

## MESSAGE TO PATIENTS COMING FOR A SURGICAL ABORTION

Welcome to Clinique médicale Fémina,

Your decision to have an abortion instead of continuing with your pregnancy may have been difficult for you, but be assured that it will be entirely respected by all members of our staff. You will be treated with understanding, empathy, kindness and competence. Our goal is to provide you with an abortion that will be performed in the best possible conditions.

Below you will find the information and recommendations that will be given to you when you call us to make an appointment :

- Bring your Quebec healthcare insurance card (RAMQ) with a valid expiration date in order to receive our services free of charge. If you do not have a RAMQ card, you will need to incur the cost of the service. Our secretary will provide you with the financial details.
- You need to have fasted for 3 hours (no liquid or food) before the time of your appointment. If you are diabetic taking insulin, please call us for specific instructions.
- No drugs or alcohol 24 hours prior to and 24 hours after the appointment.
- If you are taking any medication prescribed by a doctor, take it at the regular time and at the usual dose.
- It is recommended that you have someone take you home after the appointment.
- Do not drive any motor vehicle until 24 hours after the procedure.
- Once your appointment has been made with the receptionist, you will receive a confirmation of this appointment by text message a few days before the scheduled date. **You will then have to confirm your presence or cancel this appointment by following the instructions indicated in the message.**

Once the formalities are completed at the reception desk and after you have read the pre and post-abortion documents, you will be called in by the counselor. This is not a psychosocial evaluation about your choice and reasons for having an abortion; it is an informal meeting to answer your questions, alleviate your fears and set you at ease. The counselor will review with you the medical questionnaire; then, if you wish, you may discuss with her the subject of birth control. If, after the interview, you have other questions or worries, feel free to ask the medical staff. You have the right to know exactly what to expect.

As we suggested, somebody probably came with you. People close to you play an important role throughout the whole process. Their support and presence before and the days and weeks following the abortion are essential. At the clinic, their role will be limited

but nevertheless instrumental. To ensure objectivity, you will meet with the counselor on your own at least for the first part of the interview. If you then wish to have somebody with you, feel free to ask the counselor who will be happy to grant your request. The access to the operating room will be limited to just you. During the procedure itself, experience has shown that you will be better supported physically and emotionally if you are accompanied by an experienced professional who is accustomed to this type of situation.

Shortly after the interview with the counselor, the recovery room nurse will call you to get you ready for the procedure. She will give you a hospital gown and will bring you to a private bathroom where you will be able to change and empty your bladder, once a urine sample has been collected to test for chlamydia and gonorrhoea (STIs). She will then show you where to leave your clothes and bring you to a comfortable bed where you can wait to be called.

In the operating room an ultrasound examination will be performed first; this is a simple and painless procedure done on an empty bladder. A small device will be placed on your stomach or in your vagina, coated with jelly, which transmits a picture of your internal organs and their contents. This way, we can tell more precisely how many weeks pregnant you are.

Once this is completed, the nurse, who will be by your side throughout the whole procedure, will position you on the operating table in the lithotomy position (same as with a gynaecological exam).

As well a plastic catheter will be inserted in a vein in your arm by which you will be given intravenous medication. This way, we can administer any medication you may need during or after the procedure without any further manipulation. It will remain in place as long as you are in the clinic. All of this is to ensure that the abortion is performed in the safest possible conditions. From the same catheter, the nurse will draw a few drops of blood to determine a part of your blood type called Rhesus (Rh) if you are at more than 8 weeks of pregnancy. About 15% of the population do not have this in their blood. If that is your case, you are confirmed to have Rh negative blood and the nurse will give you an injection of immunoglobulin (similar to a vaccine) to help prevent your body from producing antibodies in order to protect a future pregnancy.

Most of the patients are given a strong painkiller (via the catheter in their arm) that will prevent most of the pain and anxiety that could be experienced during the procedure. Each patient has different needs and we respect that. Again, be assured that we use the safest medications and that the dosage is adapted to each woman's needs.

A nurse will be by your side at all times to take care of you, check your blood pressure, your heart and respiratory rates, the amount of oxygen in your blood and thus ensure your well-being. While explaining the different stages of the intervention, she will be a warm and human presence throughout the intervention.

Having prepared the surgical instruments, the doctor will start by inserting a warm speculum in your vagina. Then, the doctor will proceed with the local anesthesia which may cause numbness around the mouth and buzzing in the ears. The technique that will be used to perform the abortion is dilation and suction with or without curettage and is the safest technique. The surgical procedure takes about 15 minutes.

We will then take you to the recovery room where you will rest until you feel ready to leave (minimum of 1 hour). We will ensure that you are comfortable, that your bleeding is minimal and we will offer you a light snack. During that time, we will also review with you the post-abortion instructions. Before you leave the clinic, we will make sure that you are feeling sufficiently well, that all of your questions have been answered, including questions on the contraception method you have chosen and that you have received all the necessary prescriptions and medications.

## **HERE ARE A FEW FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What are the risks in undergoing the procedure?**

The most frequent complication (about 1 to 2% of cases) is “tissue retention” (also known as incomplete abortion). Some tissues, not the pregnancy itself, are always left in the uterus after an abortion, even if your doctor performed the suction and curettage with a state-of-the-art technique. The uterus will usually expel those tissues during the normal bleeding that occurs during the first week following the abortion. In some cases, the uterus will not do its job correctly and/or for reasons related to uterine anatomy, more tissue than average is left in the uterus. This is the phenomenon called incomplete abortion. The signs and symptoms of that will be abnormal bleeding and cramping usually in the days or weeks after the procedure. A curettage and suction will be performed at our clinic which will solve the problem. It does not mean that your abortion was not performed properly, but rather it is a risk related to the procedure itself that is, sometimes, unavoidable. You will be given our emergency phone number to use after business hours of the clinic if you think you have an urgent problem. Try to avoid going to the hospital emergency room without calling us first.

Screening of patients with particular risks (uterine anomaly, previous incomplete abortion) helps us reducing the rate of complications.

Other possible complications are:

- Hemorrhage
- Infection
- Laceration of the cervix
- Perforation of the uterus
- Unsuccessful abortion
- Intrauterine adhesions (scar tissue in the uterus)

These complications are very rare and the clinic uses strict protocols to deal with it.

### **Will I experience a lot of pain?**

Probably not at all or only mild pain will be experienced. Since you are not under general anesthesia, you will experience sensations. However, we use medications that significantly reduce pain and anxiety. Our ultimate goal is to provide you with a safe and painless abortion. Our doctors are gentle and work with great care while being attentive to your needs. Medications will be adjusted according to the need of each patient. One of the medications used creates a form of amnesia so that patients will have no recollection of the surgical procedure or only a very vague one.

### **Is there any chance for me to become sterile after this procedure?**

We use a technique which is recognized as being the safest and instruments are sterilized in the same way as in hospital operating rooms. We therefore minimize the risk of any complication which could affect future fertility. Studies of women who have had several abortions show that their fertility remained unaffected (except for certain major complications which occur very rarely).

Finally, we thank you for your trust and wish for your visit to take place under the best possible conditions. If you have any questions, comments or suggestions, feel free to let us know. Your well-being is our main concern.

## **MESSAGE TO PEOPLE WHO HAVE COME WITH A SOMEONE UNDERGOING A PROCEDURE**

When a woman makes appointment, we always suggest that she does not come alone. A procedure like that is not an easy experience to go through for many reasons. Empathy, attention, patience and the kindness of the people around her are very important in supporting her through the situation. Women are given medications adapted to their needs to make the procedure as easy as possible; it is preferable for them to be accompanied when returning home.

Many years of experience have shown that the presence of a partner or friend in the operating room is rarely helpful to the woman. An experienced nurse, who knows the technique and medications being used, can provide an accurate explanation of what is taking place and knows what kind of sensations the woman could expect. Please be assured that her presence will be a warm and supportive one.

She will stay in the recovery room for at least 1 hour or more if she needs to. During that time or even beforehand, you may want to leave the clinic for a while. Let us know and we will tell you approximatively when she will be ready to go home.

Women go through the process in their own way and it is necessary to give them the time that they need.

All the information about the procedure and post-abortion care is available upon request. By reading it, you will be better equipped to help the person you have come here with.

We truly appreciate your collaboration.

## **POST-SURGERY INFORMATION**

After an abortion, it is important to take care of yourself both physically and emotionally. It is normal to experience various feelings such as sadness or anger, to feel relieved or proud of one's choice. It may happen that you don't feel like having sexual intercourse; respect your own rhythm. Each woman reacts in her own way.

Physically, we suggest that you rest the day of the abortion. Most women resume their usual activities the day following the procedure with their pregnancy symptoms fading away over the next few days. We recommend waiting one week before participating in strenuous exercise.

### **INFORMATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Do not drive for 24 hours.
- Do not drink alcohol or use street drugs for 24 hours.

**TO AVOID INFECTIONS, we recommend the following for one week after the procedure:**

- **Do not put anything inside the vagina.** This would include:
  - No sexual relations with penetration
  - No fingers
  - No suppositories
  - No vaginal douches
  - No public hot tubs
- **Use only sanitary pads (no tampons or menstrual cup)**

**AFTER THE PROCEDURE, IT IS NORMAL:**

- Not to bleed
- To bleed immediately afterwards
- To bleed a few days afterwards
- To bleed more or less heavily with or without blood clots, during the first week

- To experience light bleeding (spotting) for up to 3 weeks
- To have a positive pregnancy test for the first 3-4 weeks

N.B. The fact that you bleed after an abortion does not mean that you are having your period. Your real period will appear within 4 to 7 weeks, if you are not on the contraceptive pill. However, you can get pregnant immediately after an abortion, even while you are bleeding.

### **IT IS ALSO NORMAL:**

To have cramps and to feel pain in your lower abdomen, for a few hours or even for a few days

N.B. to relieve the pain, take Ibuprofen, 200 mg (Advil or Motrin) 3 tablets every 4 to 6 hrs. If you have prescription for Anaprox or Ponstan, you can use it as prescribed. Avoid these medications if you are allergic to Aspirin. In this case, you should take acetaminophen 500 mg (Tylenol or Atasol) 2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours. If that does not work, use Tylenol 1 or Atasol 8, 2 or 3 pills every 4 to 6 hours except if you are allergic to codeine.

**About 3 or 5 days after an abortion, many women experience heavier bleeding with blood clots, sometimes accompanied with a low-grade fever. These symptoms last between 24 to 48 hours and are NORMAL. We recommend: rest, a hot water bottle and analgesics: either Advil or Motrin, 200 mg, 3 tabs every 4-6 hours. If you have a prescription of Anaprox or Ponstan, you can take it as prescribed.**

### **WHAT IS << NOT NORMAL >> AFTER THE PROCEDURE:**

- Bleeding that makes you change your pad every 30 minutes for 6 hours in a row
- Heavy bleeding (with or without blood clots) that may start once again more than one week after the abortion.
- Non-stop acute pain which is not relieved with Advil, Mortin, Ponstan or Anaprox
- Fever higher than 38 °C
- Pregnancy symptoms that do not fade away after 1 week (however, breasts may remain swollen and sensitive for a longer period of time).
- To have a positive pregnancy test more than 4 weeks after the abortion.

If you experience any of these symptoms, please call us at the clinic. If the clinic is closed and your bleeding is very heavy, your pain is unbearable or your fever is higher than 38 °C, please call us at the emergency phone number.

### **SCREENING:**

A test was done before the procedure to detect sexually transmitted diseases (gonorrhea and Chlamydia). If a result comes back positive, we will contact you at the phone number you have provided. Please note that the cervical cytology (Pap test) was not done during your abortion.

**ANTIBIOTICS:**

If antibiotics have been prescribed or given to you, it is very important that you start taking them today and that you carefully read the instructions that came with it.

**HORMONAL CONTRACEPTION:**

If you choose to take the pill or the patch (EVRA), you must start on the Sunday following the abortion. If you choose the ring (NUVARING), follow the instructions given to you by the nurse before your departure.

**N.B. You are not well protected before you have used your method for 7 days.**

If you have any questions or if you feel there is something wrong, contact us at the clinic Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 4h45 p.m. at 514 843-7904.

If the clinic is closed and you feel that your condition is an emergency, use the **EMERGENCY PHONE NUMBER that was given to you** and leave your name and phone number. A qualified member of the clinic is available to answer your call. Between 8 pm and 8 am, please call 811 (Info-Santé).

Take good care of yourself!

The staff of Clinique médicale Fémina