

Abortion in ancient times

[History](#), [Ancient History](#)



Procedure of abortion is known since ancient times. The word abortion is came from the Latin abortus where " ab" means " amiss" and " oriri" means " likely to be born, arise". Along with infanticide it has existed in many societies, both primitive and advanced. The earliest records of an abortive technique go back about 4, 600 years to an ancient Chinese work, purportedly the work of Emperor Shen Nung which prescribes the use of mercury to induce an abortion. In ancient ages pessaries or vaginal suppositories were used as an abortifacients.

They are generally more effective than oral drugs and included substances such as juice of the wild fig, a " dairy liquid" , which caused irritation, soapwort, myrrh, myrtle, lupine, cedar-oil mixed with water, wine, or hot oil. Ancient doctors also suggested smearing on the uterine opening goose fat, mashed leek and celery, rose oils, pine resin, copper scum, boiled honey, sodium carbonate, and even mouse dung. The Egyptian Kahun Papyrus, which dates to 1850 B. C. , recommend crocodile feces either for preventing conception or as an abortifacient.

The Ebers Papyrus, which dates to 1550 B. C. , contains several recipes that " cause a woman to stop pregnancy in the first, second, or third period. " One recipe for a vaginal suppository includes mixed the unripe fruit of Acacia, colocynth, dates, and 6/7 pints of honey and pouring the mixture onto a moistened plant fiber. Modern Arabic women still take colocynth as an abortifacient, though one woman who took 120 grains in a powder died 50 hours later. In Arabic medicine, elephant feces were frequently recommended.

Aristotle suggests that the conceptus had a “ soul” after 40 days from conception if a male and 90 if female. In addition there are similar differentiations in the Bible. Later, Aristotle says that the fetus develops gradually and that it is impossible to make a fine judgment. Famous doctors such as Pliny the Elder, Dioscorides, and Pseudo-Galen mention more “ superstitious” abortifacients, like passage over the root of a cyclamen, the egg of a crow, a snake, or a stone which was bitten by a dog. Ancient physicians also used pessaries, or vaginal suppositories, as abortifacients.

They were usually more potent than oral drugs and included substances like the juice of the wild fig, a “ milky liquid” which caused irritation, soapwort, myrrh, myrtle, lupine, cedar-oil mixed with water, wine, or hot oil. Physicians also recommend smearing on the uterine opening goose fat, mashed leek and celery, rose oils, pine resin, copper scum, boiled honey, sodium carbonate, and even mouse dung. In the Middle Ages, abortion was tolerated because there were no laws against it. There were a variety of abortifacients, such as mixture called “ cup of roots” and another known as a “ A Cure for All Kinds of Stomach Aches. However after long time, therapeutic abortion is one of the most controversial subjects in modern society, is evident capable of generating intense passions, that lead to a great number of other social issues. In recent decades, on a global scale there is increasing pressure for changes in abortion which could lead to a various consequences. A great number of people have the view that abortion is a matter merely between a woman and her attending physician. There is another opinion that ultimately abortion should be granted on request.

According to the statistics of UN's Department of Economic and social Affairs of 2007 year, about 97% of countries around the world allow abortion in the event of an emergency, when women's life is in explicit threat. There are only 5 countries where abortion is prohibited. These countries are Chile, El Salvador, the Holy See, Malta and Nicaragua. The most strict abortion laws are adopted in developing countries. For example, there are 19% of developing countries that authorize abortion on account of social and economic issues, 15% that allow it on request.

In contrast, there are 78% of developed countries that let abortion for economic and social issues, 67% of them permit it on request. In the vast majority of countries, to have an abortion woman has to pass additional procedural requirements. It could be agreement of parents, the husband or third-party authorization, consultations, waiting period, categories of health providers permitted to perform abortions. However, it is essential to notice that this statistic is not absolutely clear, because not all countries give full information about abortion rate.