

# Abortion: Common Questions, Myths and Concerns

There are a lot of myths about abortion as well as inaccurate and misleading information. Get the facts!

## **Do all crisis pregnancy centers / pregnancy advisory centers provide unbiased information about abortion?**

Some people do not trust women to make their own decision. A number of organizations may seem sympathetic, but because they oppose abortion, may not give you the information you need and may try to persuade you against having an abortion. They are often religion-based organizations with the specific aim of preventing abortion, although that will not always be clear to you. These organizations employ a range of tactics, including spreading a number of myths about abortion and its effects on women, such as those addressed below.

For a list of reputable agencies in Ireland and Northern Ireland, which will give you unbiased information about abortion, please see: <http://www.abortionsupport.org.uk/need-help/>



## **Common Myths About Abortion:**



### **Abortion causes breast cancer**

There is no evidence from the medical profession that abortion causes breast cancer. This was reiterated by a collaborative study analysing data from 83,000 women in 53 countries (The Lancet, 2004). The World Health Organization (2000) and The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (2004) share this conclusion.

### **Having an abortion will make it more difficult to get pregnant in the future**

There are few health risks associated with a straightforward abortion and no evidence that a medical abortion has any effect on future fertility.

### **Women who have an abortion are likely to suffer from “post abortion syndrome” or depression**

According to the American Psychiatric Association (2008), no scientific evidence exists to support the idea that women who have abortions experience so-called “post abortion syndrome”, and there is no credible evidence to show that elective abortions carried out on unwanted pregnancies pose a threat to women’s mental health. This finding is supported by The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (2008).

### **A woman’s partner has to give consent to an abortion**

Not true. It is solely a woman’s right to have an abortion or not.

### **It is illegal for women in Ireland and Northern Ireland to travel overseas for an abortion**

This is not true. Although abortion is illegal under most circumstances, it is not against the law to ask for and obtain advice or information about abortion, or to travel to a clinic in England (or any other country where abortion is legal) to have an abortion.

## **Is having an abortion a moral choice?**

Women juggle responsibility for their children, their jobs and their families. When a woman has an unplanned pregnancy, only she can decide on the right and moral decision for herself. Most women who have abortions already have children, and each woman wants to be the best parent she can. Women know that bringing a child into the world is a serious responsibility, and must feel ready for it. Abortion is a fact of life and a common event. Our mothers, sisters, daughters and friends have abortions, even if it’s not openly discussed.

### **All Irish women do not support the right to abortion:**

Some women struggle with feelings of guilt and shame because they feel that the decision to have an abortion would be judged by the community, or may be against their religion or faith. You may be comforted to know that every year thousands of women from Ireland and Northern Ireland have abortions, including many women of different faiths and religions. Public opinion is changing and becoming less prescriptive, even if abortion is rarely discussed. In 2010, an Irish Examiner/Red C Poll found that 60% of people in Ireland supported legal abortion. Also in Ireland in 2010, a Marie Stopes/YouGov opinion poll indicated that 78% of those questioned were in favour of abortion if the pregnancy is the result of rape or sexual abuse, or if the woman’s health is at risk. In Northern Ireland, a poll by the FPA in 2008 showed that 62% would support abortion in cases of rape and incest.

### **All Catholics are against abortion:**

Although the Catholic hierarchy prohibits abortion in all circumstances, many Catholics are more ambivalent. Opinions vary greatly, but most Catholics agree that abortions should be allowed, at least in some situations. A study undertaken in the US found that Catholic women there were as likely to have abortions as other women. Catholics may find information from the organization *Catholics for Choice* helpful: <http://www.catholicsforchoice.org/topics/abortion/default.asp>