

Abortion is the forcible removal of a baby from the womb by a qualified doctor who is following the law of the land. The abortion can happen if a woman fulfils certain criteria outlined in the law. New Zealand has had laws in place about abortion since the 1800's. These laws give the doctor guidance about when they can do an abortion. There are a number of ways in which an abortion can happen, such as a surgical or a medical abortion.

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Abortion means the foetus dies. This can occur naturally or it can be procured by a surgical procedure. Abortion has been legal in some countries like the UK since 1967, but in NZ this was not the case. However in 1971 New Zealand women with means could obtain a legal abortion in the two States of Victoria and New South Wales in Australia due to a change in the law over there. Abortions have been performed in New Zealand since 1974 in the Auckland Medical Aid Centre. However, this was closed until a legal battle was sorted and abortion was allowed and restricted to public hospitals in 1975. The legal battles continues and although it is legal under the Contraception, Sterilisation, and Abortion Bill. After many amendments and one all-night sitting, the National bill was passed on 15 December 1977. There have continued to be challenges to the Bill since this time.

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In New Zealand the Abortion procedures are either through 'Surgical abortion', by dilatation of the cervix and suction curettage is the most common method used in New Zealand for first trimester and some second trimester abortions. Or by a 'Medical abortion' which uses pills rather than surgery. It is more like an induction of labour and is commonly used for second trimester pregnancy. These two are known as 'induced abortions' and are different from a 'Spontaneous abortion' which is usually called a miscarriage.

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The Catholic Church says in the 5<sup>th</sup> Commandment 'you shall not kill', so abortion is wrong because it is killing the baby in the womb.

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The baby is a gift from God and so should not be killed under any circumstances and this goes with the principle of human dignity of the person.

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Every human being is created by God and in his image and likeness (Gen 1:27) and so should be protected and loved by us all.

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Benedict XVI spoke of a 'culture of death' in the world where people do not care about those who are not part of their family or community. Benedict XVI in *Deus caritas est* (2005) discussed that we need to be a community, which protects the vulnerable in society. Babies who are being aborted are these vulnerable in society.

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If a woman is thinking about having an abortion then she can turn to the Catholic Church and ask for help through groups like Project Rachel in the NZ Catholic Church.

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