



**Abortion Rights
Coalition of Canada**

**Coalition pour le droit à
l'avortement au Canada**

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Position Paper # 19

All About Your Abortion

This paper discusses the process for an early abortion (up to about 12 weeks gestation). Details may vary between clinics.

Making the Appointment

You will be treated with respect and dignity from your first phone call to make an appointment for an abortion. You should make the call yourself so that the clinic staff can ask pertinent personal information for your best medical treatment. It may take one day to several weeks for an appointment depending on both how advanced your pregnancy is, and on the clinic (e.g. where you live can affect wait times).

The Day of Your Appointment

You will be greeted in a friendly, casual atmosphere upon arrival at the clinic. The surroundings are usually more comfortable than clinical. Upon admittance, you will have to read and complete forms regarding your personal information, medical history, and consent. You will speak with the clinic's counsellor. This counselling is called *Informed Consent*, which means that you will be giving your permission to the doctor to do the procedure and that it is *your* decision to have the abortion. It is not decision making counselling. You should make your decision before you arrive at the clinic. You will also have time to voice concerns and ask questions about the procedure. Future birth control will also be discussed at this time.

Next you will undergo some pre-operative procedures, which may include may include Rh testing, Hemoglobin testing, blood pressure, temperature, and STI testing among others. You will also have an ultrasound to determine the length of your pregnancy. For the ultrasound and abortion you will change into a gown and undress from the waist down.

You will then be ready to undergo the abortion procedure. The doctor may examine you prior to the procedure. The abortion is based on the principle of completely emptying the uterus of all pregnancy tissue. The doctor will use a speculum (same instrument used for PAP smears) to gently separate the vaginal walls to see the cervix, which is the opening of the uterus. The doctor will then clean and freeze the cervix with a local anaesthetic. The doctor will gently open the cervical canal with the help of metal dilators; the dilators increase in size, depending on how

advanced is the pregnancy. Once dilated, the doctor will put a hollow tube in the uterus. This tube is attached to a pump, which will empty the contents of the uterus. Next, a curette is used along the uterine wall to ensure the entire placenta has been removed. The suction tube will be used once more to remove the last of the tissue. The whole procedure normally lasts about eight to ten minutes. During the procedure many women describe it as feeling similar to menstrual cramps. Pain pills, tranquilizers, or nitrous oxide (laughing gas) may be used to help relieve any cramping sensations.

After the procedure you will be required to stay in the recovery area under a nurse's care. Most patients usually remain about thirty to forty minutes and are usually served juice and crackers. The nurse in charge of your care will review instructions on your post abortion care and discuss birth control.

Post-Abortion

Two weeks after your abortion, you must have a follow up with your family doctor or local sexual health clinic to rule out such things as a failed abortion or infection.