who are further along in their pregnancy.

## Before your appointment

Before you visit us in the Women's Clinic we need you to have a dating ultrasound. This is to figure out how far along your pregnancy is and to make sure the pregnancy is in your uterus. This ultrasound can be arranged at the hospital or at a facility closer to your home.

If you haven't already had your ultrasound, we'll help arrange one. In order to see the pregnancy on the ultrasound, you must be 5 or more weeks from the beginning of your last period. For this reason, we will not accept ultrasounds completed before 5 ½ weeks.

## What to expect for a medical abortion

A medical abortion is when medication is taken that ends a first trimester pregnancy (before 9 weeks). We'll give you a pack of medication that contains 1 dose of a medication called mifepristone and 4 tablets of a medication called misoprostol.

**Medical abortion requires 2 visits to the clinic, about 7-14 days apart.**

At the first visit, you'll meet with a nurse and a doctor.

### Please bring:

1. **A copy of your doctor's report.** This is not needed if your doctor sent the report, or if you have referred yourself
2. **Your VALID Ontario (or other provincial) health card.** If your health card has expired, please contact Service Ontario to renew it prior to your appointment
  - a. Phone: +1 800-267-8097

We'll ask about your medical history to make sure you don't have any health conditions that would make medical abortion unsafe for you. We'll take some blood work. We'll counsel you about your options for birth control after the abortion. We can give you a prescription for the method you choose.

It's important to test for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), if this hasn't already been done in the pregnancy. We'll do this with a urine test or with a pelvic exam and swab of your cervix.

We will counsel you about what to expect with the medical abortion, and give you advice about when to seek care if an emergency arises. You will sign a consent form to undergo the medical abortion. Signing this consent also means that you agree to return for the follow up appointment in 1-2 weeks. This is to make sure the abortion worked and that you are no longer pregnant.

We'll give you advice on how to manage pain or other symptoms that you might have at home during the medical abortion.

### Step 1: Mifepristone

You'll take this medication at your first appointment. It is an anti-hormone. This blocks progesterone. Progesterone is a hormone needed for pregnancy to continue. Taking this medication stops pregnancy from developing.

## Step 2: Misoprostol

You'll take this medication at home 24 to 48 hours after the mifepristone. It is a medication that causes contractions of your uterus and relaxation of your cervix. This helps push out the contents of the uterus.

Cramping is common between 30 minutes to 48 hours after taking the misoprostol tablets. We'll give you advice about medications to take to improve your cramping. The misoprostol can also cause nausea and stomach upset. We'll give you advice about how to improve these symptoms.

Bleeding usually starts between 30 minutes to 24 hours after taking the misoprostol. It can be heavy for about 24 to 48 hours then should gradually improve. It can be normal to have period-like bleeding for 2 weeks after the abortion.

Medical abortion is a safe procedure, but it doesn't work in 2-5% of cases. Therefore, it is very important to come for your follow-up appointment, to make sure the abortion has worked.



## What to expect for a surgical abortion

A surgical abortion is a procedure that ends a pregnancy. We use a procedure called dilation and curettage. You may have heard of this as a D&C.

### When coming for a surgical abortion please bring:

- Your VALID Ontario (or other provincial) health card. If your health card has expired, please contact Service Ontario to renew it prior to your appointment
  - Phone: +1 800-267-8097
- Bring 1-2 comfortable sanitary pads. You may wish to have a supply of sanitary pads at home for the weeks following the procedure
- A list of any medications you are taking, including the dosage and timing that you take them
- We encourage you to bring one friend or relative. Many people find that it is comforting to have someone stay with them at the hospital. This person can join you in the procedure room for support. You can't drive after the procedure, so you'll need someone to drive you home

### Before you come to the clinic:

- You can have breakfast before 9 a.m. Don't eat or drink anything 9 a.m.
- Have a shower or bath on the morning of your procedure
- Remove all nail polish. We check the oxygen level in your blood during and after the procedure using a small monitor that attaches to your finger. Nail polish makes it difficult for the monitor to find the oxygen level in your blood
- Leave all jewelry and valuables at home
- Wear comfortable clothing
- Don't bring children to the clinic

### During the morning of your appointment

A doctor and a nurse will see you first. The morning part of the appointment may take 1-2 hours.

In the morning, the nurse and doctor will review your medical history. They will explain the procedure to you. You will need to sign a consent form. If you need blood tests and/or swabs of your cervix to test for chlamydia and gonorrhea, we'll do it at this time.

We will do a brief physical exam. Then the doctor will place a medication called misoprostol inside your vagina. This helps soften and open your cervix before you have the procedure in the afternoon.

After this you may be able to leave the clinic for bit of time and return in the late morning where we we'll offer you medication to help you relax and pain medication to help with cramping prior to the afternoon part of your appointment.

## During the afternoon of your appointment (the procedure)

The D&C procedure involves gently opening your cervix a few millimetres. This was started with the misoprostol in the morning.

This is followed by what is called curettage. A plastic tube is attached to a suction machine. The tube is passed through your vagina, through your cervix, and into your uterus. The contents of your uterus are emptied through the tube.

During the procedure, we'll offer you nitrous oxide (laughing gas) to breathe by mask. This helps you to relax. The doctor injects a local anesthetic to freeze your cervix. When your cervix is frozen, the doctor removes the contents of your uterus.

You will feel cramps and some pain during this part of the procedure. This cramping lasts the duration of the abortion (about 5 minutes), and eases off shortly after the end of the procedure.

## Types of pain control

An anesthetic is a drug that takes away the feeling in all, or part, of your body. Surgical abortion at the KGH Women's Clinic is done under a local anesthetic. Local anesthetic freezes the area around your cervix. Local anesthetic is safer and shorter lasting than general anesthetic. General anesthetic is when you are asleep for the procedure. It requires a longer recovery period. Abortion under general anesthetic is not done at KGH.

Along with local anesthetic, we will give you pain medications to control pain. We may give these medications before and/or during the procedure.

After the procedure, a nurse is there to support your recovery. You will stay in the clinic for about ½ to 1 hour, until you are well enough to go home with your driver.

## After the procedure

### Emotions

This can be a difficult time. You may experience many different emotions. It's helpful to talk to someone you trust. The Women's Clinic can also help you arrange a meeting with a social worker.

### Bleeding

You may bleed for as few as 2 or 3 days, or as long as 2 or 3 weeks. Sometimes you may pass blood clots. This most often happens on the third to fifth day after the abortion. Some people have little or no bleeding afterwards.

#### **Get medical attention if you:**

- Bleed through 3 or more maxi pads in 1 hour, or
- Bleed through 1 maxi pad an hour for more than 3 hours in a row

### Pain and cramps

You may have cramps for about 1 week. To help, you can take:

- Ibuprofen (Advil®) or acetaminophen (Tylenol®). Do not take drugs that contain aspirin (ASA)
- A warm shower

Get medical attention if you develop severe cramps after the abortion.

### Infection

The risk for infection is greater in the first week after your abortion while you are still healing. You can help prevent infection by following these recommendations:

#### **For 2 weeks after your abortion:**

Do

- Take a shower every day
- Use sanitary napkins instead of tampons
- Change your pads frequently
- Wash your hands before and after you go to the toilet

Don't

- Place anything inside your vagina
- Use tampons
- Have sex
- Have a bath
- Go swimming or in hot tubs
- Use a diva cup

#### **Watch for signs of infection. They are:**

- A fever of 38.5 °C (100°F) or more
- Pain and tenderness in your lower abdomen
- Smelly discharge from your vagina
- Large blood clots or tissue passing from your vagina

Get medical attention right away if you think you have an infection.

## Activity

During the procedure, you had some medications that may make you sleepy for the rest of the day. Don't do anything that needs close attention or concentration for the rest of the day when you go home. For example, don't drive your car until the next day.

Most people feel well enough to go back to work or school the day after the procedure. You can return to your usual activities when you feel up to it. There are no restrictions on your activities, you go back to work, school, household chores and exercise at any time. You'll need one visit to the clinic after your surgical abortion. We offer follow-up at 2 weeks if you don't want to follow-up with your family doctor.

## Your next period

If you take birth control pills after the abortion, you will get your period 2 to 4 days after you take the 21st pill. If you don't take the pill, you should get your first period in 2 to 6 weeks.

If you use tampons or a menstrual cup with your periods, you can start to use them when you get your first period.

Contact the doctor or nurse practitioner who referred you to the clinic if you have not had a period 8 weeks after the procedure. If you self referred, the Women's clinic can help you arrange an appointment.

## Follow up

It's important to have a checkup about 2 weeks after the procedure to make sure the abortion worked and to see how you are doing.

It's best to see the doctor or nurse practitioner who referred you to the clinic. If you weren't referred by a doctor, or can't see the doctor who referred you, you may see a doctor in the Women's Clinic. The clinic staff will arrange this appointment while you are there for your procedure.

## Birth control options

You can get pregnant as soon as 2 weeks after the procedure. When you start to have sex again, it is very important to use birth control that works.

There are several options for birth control, which can be found at: <https://www.sexandu.ca/contraception/>

**We encourage you to look into your options prior to your appointment and discuss them with our health care team.** During your appointment, your nurse and doctor will talk to you about your birth control options. The doctor can write a prescription for the birth control method that you choose.

Same day intrauterine device (IUD) insertions are possible. The prescription for your IUD will be filled during your appointment, allowing insertion during your procedure. Birth control prescriptions can be filled at the KGH pharmacy.

### Here are some birth control options:

Contraception Type	Information
Hormonal IUD	Small T-shaped piece of silicone that is inserted into your uterus by a healthcare provider. It slowly releases hormones that prevent pregnancy.
Copper IUD	Small T-shaped piece of silicone with a copper coil, that prevents pregnancy. It does not contain hormones, like the other forms of IUDs.
Combined Oral Contraception	(the pill) Contains the hormones, estrogen and progestin. A pill must be taken every day at the same time to prevent pregnancy.
Progestin-only Pill	(mini pill) Contains only the hormone progestin. A pill must be taken every day at the same time to prevent pregnancy.
The Patch	A patch is worn on the skin and releases hormones, estrogen and progestin, into your bloodstream. The patch needs to be changed once a week for 3 weeks, followed by a 1 week break.
Vaginal Ring	A vaginal ring that you insert into your vagina, where it slowly releases hormones, estrogen and progestin. This ring stays inserted for 3 weeks, and is removed for a 1 week break.
Injectable Contraception	(the shot) Contains the hormone progestin. A shot must be given by a healthcare provider every 3 months to prevent pregnancy.

There are other non-hormonal forms of birth control that are not listed (e.g. condoms, spermicide). These don't need a prescription. You can buy them at your local drugstore.

\*Please note that all forms of birth control listed do not provide protection against sexually transmitted infections (STIs).

## Payment for our services

Our services are covered by the Ontario Health Insurance Program (OHIP) with a valid Ontario health card. Other provincial health cards may be accepted. Bring your out-of-province health card with you so that a bill can be submitted on your behalf.

If you don't have valid, up-to-date Ontario health insurance, you may have to pay additional fees. Please call the Women's Clinic at (613) 548-2423 before your visit to find out more and what we can do to help you.

If you have private insurance, call your insurance company to find out if this procedure is covered. If it is covered, you will pay the hospital and doctor's fees, and then claim a refund from your insurance company.

## Frequently asked questions

### Why do I need an ultrasound?

You need an ultrasound to keep you safe during the procedure. It helps the health care team know how far along your pregnancy is and that the pregnancy is within your uterus. The ultrasound is not able to see a pregnancy that is less than 5 ½ weeks from the beginning of your last period, and therefore will not be scheduled before this time.

### Why don't I get general anesthesia for my procedure?

General anesthesia is a riskier procedure and would require a longer recovery period. Local anesthesia is an effective form of pain management. It is safer and faster than general anesthesia.

### Do I need a note/referral from my doctor to get an abortion?

You can refer yourself. This means you don't need a note or referral from a doctor. If you refer yourself, the clinic will arrange for you to have an ultrasound before your appointment.

### How much will this cost?

If you have OHIP coverage or certain private insurance plans, the cost of the procedure is covered. For further information, please see the **Payment for the procedure** section, or call us at (613) 548-2423.

### What is the best birth control option?

Birth control works differently for everyone. The best choice depends on the individual person. Your nurses and doctor will discuss the different birth control options and can help you make a decision that is best for you.

## Additional resources

Victoria Order of Nurses (VON): Transportation Services  
Phone: (613)-634-0130

Service Ontario: Health card renewal information  
Phone: +1 800-267-8097  
Website: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/serviceontario>

Canadians for Choice  
Phone: (613)-789-9958  
Website: <http://www.canadiansforchoice.ca/>

Exhale Pro-Voice  
Phone: After Abortion Talkline- 866-4-EXHALE (866-439-4253)  
Website: <https://exhaleprovoice.org/>

Sex & U: Contraception Options  
<https://www.sexandu.ca/contraception/>

Sexual Assault Centre Kingston (SACK)  
Phone: (613) 545-0762  
Website: <http://sackington.com/>