

Selected Summary of the Literature on Induced Abortion & Adolescence

Adolescents were significantly more likely to be dissatisfied with their choice of abortion than adult women. Adolescents are more likely to feel pressured to abort, report being misinformed in the preabortion counseling, to report greater severity of psychological stress postabortion, and are more likely to have second-trimester abortions which carry greater postabortion psychological risks. (Franz, W. & Reardon, D. [1992]. *Differential Impact of Abortion on Adolescents & Adults. Adolescence* 27:105, 162-172)

Adolescents are more likely postabortion to have suicidal ideation than adult women. Twenty-nine percent of one sample of adolescent aborters made suicidal gestures. (Campbell, N., Franco, K. & Jurs, [1988]. *Abortion in Adolescence. Adolescence* 23:92, 813-823)

When compared to women who have not aborted, women who have elected abortion are more likely to have considered suicide. (Commonwealth Fund [1993] *Health of American Women, N.Y., N.Y.* & Gissler, M. [1996] *Suicides after Pregnancy in Finland, 1987-94. British Medical Journal* 313:1431-1434.)

In one state study, if a girl had undergone an abortion within the last 6 months she was 10 times more likely to have attempted suicide than if she had not had an abortion in that period. (Garfinkel, B. et al. [1986]. *Stress, Depression & Suicide: A Study of Adolescents in Minnesota. Responding to High Risk Youth. Mpls., MN: Minnesota Extension Service, University of Minnesota.*)

The risk of suicide for adolescents can increase during the "anniversary period" of the abortion or around the date when the pregnancy would have gone to term. (Tischler, C. [1981]. *Adolescent Suicide Attempts Following Elective Abortion. Pediatrics* 68:5, 670.)

Teenagers who do not tell their parents about their abortion have an increased incidence of emotional problems and feelings of guilt. (Rosenfeld, J. [1992]. *Emotional Responses to Therapeutic Abortion. American Family Physician.* 45:1, 137-140.)

Postabortion symptoms appear to be more dramatic and severe for adolescents vs. older women. (Wallerstein, J. et al., [1972]. *Psychological Sequelae of Therapeutic Abortion in Young Unmarried Women. Archives of General Psychiatry* 27, 828-832.)

Many teenagers believe abortion is traumatic in most cases. (Stone, R. & Waszak, C. [1992] *Adolescent Knowledge and Attitudes About Abortion. Family Planning Perspectives* 24:2, 52-58.)

Physical or sexual abuse was significantly related to abortion, and abortion and trauma were significantly correlated. (Borins, E. & Forsythe, P. [1985]. *Past Trauma and Present Functioning of Patients Attending a Women's Psychiatric Clinic*. *American Journal of Psychiatry* 142:4, 460-463.)

Two thirds of a sample of pregnant adolescents had been sexually abused pre-pregnancy. (Boyer, D. & Fine, D. [1992]. *Sexual Abuse as a Factor in Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Maltreatment*. *Family Planning Perspectives* 24:1, 4-7.)

The experience of the abortion procedure itself is considered by many teens to be stressful and associated with feelings of guilt, depression and a sense of isolation. (Biro, F. et al. [1986]. *Acute and Long-Term Consequences of Adolescents Who Choose Abortions*. *Pediatric Annals* 15:10, 667-672.)

Teenagers are particularly vulnerable to post-abortion problems. (Zakus, G. & Wilday, S. [1987]. *Adolescent Abortion Option*. *Social Work in Health Care* 12:4, 77-91.)

Almost all adolescent subjects experienced the abortion procedure as frightening, dangerous & punitive, often temporarily overwhelming. (Barglow, P. & Weinstein, S. [1973]. *Therapeutic Abortion During Adolescence: Psychiatric Observations*. *Journal of Youth & Adolescence* 2:4, 331-342.)

Young mothers who have terminated a pregnancy see the world as a much more negative place, experience more anxiety, pessimism and much more bodily pain and dysfunction as well as see themselves in a much more negative light compared to women who have never terminated. They also describe their thinking as cloudy and more impulsive. (Ajzenstat, J. [1994] *Going It Alone*. Toronto: Palmerston Press.)

Adolescence is now considered a risk factor for post-abortion traumatization. (Speckard, A. & Rue, V. [1992]. *Post-abortion Syndrome: An Emerging Public Health Concern*. *Journal of Social Issues* 48:3, 95-120.)

10 - 20% of adolescents report negative emotional adjustment post-abortion. (Burnell, G. & Norfleet, M. [1987]. *Women's Self-Reported Responses to Abortion*. *Journal of Psychology* 12:1, 71-76.)

Younger women tend to experience greater emotional trauma than older women. (Osofsky, H. & Osofsky, J. [1973]. *Psychological Effects of Abortion*. In H. Osofsky & J. Osofsky, *The Abortion Experience: Psychological and Medical Impact*. Hagerstown, MD: Harper & Row; Adler, N. [1979]. *Abortion: A Social-Psychological Perspective*. *Journal of Social Issues* 35, 100-119; Payne, E. et al. [1976]. *Outcome Following Therapeutic Abortion*. *Archives of General Psychiatry* 33, 725-733; Adler, N. & Dolcini, P. [1986]. *Psychological Issues in Abortion for Adolescents*. In G. Melton

(ed.) **Adolescent Abortion: Psychological and Legal Issues.** Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press; Wallerstein, J. et al., [1972]. *Psychological Sequelae of Therapeutic Abortion in Young Unmarried Women.* **Archives of General Psychiatry** 27, 828-832.)

Teens are disproportionately more likely to have 2nd trimester abortions which carry greater risks of postabortion negative sequelae. (Turell, S., Armsworth, M. & Gaa, J. [1990]. *Emotional Response to Abortion: A Critical Review of the Literature.* **Women & Therapy** 9:4, 49-68.)

Women who have repeat abortions showed significantly higher scores on interpersonal sensitivity, paranoid ideation, phobic anxiety and sleep disturbance when compared to women who experienced one abortion. (Freeman, E. et al., [1980]. *Emotional Distress Patterns Among Women Having First or Repeat Abortions.* **Obstetrics & Gynecology** 55:5, 630.)

When compared to black adolescents who carried to term, young black women who elected to terminate their pregnancies scored lower on CPI scores of psychological-mindedness, self-control, achievement via conformance, good impression and commonality. (Falk, R., Gispert, M. & Baucom, D. [1981]. *Personality Factors Related to Black Teenage Pregnancy & Abortion.* **Psychology of Women Quarterly** 5:5, 737-745.)

Adolescents tend to be more influenced in the abortion decision making by significant others, i.e., mother or friends, than by their own beliefs or attitudes. (Brazzell, J. & Acock, A. [1988] *Influence of Attitudes, Significant Others, and Aspirations on How Adolescents Intend to Resolve a Premarital Pregnancy.* **Journal of Marriage and the Family** 50, 413-425.)

After one year, 48% of aborting adolescents said they would reconsider their decision. (Robbins, J. [1984]. *Out of Wedlock Abortion and Delivery: The Importance of the Male Partner.* **Social Problems** 31, 334-350.)

Never pregnant adolescents manifested significantly higher measures of self-esteem than adolescents who had one abortion or a repeat abortion. (Deutsch, M. [1982]. *Personality Factors, Self-Concept, and Family Variables Related to First Time and Repeat Abortion-Seeking Behavior in Adolescent Women.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Washington, D.C.: American University.)

Adolescents are generally in need of more counseling and guidance regarding abortion than adult women. (Gold, J. [1989]. *Adolescents and Abortion.* In N. Stotland (ed.) **Psychiatric Aspects of Abortion.** Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 187-195.)