

A large orange silhouette of a woman's head in profile, facing right. Inside the silhouette, the text "SAFE ABORTION debunking some common myths" is written in white. To the right of the silhouette, there are several overlapping speech bubbles in various colors: orange, red, dark blue, light blue, green, and yellow.

SAFE ABORTION

debunking some common myths



RIYA



EVA



NAZIA

Riya found out that she is pregnant. She is thinking about getting an abortion. Before taking any action, she confides in her two close friends, Eva and Nazia. They decide to meet in a coffee shop where they discuss and help out Riya.



Contraceptives are not 100% effective. Each method has an inherent failure rate, even if used correctly. There are chances that women would still need to abort an unplanned pregnancy.



Women including unmarried women can now terminate pregnancy till 20 weeks, while for special category of women, the gestation is up to 24 weeks.

Oh! I thought abortions were illegal in general and could be done in certain cases only. Sex selection is such a huge concern in our country. If abortions are legal and easily accessible, don't you think this is the reason for increase in sex selection?



This isn't true. An overwhelming majority of abortions are for reasons other than sex selection.

Riya is an adult. She has all the right to make decisions about her own life.



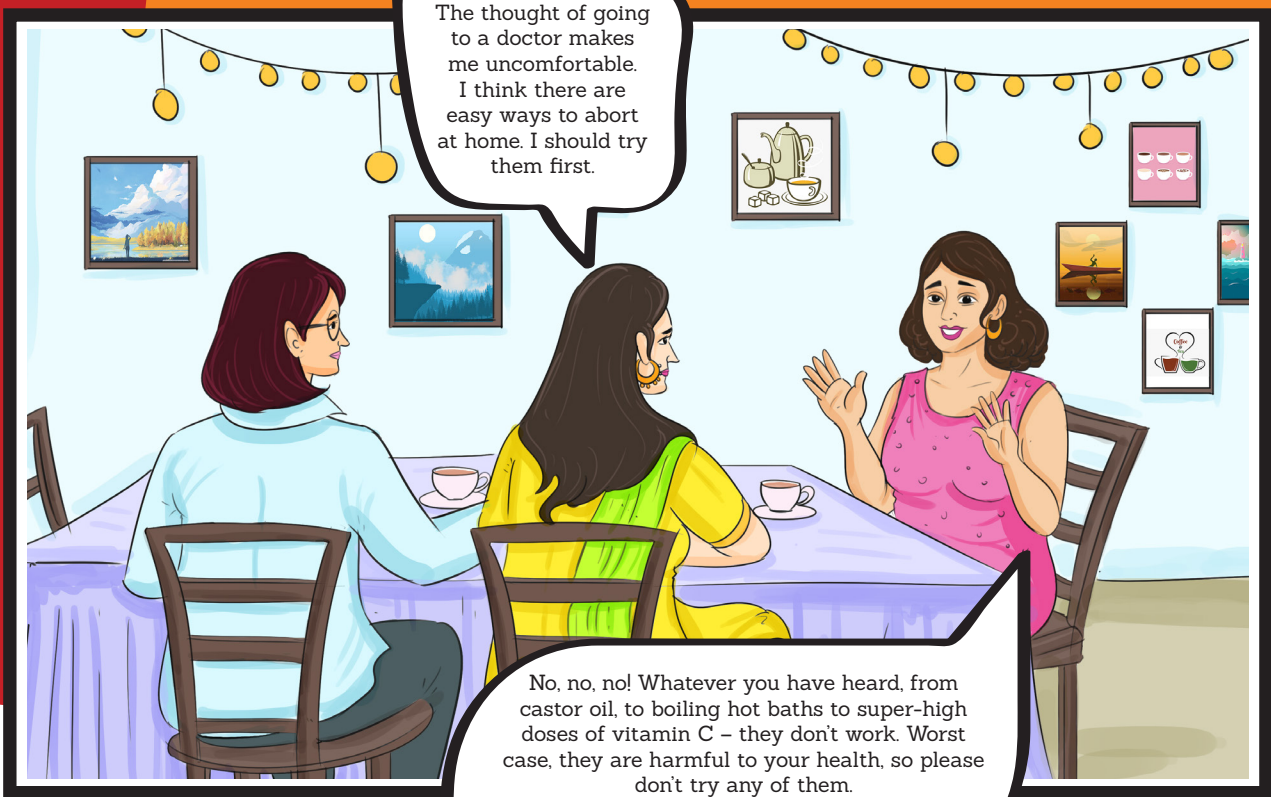
A study by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare informs us that only 9% of all the abortions performed in India per year are sex selective in nature. This means that 91% of abortions happen due to various other reasons that are not linked to sex selection. It is estimated that between 85-90% of all abortions in India are first trimester abortions (before 12 weeks gestation). Ultrasound can detect the sex of the foetus only around 13-14 weeks gestation.

COFFEE SHOP

I'm really confused and anxious. I am not ready for a child right now. But I've heard that abortion can have a severe impact on my body. My aunt was talking to mom about how abortions can cause infertility and how young girls are so irresponsible these days. Do abortions really cause infertility?

It's so wrong to presume that young people are irresponsible. And as per my knowledge, abortion is a safe procedure and does not cause infertility. However, I think we should consult a gynaecologist instead of believing hearsay.





The thought of going to a doctor makes me uncomfortable. I think there are easy ways to abort at home. I should try them first.

No, no, no! Whatever you have heard, from castor oil, to boiling hot baths to super-high doses of vitamin C – they don't work. Worst case, they are harmful to your health, so please don't try any of them.

I agree with Nazia, you should consult with a medical professional before making any decisions.



After a thorough discussion, Riya decides to consult a gynaecologist to address all her concerns. As she is hesitant to go there alone, she requests Eva and Nazia to accompany her for the consultation.

Your ultrasound report suggests you are around 6 weeks pregnant. If you are not ready to have a child, you can go for an abortion. Take some time to decide and let me know your decision.

I want to terminate the pregnancy, but I'm afraid that abortion can cause infertility.

I've also read somewhere that it increases the chances of developing breast cancer.



These are some of the common myths that discourage individuals to seek abortion when they want to end an unintended pregnancy. Neither does abortion cause infertility, nor does it increase the chances of developing breast cancer.

There is no evidence to prove it.

In fact, abortion is safer than child birth. Rather it is the unsafe abortion done by untrained professionals that leads to complications.



Over 3500 women die annually in India due to unsafe abortions. To prevent these unnecessary deaths, it is important to share correct information on abortion and bust some existing myths.



This reassured Riya and she decided to have an abortion. The doctor prescribed her few medicines and explained the steps for taking them as well as what she would experience, such as cramps, heavy bleeding, etc. The doctor asked Riya to contact her immediately in case of any emergency.

Abortions can be conducted through two methods - medical and surgical. As you are at an early stage of pregnancy, a medical abortion would be appropriate for you.

See Riya, you have all the right to decide about your body and well-being. This is not just for you but everyone. Please do not let other's opinion affect you. This is about your future and your life. Decide what is best for you.



You do not require anyone's consent to terminate pregnancy. It's only in the cases of minor that the guardian's consent is required.

Isn't abortion a surgical procedure? And don't I need my partner's consent?



A medical abortion can be conducted till 9 weeks of gestation, post that a minor surgical procedure is conducted to terminate pregnancy.



The doctor handed Riya and her friends a brochure while they were leaving. All three of them read the brochure to get more details.



MYTHS AND FACTS

MYTH

Only young or
irresponsible people
have abortions.



FACT



Everyone, irrespective of their age, gender, socio-economic background needs safe abortion services. Anybody in their reproductive age irrespective of religion, marital status, occupation and income can experience unplanned pregnancy and seek abortion. Thus, safe abortion services should be accessible and available.



MYTH

Making abortion easier to access will discourage people from using contraception and lead to more unplanned pregnancies.



FACT

There is no credible evidence that if abortion services were accessible that would mean sexually active individuals will irresponsibly use abortion as contraception. Abortion is not contraception; there is a basket of choice available in public and private sector for people to choose from. Abortion is termination of an unplanned pregnancy, and should be easily accessible, as unplanned pregnancies if carried to term has a deep impact on a pregnant person's mental and physical health.

Abortion does not replace contraceptives, and certainly is not an alternative. People make decisions based on their unique circumstances and the resources available to them. Having access to abortion is a part of comprehensive healthcare services.



MYTH

People commonly experience feelings of intense grief, regret or depression after abortion.



FACT



Evidence suggests that the majority of people do not regret having an abortion, and the most common emotion is in fact relief. Those who campaign against legal abortion often talk about something called 'post-abortion stress/syndrome' a disorder that appears to be made up as it has no medical grounding.



MYTH

Only women get abortions.



FACT

Abortion rhetoric is highly gendered. Rarely is it even acknowledged that abortions are not exclusively for cis women. Trans-persons, gender queer and gender-non-conforming persons, as well as others of diverse gender identity who do not identify as women, can get pregnant and may need to seek an abortion. Individuals of diverse gender identity, however, face extensive challenges in accessing safe abortion information and services, a result not only of the stigma surrounding abortion itself, but additional barriers they face in realising their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).



MYTH

Women will stop
having abortions if
they are illegal.



FACT

The fact that abortion rates in countries where abortion is illegal are observed to be more or less the same as in countries where abortion is permitted, shows that even when the procedure is illegal, people will find ways to terminate a pregnancy. By criminalising and stigmatising abortion, abortions will not stop but safe abortions will stop! People will resort to dangerous methods to self-induce abortion or visit unapproved abortion providers, which can result in hemorrhage, infections and/or even death.



About Us:

Pratigya is a network of individuals and organisations in India working to protect and advance women's rights and access to safe abortion care. This campaign promotes women's empowerment and women's access to healthcare services with national and state governments, organisations and media.

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Pratigya - Campaign for Gender Equality and Safe Abortion

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