

A Primer on Abortion

Christian Life Resources

What is abortion?

Abortion is the expulsion or removal of an unborn child from the womb resulting in the death of that child. Generally, there are three types of abortion: spontaneous, medically necessary, elective.

What is a spontaneous abortion?

The action of the body in which a child, usually in the very early stages of gestation, dies in the womb and is naturally expelled. A spontaneous abortion is unintentional and is often called a miscarriage.

What is a medically-necessary abortion?

This type of abortion involves the intentional termination of the life of an unborn child once it is determined continuing the pregnancy would end the life of both mother and child. Abortions for this reason are becoming more rare with the advancements of medicine, but they do occur.

What is an elective abortion?

An elective abortion means the termination of the life of an unborn child for any reason other than to save the mother's life. This includes situations in which the mother's health might be endangered but not necessarily her life.

How many pregnancies end in abortion each year in the United States?

After reaching a high of over 1.6 million in 1990, the number of abortions annually performed in the U.S. has dropped back to levels not seen since the late 1970s. Using Guttmacher Institute figures, it is estimated about 1,206,200 abortions occur each year in the U.S. [SOURCE: [National Right to Life Factsheet](#), January 2010]

What proportion of American women will have an abortion in their lifetime?

At current rates, about one in three American women will have had an abortion by age 45. [SOURCE: [Guttmacher Institute's](#) "Trends in the Characteristics of Women Obtaining Abortions, 1974 to 2004"]

Why do women abort?

On average, women offer four reasons for choosing abortion: 75 percent say that having a baby interferes with work, school or other responsibilities; 75 percent say they cannot afford a child; and half say they do not want to be a single parent or are having problems with their husband or partner. [SOURCE: AGI]

A small percentage of abortions occur because of medical necessity, meaning they are performed to save the life of the mother.

When are most abortions performed in the woman's pregnancy?

Most women abort in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy: 59.2 percent in less than 9 weeks, 19.3 percent in 9-10 weeks, and 10.1 percent in 11-12 weeks. [SOURCE: AGI, 2001 Statistics]

What is the most common form of abortion?

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the most common form of surgical abortion is suction curettage (vacuum aspiration) in which a physician dilates the cervix, then uses an instrument to suction out the contents of the uterus. This first-trimester method is used in 95 to 97 percent of all abortions. [SOURCE: CDC, *Abortion Surveillance Report*, 11/03]

What other methods are used to abort a child?

First Trimester:

- **Chemical Abortions** - A woman who desires a chemical abortion need only go to her own private physician. The process involves the taking of drugs either orally or vaginally, and occasionally by injection. There are two ways to accomplish the abortion: the use of **Methotrexate** and **Cytotec** (misoprostol) or by using **Mifeprex** (mifepristone or RU-486) and **Cytotec**. Each method is equally effective. By using **Methotrexate**, fetal and placental cell division is stopped or slowed. This is accomplished by the drug interfering with the action of folic acid which is needed for cell division. After Methotrexate is given time to work, the woman follows it with the drug **Cytotec** which then causes uterine contractions and the onset of bleeding and abortion. **Mifeprex** abortions work by blocking the action of progesterone which is needed to maintain a pregnancy. It causes the uterus to shed the endometrial lining, thus shearing the baby away from its nutritional source. This drug, too, is followed by **Cytotec**, which induces contractions and expulsion of the baby from the womb. Both methods can be used up to the 7th week of pregnancy, although some providers allow it through the 9th week. Heavy bleeding and anemia can result. Approximately 4 percent of women using this method still need a surgical abortion.

Second Trimester:

- **Saline method** - A strong salt solution is injected into the amnion, poisoning the unborn child and severely burning its skin, after which the mother goes into labor and expels the dead child. This procedure is no longer commonly done.

- **Dilation and evacuation (D&E)** - Similar to vacuum aspiration, but a larger cervical opening is required due to the greater size of the unborn child. Because of the baby's size and stronger bones, it must often be removed in pieces. Performed between 4 and 8 months.

Second or Third Trimester:

- **Dilation and extraction (D&X; also called Partial Birth Abortion)** - A surgeon partially pulls the fetus out of the birth canal feet first, punctures the base of the skull with a scissors or other sharp instrument to insert a catheter into the skull to remove its contents, then collapses the skull so that the head can be delivered without harming the woman's reproductive organs.

When was abortion legalized in the United States?

On January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court issued its ruling in *Roe v. Wade*, finding that a right of privacy it had earlier discovered was "broad enough to encompass" a right to abortion and adopted a trimester scheme of pregnancy. In the first trimester, a state could enact virtually no regulation. In the second trimester, the state could enact some regulation, but only for the purpose of protecting maternal "health." In the third trimester, after viability, a state could ostensibly "proscribe" abortion, provided it made exceptions to preserve the life and "health" of the woman seeking abortion. Issued on the same day, *Doe v. Bolton* defined "health" to mean "all factors" that affect the woman, including "physical, emotional, psychological, familial, and the woman's age." [SOURCE: [National Right to Life](#), *Abortion History*]

On June 29, 1992, the US. Supreme Court reaffirmed in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* the core holdings of *Roe* but modified it by discarding the trimester scheme, upholding certain restrictions on abortion, and adopting the "undue burden" test of abortion laws that requires opponents of an abortion regulation to prove the provision would create an "undue burden" on a woman's right to abortion in order for it to be declared unconstitutional. The vote was 6-3. [SOURCE: [National Right to Life](#), *Abortion History*]

How many U.S. abortions have occurred since its legalization?

After reaching a high of over 1.6 million in 1990, the number of abortions annually performed in the U.S. has dropped back to levels not seen since the late 1970s. Using Guttmacher Institute figures through 2005, estimating 1,206,200 abortions for 2006-2009, and factoring in the possible 3% undercount GI estimates for its own figures, the total number of abortions performed in the U.S. since 1973 equals 52,008,665. [SOURCE: [National Right to Life Factsheet](#), January 2010]

What is Christian Life Resources' position on abortion?

God's Word teaches that life is to be protected from its earliest stage. To abort for any reason other than the preservation of another life is contrary to God's Word. Freedom of choice ends where compromising God's Word begins. Human beings, born and unborn, whether healthy or

impaired, are of equal value in God's eyes. Christians will seek to protect the lives of mothers and children, care for them, and use God's Word to correct error and proclaim truth about life now and for eternity. Since this is God's position, it is therefore, the position of Christian Life Resources.

For additional information and resources in dealing with this life topic, visit the Christian Life Resources website at www.ChristianLifeResources.com or call us at 1-800-729-9535.