

Information about applying for termination (abortion) after pregnancy week 12

In Norway, women have the right to abortion on demand within the first twelve weeks of gestation (11 weeks and 6 days). If you wish to have an abortion after the 12-week time limit, you must apply to a special medical assessment board – called an ‘abortion board’ (Norwegian: ‘abortnemnd’ or ‘primærnemnd’) – that will determine whether or not to grant you an abortion.

The duration of a pregnancy is calculated from the first day of the last menstrual period, but is determined more precisely by an ultrasound scan. You have the right to receive the information you believe you need in order to decide to terminate a pregnancy.

To apply for an abortion after the 12th week of gestation (11 weeks and 6 days), you can contact a hospital directly, your regular GP, a gynaecologist or another medical doctor. It is important to get an appointment as soon as possible. If you are uncertain about when you had your last menstrual period or if your periods are irregular, it is important to mention this when contacting the doctor/hospital.

If you have not provided a written statement of your own explaining the reasons why you are applying to terminate the pregnancy, the doctor you see is required by law to write such a statement. The doctor sends this statement, together with your application for abortion and all the relevant and necessary medical information, to a hospital-based abortion board. You can choose which hospital you want the application to be sent to, provided that the hospital has an abortion board.

As at 1 January 2016, the following hospitals have abortion boards: [more than 30 of Norway's hospitals](#). The abortion boards in Norway annually assess around 650-800 applications for pregnancy termination after the end of the 12th week of gestation.

In Norway, abortions after the end of the 12th week of gestation are only performed at public hospitals and are not available at private clinics. The abortion is performed as a medical abortion, meaning that you will be given medication to induce birth contractions for a vaginal delivery.

What is an abortion board?

An abortion board assesses applications for termination of pregnancies after the 12th week of gestation. The board is composed of two medical doctors. One of them must be employed by the department that carries out abortions at the hospital.

A few days after submitting your application you will be called in for a preliminary medical examination at the hospital and will then be invited to a meeting with the abortion board. This meeting is an opportunity to describe your situation in person. You will be able to explain why you wish to terminate the pregnancy. The law requires that the abortion board takes

into consideration how you assess your situation and the abortion board's decision must be reached in consultation with you.

You have the right to attend the meeting with the abortion board that will be assessing your application, but Norwegian law does not require you to attend. This means that it is up to you to decide if you want the meeting to be held without you being present. If the foetus is non-viable (meaning that it is unlikely to survive), many women prefer not to attend the meeting. The abortion board meeting is usually held at the hospital. If you wish to do so, you can bring someone with you to the meeting with the board. You are free to choose who to bring.

One of the hospital staff who assists in organising the meetings of the board will contact you by phone. You will receive information about the meeting and practical information about how to get your travelling expenses covered. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

Approval or denial of your application

The longer you have been pregnant, the stricter the requirements for being granted an abortion. After the end of the 18th week of gestation (17 weeks + 6 days), the pregnancy cannot be terminated except on grounds of grave risk. A foetus is presumed to be viable from the end of the 22nd week of gestation (21 weeks + 6 days), from which time abortion is prohibited by Norwegian law. However, if there is something seriously wrong with the foetus so it is not viable, you will be eligible for abortion throughout the pregnancy.

What happens if your application is approved?

If you are granted an abortion, you will receive advice and counselling on preparing for an abortion, including how the abortion is carried out, and you will have the chance to ask practical questions.

What happens if your application is denied?

If your application is denied, it will automatically be referred to the Norwegian national appeals board for abortion applications (Norwegian: 'klagenemnda for abortsaker'). There is only one such board and it considers appeals from all over Norway. The appeals board assesses denied applications within a few days. If you do not want the appeals board to consider your original application, you must notify your abortion board contact at the place where your original application was assessed, or your appeals board contact.

At many hospitals, you will be offered a counselling session with a social welfare counsellor both before and after the meeting with the board. If you are not offered a counselling session automatically, you can request to have one.



About the Norwegian national appeals board for abortion applications

The national appeals board for abortion applications is appointed by the Norwegian Ministry of Health and Care Services to serve for 4 years at a time. The board has five members, at least two of whom are medical doctors and one a lawyer. Usually, one of the members of the board will be a social welfare professional and/or a psychologist. The meetings of the appeals board are held at Oslo University Hospital at the Ullevål site. The appeals board considers 30-50 denied applications a year.

If your application is referred to the appeals board, you will be contacted by one of the staff members who organises the meeting, be notified of the time of the meeting and invited to attend the meeting. If you wish to do so, you can bring someone with you to the meeting with the appeals board. Your expenses on travel and overnight accommodation for both you and a person accompanying you to the meeting will be covered by the hospital that considered your original application for an abortion.

What happens at a meeting of the abortion board and of the appeals board?

At the start of the meeting, the person in charge of the meeting, the chairperson, will explain how the meeting is to be conducted. The chairperson will usually:

- introduce the members of the board by their name and professional title,
- explain the purpose of the meeting, how the meeting will be conducted, the official procedure and the legal rules and regulations,
- tell you what the board knows about you, and
- ask you to tell the board why you have applied to have an abortion.

If someone accompanies you to the meeting, the chairperson will ask you or that person to say a bit about how you know each other. Many women find it reassuring to have someone accompany them. The person who accompanies you does not have to stay for the whole meeting with the board.

After you have said why you have applied for an abortion and the board has asked its questions, the meeting will be concluded. The board will then discuss your application in closed chambers without you being present. You will be escorted to a suitable place to wait.

As soon as the board has decided on your application, you will be asked to return to the meeting room and will be told the board's decision. You will also receive the decision in writing (if you do not receive it in person, it will be sent to you by post).

Emotional reactions after an abortion

Women react differently to having an abortion. Most of them feel relieved after the procedure, but it is also normal to feel sad and upset. A mixture of different feelings is also a normal reaction. For most women, talking to close family or friends is comforting. You can also contact your regular GP, the hospital, community youth health clinic or a counselling service such as

[Amathea](#) or [Sex og samfunn](#) if you want to talk to someone before or after having an abortion. All these professionals and services are bound by a duty of confidentiality.

Contraception after an abortion

You can become pregnant again very soon after having an abortion. This makes it important to think about what kind of contraception you want to use after the abortion so you avoid an unwanted pregnancy. At the medical examination you have at the hospital before the abortion, you will be given advice on contraception. Information about contraception is also available at helsenorge.no.

Who has the right to an abortion in Norway?

All women living in Norway have the right to abortion, either on demand or following the assessment by a board. Abortion is free of charge for women living in Norway. Women who are not living in Norway, but who are members of the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme or covered by a reciprocal healthcare agreement with another country, can have the costs of the procedure covered by the Norwegian National Insurance Scheme. Anyone else has to pay to have an abortion. However, the hospital is not permitted to require advance, 'up-front' payment.

The right to an interpreter

Some women may need interpreting services at the meeting with the board. The hospital is responsible for arranging for a state-authorized interpreter to attend any meeting with the board. Family members cannot be used as interpreters or any person who is not a state-authorized interpreter. The interpreter has a duty of confidentiality concerning what is said at the meeting and any written or spoken information he or she receives for the interpreting session.

A meeting with the abortion board can be challenging even for an experienced state-authorized interpreter. The Norwegian Directorate of Health is working with the official interpreting service (Norwegian: 'Tolkesentralen') to provide a special information brochure for interpreters providing interpreting services at a meeting with an abortion board in order to prepare them as much as possible for this interpreting task.

For more information about abortion/termination of pregnancy, see: helsenorge.no and abortinfo.no.