

## **Where does the information in our fact sheets come from?**

- **Who has abortions?**

### **'There's no such thing as the kind of woman who has an abortion'**

For information on abortion around the world see the Guttmacher Institute website – *"Today, as throughout history, women in every region of the world sometimes choose to end unwanted pregnancies by abortion. They take this step even when pregnancy termination is against the law, and even when an unsafe abortion may threaten their lives"* 2009 (pg 9) <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/AWWfullreport.pdf>

For information on the ethnicity and age range of women accessing abortion in England and Wales see the 2009 Department of Health Abortion Statistics:

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_116336.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_116336.pdf)

Also, see here for information on the numbers of women who have given birth prior to accessing abortion: *"In 2009, 49% of women undergoing abortions had one or more previous pregnancies that resulted in a live or stillbirth"* (4.8)

### **'By the time they're 45 almost one in three women will have had an abortion.'**

*"At least one-third of British women will have had an abortion by the time they reach the age of 45 years"* –Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists *"The Care of Women Requesting Induced Abortion"* 2004 (pg 1) <http://www.rcog.org.uk/files/rcog-corp/uploaded-files/NEBInducedAbortionfull.pdf>

- **If women don't want to get pregnant why don't they use contraception?**

### **'Most methods of contraception are not 100% effective'**

For more information on contraception see fpa website:

<http://www.fpa.org.uk/helpandadvice/contraception/guidetocontraceptionmethods>

This table gives information on 'typical' and 'perfect' use of contraception:

<http://www.contraceptivetechnology.org/table.html>

### **'The 'morning-after pill' is most effective if taken within 24 hours'**

The fpa states that the morning-after pill is *"very effective and is more effective the sooner it is taken after sex. Of the pregnancies that could be expected to have occurred if no emergency contraception had been used, the emergency pill will prevent:*

- *up to 95 per cent if taken within 24 hours*
- *up to 85 per cent if taken between 25–48 hours*
- *up to 58 per cent if taken between 49–72 hours"*

<http://www.fpa.org.uk/helpandadvice/contraception/guidetocontraceptionmethods>

- **'Can you have an abortion if you're under 16?'**

### **'Women under the age of 16 can have an abortion'**

See here for the 2004 Department of Health guidance on providing advice and treatment on contraception, sexual and reproductive health to young people under 16:

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_4086914.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_4086914.pdf)

- **'Is there a time limit for abortion?'**

### **'The vast majority (of abortions) are carried out when the woman is less than 12 weeks pregnant.'**

*"The vast majority of abortions are performed at under 13 weeks gestation. In 2009, about 75% were at under 10 weeks and a further 16% at 10-12 weeks. The proportion at 13 weeks or more was 9%"* Department of Health Abortion Statistics 2009 (4.3)

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_116336.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_116336.pdf)

### **'In exceptional circumstances...an abortion can take place after 24 weeks'**

Again, see the Department of Health statistics above, *"Abortions where gestation has exceeded its twenty-fourth week account for less than 0.1% of the total"* (4.3.3)

- **'How do they do abortions?'**

For more information on the methods of abortion see the BPAS website:

<http://www.bpas.org/bpasknowledge.php?page=157>

- **'How will you feel afterwards?'**

**'(A woman) may feel relieved or sad, or a mixture of both.'**

*"How you react will depend on the circumstances of your abortion, the reasons for having it and on how comfortable you feel about your decision. You may feel relieved or sad, or a mixture of both."* Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists – 'About Abortion Care: What You Need to Know' <http://www.rcog.org.uk/womens-health/clinical-guidance/about-abortion-care-what-you-need-know>

**'It is unusual for a woman to have lasting problems after an abortion...Women who have experienced mental illness before they became pregnant may be more vulnerable to distress and depression following abortion, but research evidence demonstrates that abortion is not itself a cause of mental health problems'**

*"The incidence of severe negative reaction is low, although some factors are known to increase risk (abortion where pregnancy had been planned and late gestation abortion). Where problems do arise there is often a history of susceptibility which predates the abortion procedure."* Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists – 'About Abortion Care: What You Need to Know' <http://www.rcog.org.uk/womens-health/clinical-guidance/about-abortion-care-what-you-need-know> See also the American Psychological Association's 2009 'Abortion and Mental Health: Evaluating the Evidence': <http://www.apa.org/pubs/journals/features/amp-64-9-863.pdf>

- **'How many abortions can you have?'**

For numbers of repeat abortions in England and Wales see the Department of Health Abortion Statistics - "In 2009, 25% of abortions to women aged under 25 were repeat abortions" (4.7.2)

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod\\_consum\\_dh/groups/dh\\_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh\\_116336.pdf](http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_116336.pdf)

- **'Is abortion safe?'**

**'Abortion in the UK is safe and is in fact safer than pregnancy and childbirth'**

*"For most women an abortion is safer than carrying a pregnancy and having a baby. All medical and surgical procedures have risks, but the earlier in pregnancy you have an abortion, the safer it is"* Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists – 'About Abortion Care: What You Need to Know' <http://www.rcog.org.uk/womens-health/clinical-guidance/about-abortion-care-what-you-need-know>

**'There are no links between abortion and breast cancer'**

*"There is no reliable scientific evidence to suggest that there is a link between abortion and breast cancer"*

Breakthrough Breast Cancer. Their factsheet on abortion is available here:

[http://breakthrough.org.uk/breast\\_cancer/breast\\_cancer\\_facts/publications/index.html](http://breakthrough.org.uk/breast_cancer/breast_cancer_facts/publications/index.html) See also Cancer Research UK's statement that "pregnancies that end in miscarriage or abortion do not increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer later in life" <http://info.cancerresearchuk.org/news/archive/pressrelease/2004-03-26-pregnancies-that-end-in-miscarriage-or-abortion-do-not-increase-a-womans-risk-of-developing-breast-cancer#notes>

- **'If you have an abortion can you still have children in the future?'**

**'Abortion does not affect fertility and women are often fully fertile within just two weeks of having an abortion.'**

*"There are no proven associations between induced abortion and subsequent ectopic pregnancy, placenta praevia or infertility" (pg 9) "It has been shown that ovulation occurs within a month of first-trimester abortion in over 90% of women" (pg 61)* Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists 'The Care of Women Requesting Induced Abortion' <http://www.rcog.org.uk/files/rcog-corp/uploaded-files/NEBInducedAbortionfull.pdf>