

**If** you are considering an abortion, an informed decision is the best decision. You and your physician must first determine how far your pregnancy has progressed.

The physician will use different methods of abortion for women depending on your stage of pregnancy. In order to determine the age of the embryo or fetus, the physician will perform an ultrasound.

The type of abortion depends on your choice and health; where the abortion is performed; and the length of the pregnancy. The length is measured in weeks from the first day of a your last normal period. The risk of death from abortion is lower than 1 in 100,000 but increases slightly with every week of pregnancy.<sup>4</sup>

## References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2018). Trends in pregnancy-related deaths. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/reproductivehealth/maternalinfanthealth/pregnancy-mortality-surveillance-system.htm>
2. Raymond, E. G., & Grimes, D. A. (2012). The comparative safety of legal induced abortion and childbirth in the United States. *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 119(2), part 1, 215-219. doi:10.1097/aog.0b013e318258c806
3. American Psychological Association, Task Force on Mental Health and Abortion. (2008). Report of the Task Force on Mental Health and Abortion. Retrieved from: <http://www.apa.org/pi/wpo/mental-health-abortion-report.pdf>
4. American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG). (2015). Frequently asked questions FAQ043: Induced abortion. Retrieved from: <https://www.acog.org/Patients/FAQs/Induced-Abortion?IsMobileSet=false>



[VDHLiveWell.com/pregnancy](https://www.vdhlive.com/pregnancy)

# MAKING AN INFORMED DECISION ABOUT ABORTION

## Pregnancy Risks<sup>1</sup>

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), there were 18 deaths for every 100,000 live births in 2014. There are considerable racial disparities in pregnancy-related deaths. During 2011-2014, the pregnancy-related mortality rates were:

- 12.4 deaths per 100,000 live births for white women
- 40.0 deaths per 100,000 live births for black women
- 17.8 deaths per 100,000 live births for women of other races

### The most common causes of pregnancy - related deaths in the United States during 2011-2012 were:

- Cardiovascular disease 15.2%
- Non-cardiovascular disease 14.7%
- Infection or sepsis 12.8%
- Hemorrhage 11.5%
- Cardiomyopathy 10.3%
- Thrombotic pulmonary embolism 9.1%
- Hypertensive (high blood pressure) disorders of pregnancy 6.8%
- Cerebrovascular accidents 6.5%
- Amniotic fluid embolism 5.5%
- Complications from anesthesia 0.3%

In 2011-2014, the cause of death was unknown for 6.5% of all pregnancy-related deaths.

**First Trimester:** A first trimester abortion may be performed up to 13 weeks and 6 days of pregnancy. A first trimester abortion is one of the safest medical procedures; it can be done in a provider's office or clinic. First trimester abortions can be performed with medication or surgery. All complications are treatable, but some may require emergency room treatment or surgery. The risk of dying from giving birth is 14 times greater than the risk of dying from a first trimester abortion.<sup>2</sup>

Type of Abortion	Method	Risks
Medical Abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mifepristone and misoprostol pills</li> <li>• Mifepristone pills and vaginal misoprostol</li> <li>• Methotrexate and vaginal misoprostol</li> <li>• Vaginal misoprostol alone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incomplete abortion (requires additional medical intervention)</li> <li>• Infection</li> <li>• Heavy bleeding</li> </ul>
Surgical Abortion	Suction Curettage/ Vacuum Aspiration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incomplete abortion (requires additional medical intervention)</li> <li>• Infection</li> <li>• Heavy bleeding</li> </ul>

**Second Trimester:** In Virginia, an abortion performed during the second trimester must be performed in a hospital. In the second trimester, a surgical abortion has fewer complications than a medical abortion. Most women who have a second trimester abortion have a surgical abortion.

Type of Abortion	Method	Risks
Surgical Abortion	Dilation and Evacuation (D&E)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incomplete abortion (requires additional medical intervention)</li> <li>• Infection</li> <li>• Heavy bleeding</li> <li>• Injury to the uterus and other organs</li> </ul>
Medical Abortion	Mifepristone and misoprostol	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incomplete abortion (requires additional medical intervention)</li> <li>• Infection</li> <li>• Heavy bleeding</li> </ul>

### Possible Detrimental Psychological Effects of Abortion

According to a scientific literature review by the American Psychological Association (APA), a legal abortion of an unwanted pregnancy "does not pose a psychological hazard for most women."<sup>3</sup>

Individuals may contact Exhale, an after-abortion talk line that provides confidential emotional support and resources for women who have had abortions, at 1-866-4-Exhale or at [www.exhaleprovoice.org/](http://www.exhaleprovoice.org/).