

Psychological Risks

Traumatic Aftereffects of Abortion

Suicide

- **6 times higher suicide rate.** Two national records-based studies from Finland revealed that aborting women were 6 times more likely to commit suicide in the following year than were delivering women.¹
- **Up to 60% have suicidal thoughts.** According to a recent study in a major scientific journal, 31% had thoughts of suicide after abortion. In another survey, approximately 60% of women with post-abortion problems reported suicidal thoughts, with 28% attempting suicide and half of those attempting suicide two or more times.²
- **154% higher risk of suicide.** Another study of more than 173,000 American women who had abortions or carried to term found that, during the eight years after the pregnancy ended, women who aborted had a 154% higher risk of suicide than women who carried to term.³
- **Higher suicide risks for teens.** Teen girls are 6 times more likely to attempt suicide if they have had an abortion in the last six months than girls who have not had an abortion, and 2-4 times more likely to commit suicide after abortion compared to adult women.⁴

Depression

- **65% higher risk of clinical depression.** A longitudinal study of American women revealed that those who aborted were 65% more likely to be at risk of long-term clinical depression after controlling for age, race, education, marital status, history of divorce, income, and prior psychiatric state.⁵
- **Depression risk remained high, even when pregnancies were unplanned.** Among a national sample of women with unintended first pregnancies, aborting women were at significantly higher risk of long-term clinical depression compared to delivering women.⁶

Trauma

- **65% report symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder.** In a study of U.S. and Russian women who had abortions, 65% of U.S. women experienced multiple symptoms of PTSD, which they attributed to their abortions. Slightly over 14% reported all the symptoms necessary for a clinical diagnosis of abortion-induced PTSD, and 25% said they did not receive adequate counseling. 64% said they felt pressured by others to abort.⁷
- **60% said they felt “part of me died.”** In the above study, 60% of American women reported that they felt “part of me died” after their abortions.⁷
- **Twice as likely to be hospitalized.** Compared to women who deliver, women who abort are more than twice as likely to be subsequently hospitalized for psychiatric illness within six months.⁸
- **More outpatient psychiatric care.** Analysis of California Medicaid records shows that women who have abortions subsequently require significantly more treatments for psychiatric illness through outpatient care.⁹
- **Multiple disorders and regrets.** A study of post-abortion patients only 8 weeks after their abortions found that 44% reported nervous disorders, 36% experienced sleep disturbances, 31% had regrets about their decision, and 11% had been prescribed psychotropic medicine by their family doctor.¹⁰
- **Generalized anxiety disorder.** Among women with no previous history of anxiety, women who aborted a first, unplanned pregnancy were 30% more likely to subsequently report all the symptoms associated with a diagnosis for generalized anxiety disorder, compared to women who carried to term.¹¹

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- **Sleep disorders.** In a study of women with no known history of sleep disorders, women were more likely to be treated for sleep disorders after having an abortion compared to giving birth (nearly twice as likely in the first 180 days afterwards). Numerous studies have shown that trauma victims often experience sleep difficulties.¹²
- **Disorders not pre-existing.** In a New Zealand study, women had higher rates of suicidal behavior, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and other disorders after abortion. The study found that these were not pre-existing problems.¹³

Eating disorders & substance abuse

- **39% had eating disorders.** In a survey of women with post-abortion problems, 39% reported subsequent eating disorders.¹⁴
- **Five-fold higher risk of drug and alcohol abuse.** Excluding women with a prior history of substance abuse, those who abort their first pregnancy are 5 times more likely to report subsequent drug and alcohol abuse vs. those who give birth.¹⁵
- **Substance abuse during subsequent pregnancies.** Among women giving birth for the first time, women with a history of abortion are five times more likely to use drugs, twice as likely to use alcohol, and ten times more likely to use marijuana *during* their pregnancy, compared to women who have not had an abortion.¹⁶
- **Alcohol abuse linked to other problems.** Alcohol abuse after abortion has been linked to violent behavior, divorce or separation, auto accidents, and job loss.¹⁷

Coercion, guilt, repressed grief

- **Coerced to violate their beliefs, values and conscience.** The “decision” to abort is often based on the demands or threats of others — even when it violates the woman’s own moral beliefs and desire to keep the baby.¹⁸ This is a known risk factor for psychological complications after abortion.¹⁹
- **64% of abortions involve coercion.** A recent study of women who had abortions found that 64% of American women reported that they felt pressured by others to abort.⁷
- **Common negative reactions.** In a survey of women reporting post-abortion problems, 80% experienced guilt, 83% regret, 79% loss, 62% anger and 70% depression.²
- **Forbidden grief.** After abortion, societal expectation, personal shame and public and professional denial result in repressed grief, causing serious problems including clinical depression, eating disorders, self-destructive lifestyles and suicide.²⁰

Divorce and chronic relationship problems

- **Women with a history of abortion are significantly more likely to subsequently have shorter relationships and more divorces.** This may be due to lowered self-esteem, greater distrust of males, sexual dysfunction, substance abuse, and increased levels of depression, anxiety, and volatile anger.²¹
- **More poverty and single parenthood after repeat abortions.** Women who have more than one abortion (nearly half of those seeking abortions each year)²² are more likely to become single parents and to require public assistance.²³
- **30-50% of post-abortive women report experiencing sexual dysfunctions** such as promiscuity, loss of pleasure from intercourse, increased pain, and aversion to sex and/or men.²³

Not counseled before or after the abortion, many wanted alternatives

In a study of American and Russian women who experienced abortion:

- 67% of American women reported that they received no counseling beforehand

- 84% reported they received inadequate counseling beforehand
- 79% were not counseled about alternatives
- 54% were not sure about their decision at the time.⁷

Unresolved trauma and child abuse

- **144 % more likely to abuse their children.** One study found that women with a history of induced abortion were 144% more likely to physically abuse their children than women who had not had an abortion.²⁴
- **Child abuse linked to unresolved trauma.** Abortion is linked with increased violent behavior, alcohol and drug abuse, replacement pregnancies, depression, and poor maternal bonding with later children. These factors are closely associated with child abuse and would appear to confirm a link between unresolved post-abortion trauma and subsequent child abuse.²⁵

Repeat abortions, self-punishment and risk factors

- **48% of aborting women have had a previous abortion.**²² Women who have had an abortion are 4 times more likely to abort a current pregnancy than those with no prior abortion history.²¹ This may reflect aspects of self-punishment.²⁶
- **Studies have identified factors that put women at risk for negative reactions to abortion,** including feeling pressured into unwanted abortions, lack of support, being more religious, prior emotional or psychological problems, adolescence, being unsure of her decision, and receiving little or no counseling prior to abortion. An analysis of 63 medical studies that identify risk factors concluded that the number of women suffering from negative emotional reactions could be dramatically reduced if abortion clinics screened women for these risk factors.¹⁹

To learn more, see **Forbidden Grief: The Unspoken Pain of Abortion.** To order, call: **Acorn Books: 1-888-412-2676.**

Citations for *Psychological Risks of Abortion* Fact Sheet

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