

Queensland Health

Termination of pregnancy in Queensland information for women

This factsheet aims to answer some commonly asked questions about changes to Queensland's termination of pregnancy law.

What is termination of pregnancy?

A termination of pregnancy is a deliberate ending of a pregnancy.

Termination of pregnancy law in Queensland

Up until 3 December 2018, termination of pregnancy was considered unlawful except in certain circumstances.

Queensland laws have recently changed to enable reasonable and safe access by women to terminations of pregnancy and to regulate the conduct of health practitioners in relation to terminations.

The *Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018* provides clarity for women, health practitioners and the community about the circumstances in which a termination is lawfully permitted.

Fast facts

- Termination of pregnancy is a legal medical procedure in Queensland from 3 December 2018.
- Termination of pregnancy is a decision to be made by you.
- A termination on request may be performed up to 22 weeks gestation.
- After 22 weeks gestation, a termination may be performed if two doctors agree.
- Where a doctor conscientiously objects to a termination, they must disclose their conscientious objection and refer you, or transfer your care, on to a health practitioner or service who, they believe can provide the requested service and does not hold a conscientious objection to termination of pregnancy.
- Safe access zones are established around premises offering termination services to protect your safety and wellbeing, and respect your privacy and dignity.



What this means for women

The new Queensland termination of pregnancy law means you can request a termination without fear of committing a criminal offence.

When a termination can be performed

If you are up to 22 weeks pregnant you may request a termination, for any reason, without disclosing your reason to the doctor.

If you are more than 22 weeks pregnant when you request a termination, two doctors must consider all your circumstances and agree the termination should be performed. The doctor must consider the medical circumstances relating to you and your pregnancy, your current and future physical, psychological and social circumstances, and any professional standards and guidelines that are relevant.

Who can perform a termination

A registered medical practitioner can perform a termination. A medical practitioner, nurse, midwife, pharmacist or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner may assist in a termination within their scope of practice.

A woman may consent to, assist in or perform a termination (e.g. by taking prescribed medication).

Conscientious objection

A doctor may refuse to provide or participate in terminations of pregnancy because it conflicts with the doctor's own personal beliefs, values or moral concerns. This constitutes a 'conscientious objection'. If this happens, the doctor must disclose their objection and refer you on to a health practitioner or service who they believe can provide the requested service, and does not hold a conscientious objection to termination of pregnancy.

If you feel your doctor has not done this, you, or any other person such as a family member, can make a complaint to the Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO). The OHO will assess the complaint and decide if a matter requires further action.

Safe access zones

To ensure you can access termination health services without interference and with privacy and dignity, safe access zones are established around premises providing termination services. A place is in the safe access zone if it is inside the premises or within 150m of the premises. It is an offence to engage in prohibited conduct inside a safe access zone.

If you are a young person

If you are a woman aged less than 18 years, it is your choice to involve your parents/guardians or not. Some young people under 18 years have the maturity to decide about a termination of pregnancy without their parents' or guardians' involvement. In certain circumstances you may be encouraged to talk to a health professional such as a social worker. This is to ensure you can make this decision for yourself and are well supported.

Termination services

The options available to you will depend on the gestation of your pregnancy, where you live, your personal circumstances and the type of termination procedure you prefer. Your GP, local Aboriginal Medical Service or local community health or women's health organisation can discuss your options with you.

Terminations in a public hospital

Some healthcare facilities may provide a limited number of appointments for terminations. Priority appointments for terminations will be given to women with complex health care needs and no ability to have a termination in the private sector where most terminations are performed.



Information and referral options

If you decide that termination of pregnancy could be an option for you, it may be helpful to have as much information as possible to assist you in making this decision.

Counselling is not mandatory however it is available.

If you are currently pregnant, or have been pregnant in the last 12 months, you may be eligible under Medicare to receive a maximum of three 30-minute support counselling services by an eligible GP, or eligible psychologist, social worker or mental health nurse on referral from a GP. It is your choice whether your partner attends any or all of the sessions with you. Your healthcare provider may charge out of pocket expenses.

For information on services, procedure, costs, locations, what happens on the day, and how you might feel afterwards, you can contact:

- **13 HEALTH**
13 43 25 84 is a phone line that provides health information, referral and services to the public.
- **Children By Choice**
Children by Choice 1800 177 725 (free call) offers free all-options pregnancy counselling, information and referrals Queensland-wide.
www.childrenbychoice.org.au
- **Women's Health Queensland**
1800 017 676 (free call) offers health promotion, information and education services for women and health professionals throughout Queensland.
www.womhealth.org.au
- **True Relationships and Reproductive Health**
provides expert reproductive and sexual health care.
www.true.org.au

If you need to travel

You may have to travel to reach a termination service. If so, you may be eligible for rebates from the Patient Travel Subsidy Scheme.

Talk to your local hospital or GP about this, or contact 13 HEALTH for more information.



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