

# Medical and Psychological Consequences of Abortion



- From 1982 to 1992, 43% of American women had at least one abortion by age 45.<sup>1</sup> Based on 2008 abortion rates, nearly one-third of US women will have at least one abortion by age 45.
- In the US, over 140,000 women a year have *immediate* medical complications from abortion.<sup>2</sup> This includes problems such as: infection, uterine perforation, hemorrhaging, cervical trauma, and failed abortion/ongoing pregnancy.<sup>3</sup>
- Abortion increases a woman's risk of breast cancer by 30%.<sup>4</sup>
- Childbirth actually protects against cancer of the reproductive system.<sup>5</sup>
- After an abortion there is a higher risk of developing cervical, ovarian, and rectal cancer.<sup>6</sup>
- Abortion can lead to infertility, a serious long-term complication<sup>7</sup> that often goes undetected for many years.
- Abortion can lead to complications in future pregnancies including: premature birth, placenta previa, and ectopic pregnancy.<sup>8</sup>
- In the twelve months following an abortion women have a death rate four times greater than women who continued with their pregnancies.<sup>9</sup>
- A woman who undergoes an abortion has a suicide risk six times higher than women who have given birth to a child.<sup>10</sup>
- It is minorities who suffer from the greatest number of serious complications and deaths after abortion.<sup>11</sup>
- Psychological and emotional complications reported in a 1994 survey of women who had abortions and sought counseling found<sup>12</sup> that they experienced a range of problems including: increased use of drugs and/or alcohol to deaden their pain, reoccurring insomnia and nightmares, eating disorders that began after the abortion, suicidal feelings, and many even attempted suicide.
- Who is at high risk for developing serious emotional and psychological problems following and abortion?<sup>13</sup>
  - Teenagers
  - Women who already have children
  - Women who have abortions after 12 weeks gestation
  - Women who feel pressured into the abortion
  - Women struggling with value conflicts
- This information is important for every woman to know, but it is especially relevant for parents of teens because of the impact abortion can have on a minor's emotional health, physical health, fertility, and future pregnancies.

<sup>1</sup> Alan Guttmacher Institute 1994 study entitled: "Unintended Pregnancy in the United States." [http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb\\_induced\\_abortion.html](http://www.agi-usa.org/pubs/fb_induced_abortion.html)

<sup>2</sup> This is based on a complication rate of 11% and assuming the yearly abortion rate is 1.3 million US women a year. Most abortion advocates claim the complication rate is only 1%, but this is inaccurate when the data is analyzed. According to the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in the UK, the immediate physical complication rate from abortions is at least 11%, primarily infections that can lead to a host of other problems including pain and infertility. The UK statistics have been recently published in January of 2001. See: Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (UK). The care of women requesting induced abortion: 4. Information for women. 2000. You can quickly find the data at: [www.rcog.org.uk/guidelines.asp?PageID=108&GuidelinesID=31](http://www.rcog.org.uk/guidelines.asp?PageID=108&GuidelinesID=31). On the web page click on Induced Abortion—Care of Women.\*This number is probably greater because complications are underreported, but due to the magnitude of abortions in the US many women suffer.

<sup>3</sup> These are included in the web site for n. 2, but for an extended list of research studies documenting these health risks and many others, please see Detrimental Effects of Abortion: An Annotated Bibliography With Commentary Ed. Thomas W. Strahan, published by Acorn Books, Springfield IL, © 2001.

<sup>4</sup> Brind J, Chinchilli VM, Severs WB, Summy-Long J. Induced abortion as an independent risk factor for breast cancer: a comprehensive review and meta-analysis. *Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health* 1996 Oct; 50(5):481-496. \* It is important to note that abortion advocates completely deny these findings, this includes many researchers in the U.S. medical community. But a careful study of international literature indicates a strong correlation between abortion and breast cancer. ***Much like tobacco companies in the past have simply denied that cigarettes endanger the health of their customers, abortion advocates simply deny any research that indicates that abortion is harmful to women's health and increases their risk for breast cancer.***

<sup>5</sup> Albrektsen G, Heuch I, Tretli S, Kvale G. Is the risk of cancer of the corpus uteri reduced by a recent pregnancy? A prospective study of 765,756 Norwegian women. *International Journal of Cancer* 1995 May 16;61(4):485-90, p.485.\*

<sup>6</sup> La Vecchia C, Negri E, Franceschi S, Parazzini F. Long-term impact of reproductive factors on cancer risk. *International Journal of Cancer* 1993 January 21;53(2):215-9, p. 217. \*

Albrektsen G, Heuch I, Tretli S, Kvale G. Is the risk of cancer of the corpus uteri reduced by a recent pregnancy? A prospective study of 765,756 Norwegian women. *International Journal of Cancer* 1995 May 16;61(4):485-90, p.485.\*

Kvale G, Heuch I. Is the incidence of colorectal cancer related to reproduction? A prospective study of 63,000 women. *International Journal of Cancer* 1991 February 1;47(3):390-5, p. 392.\*

<sup>7</sup> Frank P, McNamee R, Hannaford PC, Kay Cr, Hirsch S. The effect of induced abortion on subsequent fertility. *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 1993 June;100(6):575-80.\*

Heisterberg L, Kringelbach M. Early complications after induced first-trimester abortion. *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica* 1987;66(3):201-4, p.204.\*

<sup>8</sup> Barrett JM, Boehm FH, Killam AP. Induced abortion: a risk factor for placenta previa. *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 1981 December 1;141(7):769-72.\*

Rose GL, Chapman MG. Aetiological factors in placenta praevia—a case controlled study. *British Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology* 1986 June;93(6):586-8.\*

Taylor VM, Kramer MD, Vaughan TL, Peacock S. Placenta previa in relation to induced and spontaneous abortion: a population-based study. *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 1993 July;82(10):88-91; p. 91.\*

Michalakis S, Minaretzis D, Tsionou C, Maos G, Kioses E, Aravantinos D. Pelvic surgery, reproductive factors and risk of ectopic pregnancy: A case controlled study. *International Journal of Gynecology and Obstetrics* 1992 June;38(2):101-5, pp.101, 103.\*

Luke B. *Every Pregnant Woman's Guide to Preventing Premature Birth*. 1995 [foreword by Emile Papiernik], New York: Times Books; p.32.\*

<sup>9</sup> Gissler M, Kaupila R, Merilainen J, Toukomaa H, Hemminki E. Pregnancy-associated deaths in Finland 1987-199—definition problems and benefits of record linkage. *Acta Obstetrica et Gynecologica Scandinavica* 1997 Aug;76(7):651-7.\*

***This statistic is important to note because many of these deaths are due to complications from the abortion and are documented as such. Thus, the presenting cause of death will be the complication, not the abortion that caused it.***

<sup>10</sup> Gissler M, Kaupila R, Merilainen J, Toukomaa H, Hemminki E. Pregnancy-associated deaths in Finland 1987-1994: register linkage study. *British Medical Journal* 1996 December 7;313(7070):1431-4.\*

<sup>11</sup> Goldner TE, Lawson HW, Xia Z, Atrash HK. Surveillance for ectopic pregnancy—United States, 1970-1989. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, Centers for Disease Control Surveillance Summary* 1993 December; 42((SS-6)):73-85.\*

Council on Scientific Affairs AMA. Induced termination of pregnancy before and after *Roe v Wade*. Trends in the mortality and morbidity of women. *Journal of the American Medical Association* 1992 December 9;268(22):3231-9.\*

<sup>12</sup> The Post Abortion Review, 2, (3): 4-8, Fall 1994, published by the Elliott Institute, PO Box 7348, Springfield, IL 62791-7348, additional material is posted at: [www.afterabortion.org](http://www.afterabortion.org). It is important to note that many in the psychiatric community deny any serious emotional trauma after an abortion, but this has happened under similar circumstances before. It took years for the medical community to recognize Post Traumatic Stress in Vietnam veterans; ironically women who have undergone abortion often fit the profile of someone suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress according to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual IV (standard for diagnosis of psychiatric illness in the United States).

<sup>13</sup> The Post Abortion Review, 2, (3): 4-8, Fall 1994, published by the Elliott Institute, Springfield, IL, [www.afterabortion.org](http://www.afterabortion.org). See also *Forbidden Grief: The Unspoken Pain of Abortion* by Theresa Burke, Ph.D, Acorn Books, Springfield, IL, ©2002 for more information on the emotional and physical pain women go through after an abortion.

\* Statistics and citations taken from a compilation of studies in: *Women's Health after Abortion: the Medical and Psychological Evidence* by Elizabeth Ring-Cassidy and Ian Gentles. Published by the Toronto based de Veber Institute for Bioethics and Social Research 2002. Page 52 makes a very important note on this highly politicized issue: "There is a marked tendency in the North-American literature on abortion for researchers to minimize their own findings. Those interested in the subject are well advised to read the numerical data and compare them carefully with the abstract or conclusions, rather than relying on either the abstract or conclusions alone. Comparisons are also recommended with literature from European countries, particularly Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries, where population size and sophisticated medical linkage data bases make data collection more accurate and comprehensive."

Compiled by **Anglicans for Life** \* 405 Frederick Ave. Sewickley PA 15143

\* [www.AnglicansforLife.org](http://www.AnglicansforLife.org) \* (800) 707-6635 for the **Silent No More Awareness Campaign**.