HOW ABORTION HARMs
WOMEN’S HEALTH

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Advocates of legalized abortion downplay or deny the health risks associated with abortion. However, the research indicates that abortion isolates women and can often cause physical and psychological suffering.

Physical complications

Abortion can cause both short-term and long-term physical complications, and can significantly affect a woman’s ability to have healthy future pregnancies.

Though there are no requirements for states to report abortion data to any federal agency, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have received reports of the deaths of 386 women from legal abortion between 1973, when abortion was legalized nationwide, and 2004. ¹ Reporting procedures and coding on U.S. death certificates for pregnancy-related deaths, as well as the lack of surveillance methods, have made it very difficult to accurately assess overall deaths associated with abortion procedures.

Physical complications include cervical lacerations and injury, uterine perforations, bleeding, hemorrhage, serious infection, pain, and incomplete abortion. ² Risks of complications increase with gestational age and are dependent upon the abortion procedure. ³

Long-term physical consequences of abortion include future preterm birth and placenta previa (improper implantation of the placenta) in future pregnancies. ⁴ Premature delivery is associated with higher rates of cerebral palsy, as well as respiratory, brain, and bowel abnormalities. One recent large-scale evaluation published in Pediatrics, has concluded that preterm birth is the most frequent cause of infant death in the U.S. ⁵ Pregnancies complicated by placenta previa result in high rates of preterm birth, low birth weight, perinatal death, and maternal morbidity. ⁶

While the question of whether abortion can increase the risk of breast cancer is hotly debated, a number of scientific studies have indicated that induced
abortion can adversely affect a woman’s future risk of breast cancer. Further, it has been clearly shown that induced abortion in young women causes the loss of a protective effect from a first, full-term pregnancy which when followed by a delay in child bearing, has the net effect of an increased risk for breast cancer.\textsuperscript{7}

Physical complications from chemical abortion with the drug RU-486 include hemorrhage, infection, and missed ectopic pregnancy (a potentially fatal complication). Since 2000, at least 8 women have died from RU-486 due to hemorrhage and infection.\textsuperscript{8}

**Psychological complications**

A “pro-choice” research team in New Zealand, analyzing data from a 25-year period and controlling for multiple factors both pre- and post-abortion, found conclusively that abortion in young women is associated with increased risks of major depression, anxiety disorder, suicidal behaviors, and substance dependence.\textsuperscript{9} This is the most comprehensive, long-term study ever conducted on the issue.

Other studies also conclude that there is substantial evidence of a causal association between induced abortion and both substance abuse and suicide.\textsuperscript{10}

A review of over 100 long-term international studies concluded that induced abortion increases risks for mood disorders enough to provoke attempts at self harm.\textsuperscript{11} Researchers have also identified a pattern of psychological problems, known collectively as Post- Abortion Syndrome, in which women may experience depression, anxiety, anger, flashbacks, guilt, grief, denial, and relationship problems. Post-Abortion Syndrome has been identified in research as a subset of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.\textsuperscript{12}

Further, studies analyzing the effects of induced abortion in adolescents have shown that those who abort reported more frequent problems sleeping, more frequent marijuana use, and an increased need for psychological counseling, when compared to adolescents who give birth.\textsuperscript{13}

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\textsuperscript{1} See http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/ss5609a1.htm#tab19


Consequences of Induced Abortion: Review of the Evidence,” Finland


