

## Does Abortion Negatively Affect Women's Health? Some Facts

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Though some contend that abortion has few negative effects on women, recent research clearly indicates that post-abortion syndrome is a reality with significant negative effects on women's emotional health. In a comprehensive multinational, multi-year (1995-2009) study of 750,000 women for the *British Journal of Psychiatry* (and Cambridge University), Priscilla Coleman details the profound and long-lasting negative effects of abortion on the mental health of women. Overall, she discovered that **81%** of women who had an abortion had a significantly higher risk of mental health problems than those who did not.<sup>1</sup> She compared the population of post-abortive women with the populations of women who brought their pregnancies to term as well as those who were not pregnant. With respect to specific mental health problems, she found:

- There is a **4.1x** greater occurrence of suicides in women who had an abortion compared with those who did not.
- There is a **2.5x** greater occurrence of suicidal contemplation/behaviors in women who had an abortion compared with those who did not.
- There is a **2.1x** greater occurrence of alcohol abuse in women who had an abortion compared with those who did not.
- There is a **1.4x** greater occurrence of depression in women who had an abortion compared with those who did not.
- There is a **1.3x** greater occurrence of anxiety in women who had an abortion compared with those who did not.

Coleman's research shows conclusively that abortion has severe, long-lasting, negative effects on women's mental health. These findings are confirmed by a comprehensive literature review of abortion and women's mental health done by David Reardon in 2018 for the National Center for Biotechnology Information. He discovered that both anti-abortion and pro-abortion advocates found increased symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress as well as depression, anxiety, and regret experienced by women after an abortion:

Still, both sides [abortion advocates and opponents] agree that (a) abortion is consistently associated with elevated rates of mental illness compared to women without a history of abortion; (b) the abortion experience directly contributes to mental health problems for at least some women.<sup>2</sup>

The above studies imply that the bond between mother and preborn infant is quite strong even if there is anxiety about the pregnancy. It seems that a significant percentage of women have strong feelings of maternal care, responsibility, and protectiveness even if the pregnancy is surprising or distressing. Women who feel pressured to get an abortion by male partners or friends may also feel anger and hostility toward these individuals as well as themselves for aborting the baby. Evidently, abortions are destructive to preborn babies, but also to the emotional health of a considerable number of women who have them. In view of the extensive negative effects of abortion on preborn children, women, and families, the age-old Hippocratic prohibition of abortion should be taken seriously.

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- <sup>1</sup> Pricilla Coleman (2011). Abortion and mental health: Quantitative synthesis and analysis of research published 1995–2009. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 199(3), 180-186. Republished Cambridge University 2018  
<https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/the-british-journal-of-psychiatry/article/abortion-and-mental-health-quantitative-synthesis-and-analysis-of-research-published-19952009/E8D556AAE1C1D2F0F8B060B28BEE6C3D>
- <sup>2</sup> David Reardon, “The Abortion and Mental Health Controversy: A Comprehensive Literature Review of Common Ground Agreements, Disagreements, Actionable Recommendations, and Research Opportunities” in the Journal *SAGE Open Medicine* 6 (October 29, 2018), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6207970/>
- See also V.M. Rue, P.K. Coleman, J.J. Rue, & D.C. Reardon 2004, “Induced abortion and traumatic stress: A preliminary comparison of American and Russian women,” *Medical Science Monitor* 10, no. 10 (2004): SR5–SR16, <https://www.medscimonit.com/download/index/idArt/11784>.
- Rue et. al found the following, “Posttraumatic stress reactions were found to be associated with abortion. Consistent with previous research, the data here suggest abortion can increase stress and decrease coping abilities, particularly for those women who have a history of adverse childhood events and prior traumata. Study limitations preclude drawing definitive conclusions, but the findings do suggest additional cross-cultural research is warranted.”