

Second Trimester Abortion

FACT SHEET

What is a second trimester abortion?

A second trimester abortion is a brief surgical procedure to end an unplanned pregnancy. It is done between the 14th and 20th weeks after the first day of your last menstrual period. You will have a pelvic and ultrasound exam on the day of your procedure to confirm the length of time you have been pregnant and check for any complications.

When you check-in you will:

1. Fill out a medical history, insurance form, and consent forms.
2. Have your temperature, height, weight, blood pressure, and pulse checked.
3. Get a blood test to check if you are anemic and to determine your Rh factor.
4. Leave a urine sample for a pregnancy test and to check protein and sugar levels.
5. Talk about the procedure with a nurse to make sure you fully understand it. He or she will also discuss possible complications with you.
6. Have time to ask the nurse about any concerns that you may have.

The Abortion Procedure

If this will be your first pelvic exam, please let the nurse know before you see the physician.

Your physician will do a basic exam. This includes listening to your chest and lungs, checking your thyroid gland, and doing breast, pelvic, and ultrasound exams. Next, he or she will gently insert a speculum (a narrow metal or plastic instrument) into the vagina to hold it open. Your physician will then cleanse the cervix (the opening of the uterus) with a mild antiseptic solution.

There are two parts to this procedure: dilating (opening) the cervix and emptying the uterus.

Dilating the Cervix

You will be fully awake during both parts of the procedure. Your physician will inject a local anesthetic (pain medication) into your cervix. This will numb the cervix so that you don't feel

Dilating the Cervix (continued)

anything. Many do not feel the injection, while some say they feel a twinge. In some cases, your physician will give you a sedative to help you to relax.

One or more cervical dilators, made of expanding material, are inserted into your cervix. They will remain there for several hours. You may notice some cramping at this point, similar to what you would feel with your period.

You may need to return the next day for the second part of the procedure. In that case, you will be given detailed instructions before you go home.

If you change your mind, the dilator(s) must be removed. Serious complications can occur if you decide to continue a pregnancy once the dilator(s) have been inserted.

Emptying the Uterus

The contents of the uterus are removed through a suction tube and with the use of instruments. Medication to cause the uterus to contract and to help reduce the bleeding is often given. Pain medication, sedatives, or antibiotics may be necessary.

When the abortion procedure is over, you will rest in the Recovery Room. We will give you instructions on taking care of yourself for the next few days, including what you should do in the event of a complication. When your condition is stable and you are ready to leave, you will receive any needed prescriptions and follow-up instructions. Please make sure you have someone to take you home after the procedure.

Other Resources

Use these Kaiser Permanente resources for reliable health information:

- ❖ Connect to our Web site at kp.org to access health and drug encyclopedias, interactive programs, health classes, and much more.
- ❖ Check your *Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook*.
- ❖ Contact your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for health information, programs, or other resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse any brand names; any similar products may be used. Herbs and supplements are sold over-the-counter. Kaiser Permanente carries only herb categories for which some evidence exists to show that the herbs may be effective to treat certain medical conditions.