

Pain Management Techniques

- **Relax!** We understand this is easier said than done. Being tense and upset can cause pain to become worse! Focus on keeping your body calm and relaxed. When you feeling your shoulders, stomach or legs tensing up take a nice deep breath into your lower abdomen and relax those muscles.
- **Breathe!** When we experience pain or discomfort our breathing may become rapid and shallow. This can make you feel light-headed or dizzy. Try to focus on drawing in a long, slow, deep breath and release that breath slowly. Repeat this breathing technique throughout your entire procedure.
- **Distraction/Guided Imagery:** Focus your attention elsewhere. Imagine you are in a relaxing place, like a peaceful garden or a calm body of water. Try imagining floating clouds or whatever image you find peaceful and relaxing.
- **Music:** Many women find that music relaxes them and distracts them from their discomfort. Please feel free to bring along an iPod with your favorite music to listen to during your procedure.
- **Talk about it!** Discuss your concerns about pain management with your counselor. At AWC, many counselors are trained to support you throughout your procedure.



A Guide to Pain Management Techniques

Introduction

At the Allentown Women's Center, we offer abortion services with local anesthesia or under conscious sedation. If you have opted for local anesthesia you will be awake for your abortion procedure.

Women chose to be awake for their abortion for various reasons, including:

- Fear of anesthesia or IV sedation
- Desire to be more actively involved/aware of procedure
- Time restrictions/limitations
- Allergies to medication used with IV sedation
- Unable to have a driver wait at clinic

At AWC, your comfort is our concern. We feel it is important to educate all patients on what they will experience physically during their procedure. If you have opted to be awake for your procedure you may experience some of the following sensations:

- Mild to sharp pinching in your cervix
- A burning sensation in your cervix when the local anesthetic is given (this typically lasts for less than 5 seconds)
- Two to five minutes of very strong menstrual cramps
- A pulling and tugging sensation at your uterus

The entire procedure typically takes about 4-8 minutes from start to finish. Most women say that the majority of cramping and discomfort goes away after the procedure is completed.

An additional medication is available to help you feel a little more relaxed. This medicine is given by injection approximately 10 minutes prior to your procedure.

Assessing Pain Tolerance

You are the only person that can assess your ability to deal with pain and discomfort. Every woman has a different ability to deal with discomfort. To help you decide if you are able to be awake for your procedure, consider asking yourself the following:

- When in my life have I experienced pain?
- How have I dealt with pain in the past?
- How severe was that pain?
- How do I handle menstrual cramping?
- Have I ever had a miscarriage, abortion, or delivery?

In addition to assessing your physical pain tolerance, it is important to address your emotional and mental health concerns. Some women find that being awake for their procedure is an empowering experience, while others find it to be extremely difficult to deal with emotionally. You are the only person who can determine if being awake for your procedure is the right choice for you!

Why Is Pain Management So Important?

Pain affects us all differently. Pain can affect our appetite, energy level, mood, and recovery time. It can also greatly affect the way we view our entire abortion experience.

While it is absolutely normal to experience pain and discomfort during your procedure, there are many techniques that can be used to minimize your level of discomfort during your procedure. On the next page, you will find a list of pain management techniques to help you through your procedure.