

Warning Signs

Risk Factors That Put Women At Higher Risk

Factors That Put Women at Greater Risk of Psychological Problems After Abortion

Research has found that women and girls with certain risk factors are at greater risk of psychological problems after abortion. These warning signs of higher risk include:

- Feeling pressured to have the abortion.
- Feeling attached to the unborn child.
- A history of psychological illness or emotional instability.
- Lack of support from partner or parents.
- Strong religious convictions against abortion.
- A second or third-trimester pregnancy
- Low expectations of coping well.
- Younger women, especially adolescents.
- Conflict of conscience or moral beliefs against abortion.¹

20%-70% Abort Despite Reservations, Therefore at High Risk

The National Abortion Federation, which represents abortion businesses, reports that one in five women at their clinics are having abortions despite being philosophically and morally opposed to it and are therefore at a higher risk of adverse emotional reactions.² This ambivalence may also be a sign that the woman feels coerced or pressured to abort or believes she has no other choice, another factor that puts her at greater risk. One study found 64 percent reported feeling pressured to abort, and more than half felt rushed or uncertain about aborting.³

Pro-Choice Research: Screen for Risk Factors, Err on the Side of Health

Researchers who support abortion have found, using just five screening criteria, that 68 percent of the 326 women seeking an abortion had risk factors for a negative psychiatric outcome that should have been used to refer the patients for more extensive counseling. Of this high-risk group, 72 percent actually did develop negative post-abortion reactions during the three-month follow-up period. “From a clinician’s point of view,” the researchers concluded, “this result can be viewed as erring on the right side, for a [pre-abortion screening] system that tends to select more women for counseling than is actually necessary is preferable to the reverse.”⁴ But despite this finding and recommendation, most abortion businesses still do not do any screening for risk factors before abortion.

To learn more about this issue and legislative efforts to stop unwanted, unsafe and unnecessary abortions, visit www.stopforcedabortions.com

Citations

1. For a listing of supporting studies, see Reardon, D.C., “Abortion Decisions and the Duty to Screen: Clinical, Ethical and Legal Implications of Predictive Risk Factors of Post-Abortion Maladjustment,” *The Journal of Contemporary Health Law and Policy*, 20(1): 33-114, 2003.
2. Woo, J., “Abortion Doctor’s Patients Broaden Suits,” *Wall Street Journal*, Oct 28, 1994, B12:1.
3. Rue, V.M., et. al., “Induced abortion and traumatic stress: A preliminary comparison of American and Russian women,” *Medical Science Monitor* 10(10): SR5-16, 2004.
4. Belsey, E.M., et al., “Predictive Factors in Emotional Response to Abortion: King’s Termination Study - IV,” *Soc. Sci. & Med.*, 11:71-82 (1977).