

Women's Medical Center of Rhode Island 401.467.9111 or 800.877.6339
1725 Broad Street, Cranston, RI 02905

After-care Instructions For First and Second Trimester Surgical Abortion

What To Expect After Surgery

- **Bleeding** is normal after surgery and varies from woman to woman. You may not bleed at all, or your bleeding may start a few days after your procedure. The bleeding may start and stop again and some women continue to bleed for 2 to 4 weeks. Your flow may be light or heavy or may simply be a reddish-brown discharge. All of these situations are normal and are not cause for concern. It is also normal to pass clots, and some can be quite large. Excess activity after surgery may cause bleeding. Get off your feet, rest, and drink plenty of fluids. Eat a healthy diet. Take it easy for a few days after surgery. An ice pack placed on the abdomen may help reduce bleeding.
- **Cramping** is also normal after surgery. You can expect cramps for 7 to 10 days.
- Your next period should begin within 4 to 6 weeks. Be careful! You **CAN** get pregnant after an abortion, and before your next period. Always use a method of birth control to prevent an unplanned pregnancy.
- Contraceptive counseling will be offered to you so you can choose the best method to prevent future unintended pregnancies. Depending on your choice and medical history, we can provide you with a prescription for birth control pills, Depo Provera injection, Nuva Ring and condoms. You can resume sexual intercourse after 3 weeks. Always use protection when you have sex, unless you are trying to get pregnant. Know that you **CAN** get pregnant again before you have your next menstrual period. And, know that most birth control methods do not protect against sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV. Only latex or polyurethane (if you are allergic to latex) condoms provide protection for STDs and HIV. Natural skin condoms do not provide protection for STDs and HIV.

What To Do To Relieve Cramping

- Use an over-the-counter medication containing Ibuprofen like Advil, Motrin or Alleve to relieve cramping and any lower back pain. One to two tablets every six hours should relieve most of your cramping. If you cannot take Ibuprofen, try Extra Strength Tylenol. **Do not use aspirin products as they may increase bleeding.** Allow 2 to 3 hours for the medicine to begin working.
- Get off of your feet. If you are not bleeding, you may want to apply a heating pad to your abdomen. If you are bleeding, apply an ice pack.
- Try drinking something hot, such as tea, coffee, soup or hot chocolate. Drink plenty of fluids, including water.

- Deeply massage your lower abdomen. This most likely will be uncomfortable, but when you put pressure on your uterus, this causes blood clots to dislodge and pass through the mouth of the cervix, giving you relief. Blood clots are normal and occur when the blood in the uterus has settled before being passed into the vagina.

Post-Operative Instructions and Medical Restrictions

- You will be given **Doxycycline**, an antibiotic that helps prevent infection. You will be given one capsule to take on the day of your procedure.
- You may receive **Methergine** in the recovery room in pill form or in an intramuscular injection. You may be given Methergine to take at home. Methergine causes your uterus to cramp, or contract, and return to its normal size.

What to Do For Four Weeks Following Your Procedure or Until Your Follow-up Visit

- **Do not** insert anything into your vagina.
- **Do not** have vaginal intercourse.
- **Do not** use tampons. Use non-deodorant sanitary pads.
- **Do not** douche or use feminine hygiene sprays.
- **Do not** swim or take tub baths. Showers are fine.
- **Avoid** gym class, aerobics or strenuous exercise for approximately 1 week.
- **Most important!** Listen to your body. Rest when you are tired or if your bleeding increases. Ease slowly back into your normal routine.

Do's and Don'ts When Having General Anesthesia

- **Do not** drive a car for at least 24 hours.
- **Do not** operate complex equipment machinery or ride bikes or skateboards, etc. for 24 hours.
- **Do not** take any medications, including over-the-counter, unless prescribed by your physician.
- **Do** rest the evening of your procedure.
- **Do** arrange care for small children at home.
- **Do** drink plenty of fluids.
- **Do** have a normal diet as tolerated.
- **Try not** to smoke the evening of your procedure. If you do smoke, have someone with you. You can fall asleep with a lit cigarette.

When To Resume Normal Activities

Let your body be your guide, and you will find you will most likely resume normal activities within a few days. Most pregnancy symptoms, such as nausea and dizziness should begin to disappear within a few days. Other symptoms like breast tenderness (eased by ice packs), bloating and weight gain may last longer than a few days. Fatigue may last several weeks.

Follow-up Visit

It is important that you return to the Women's Medical Center of Rhode Island, or to your private health practitioner for a checkup in 4 weeks. **This is required even if you are feeling perfectly well. Do keep your follow-up appointment!**

Emotional Reactions

An emotional reaction to terminating a pregnancy is normal and expected. You have gone through a physical, hormonal and emotional event. Some women experience grief while other women feel great relief. Changes in your hormonal levels may also cause sadness, depression or emotional upset. Our counselors are always available to speak with you during business hours; call us if you need to talk.

What is NOT Normal? When Should You Call AFTER Normal Business Hours?

- When your temperature is over 101 degrees Fahrenheit for 2 hours or more after the first 24 to 48 hours following your procedure.
- When you completely saturate 1 sanitary pad (the type meant for heavy menstrual flow) in one hour, and continue to do so for 2 or more hours.

When Should You Call During Normal Business Hours?

- When your temperature is over 101 degrees Fahrenheit for 2 hours or more, after the first 24 to 48 hours following your procedure.
- When you completely saturate 1 sanitary pad (the type meant for heavy menstrual flow) in one hour, and continue to do so for 2 or more hours.
- When you experience pain and cramping that is not relieved by our instructions and taking the recommended medications.
- When you have a foul smelling vaginal discharge with lower back pain.
- If you do not get your period within 8 weeks following your procedure.

IF YOU ARE HAVING A PROBLEM AFTER YOUR PROCEDURE AND HAVE FOLLOWED THE INSTRUCTIONS IN THIS GUIDE, CALL US BEFORE YOU GO TO YOUR PRIVATE PHYSICIAN OR A LOCAL HOSPITAL AT 401.467.9111.