

Teen Abortion Risks

Fact Sheet

*“Parents are faced with a shell of a person
and have no idea where they lost their child.”*

—Terri, who had a secret abortion as a teen

Suicide attempts -- 6 times more likely

- Teenagers are 6 times more likely to attempt suicide if they have had an abortion in the last six months than are teens who have not had an abortion.¹
- Teens who abort are up to 4 times more likely to commit suicide than adults who abort,² and a history of abortion is likely to be associated with adolescent suicidal thinking.³
- Overall suicide rates are 6 times higher among women who abort.⁴
- Teens who abort are more likely to develop psychological problems,⁵ and are nearly three times more likely to be admitted to mental health hospitals than teens in general.⁶
- About 40% of teen abortions take place with no parental involvement,⁷ leaving parents in the dark about subsequent emotional or physical problems.
- Teens risk further injury or death because they are unlikely to inform parents of any physical complications. Some examples of teens who died from complications or suicide after they had abortions without telling their parents:⁸

Holly Patterson, California, died at age 18

Erica Richardson, Maryland, died at age 16

Dawn Ravanell, New York, died at age 13

Tamia Russell, Detroit, died at age 15

Sandra Kaiser, St. Louis, died at age 14 of suicide

Sandra died 3 weeks after her half-sister took her for an abortion without telling Sandra's mother, who could have warned doctors about Sandra's history of psychological problems that put her at risk for more problems after abortion.⁹

- Teens are 5 times more likely to seek subsequent help for psychological and emotional problems compared to their peers who carry “unwanted pregnancies” to term.¹⁰
- Teens are 3 times more likely to report subsequent trouble sleeping, and nine times more likely to report subsequent marijuana use after abortion.¹⁰
- Among studies comparing abortion vs. carrying to term, worse outcomes are associated with abortion, even when the pregnancy is unplanned.¹⁰
- 65% higher risk of clinical depression among women who abort.¹¹
- 65% experienced multiple symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) among women who abort.¹²
- 64% of women who had undergone an abortion reported that they felt pressured by others to abort.¹²

Acute Pain. Infertility. Risk of Death.

- **Acute pain**
Teens report more severe pain during the abortion procedure vs. adult women. One study of pain during 1st trimester abortions found severe acute pain comparable to childbirth or cancer. Pain scores were significantly higher for teens.¹³
- **Lacerations up to twice as likely**
Teens are up to twice as likely to experience dangerous cervical lacerations during abortion compared to older women,

continued ▶

probably because they have smaller cervixes which are more difficult to dilate or grasp with instruments.¹⁴

- **Infertility and life-threatening complications**
Teens are at higher risk for post-abortion infections such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and endometritis because their bodies are more susceptible to infection and they are less likely than older women to follow instructions for medical care.¹⁵ These infections increase their risk of infertility, hysterectomy, ectopic pregnancy, and other serious complications.¹⁶
- **Breast cancer risk 30-50% higher**
An early full-term birth reduces breast cancer risk by as much as 1/3, while abortion of a first pregnancy carries a 30- to 50% increased risk of breast cancer.¹⁷ More than 90% of those who abort at 17 or younger have not had a previous full-term pregnancy, compared to 78% of patients age 18-19 and 49% of abortion patients overall.¹⁸
- **Teens more likely to abort because of pressure from their parents or partner¹⁹**
- **Teens more likely to report being misinformed in pre-abortion counseling²⁰**

Teens more likely to have riskier late-term abortions

According to the CDC, approximately 30% of abortions among teens take place at 13 weeks gestation or greater, compared to only 12% among women in general.²¹ Late-term abortions are associated with ...

- **More severe psychological complications**
This is often because the woman wants to continue the pregnancy but ends up aborting because of pressure from others or her circumstances.²² Women who have 2nd-trimester abortions are more likely to express ambivalence, regret, moral or religious objections, and to have a more favorable attitude toward the unborn child than women having 1st-trimester abortions.²³
- **Higher risk of serious physical complications**
Teens who abort in the 2nd and 3rd trimester face a greater risk of physical complications, including endometritis, intrauterine adhesions, PID, subsequent miscarriages, ectopic pregnancies, ruptured uterus, and death.²⁴
- **Trouble with later pregnancies for mother and baby**
D&E abortions, frequently used in the second trimester, are associated with low birth weight in later pregnancies, which can lead to health and developmental problems for the baby, including cerebral palsy.²⁵

Grief, trauma and self-destructive outcomes

- **Teens who abort are twice as likely as their peers to abuse alcohol, marijuana, or cocaine.²⁶**
- * **Teens have greater difficulty coping** after abortion,²⁷ leading to problems such as suicide, psychological problems, substance abuse, and difficulty in relationships
- **Negative effects on relationships and parenting.** Teens who report “being particularly fond of children” do not do as well psychologically after an abortion.²⁸ Teenagers who have abortions often have problems regarding sexuality and parenting later in life.²⁹
- **A lonely, traumatic experience.** The abortion procedure itself is considered by many teenagers to be stressful and associated with feelings of guilt, depression, and a sense of isolation.³⁰
- **A nightmare that doesn’t end.** Teens are more likely to report severe nightmares and to score higher on scales measuring antisocial traits, paranoia, drug abuse, and psychotic delusions than are older abortion patients.³¹
- **Four times higher risk of repeat abortion.** Teens who abort are likely to become pregnant again within the next few years.³² Among pregnant teens, those who had had an abortion were at least 4 times more likely to abort.³³

For additional information on post-abortion research and links to published studies, visit www.afterabortion.org

Citations

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