



Federacja
na rzecz
Kobiet
i Planowania
Rodziny



WOMAN'S HEALTH — What are your rights in Poland?

As a woman applying for international protection in Poland you have the right to the protection of reproductive health and associated medical services.

Reproductive health means that you can decide if you want to have children and that you have the freedom to decide how many, as well as when and how often. It is also a comprehensive approach to a woman's health at every stage of her life.

CONTRACEPTION (BIRTH CONTROL)

Hormonal contraception (the pill for regular oral use)

Your gynaecologist is required — at your request — to choose a hormonal contraceptive most suitable for you and to write out an appropriate prescription. In addition, every primary care physician may prescribe a hormonal contraceptive which had been chosen by a gynaecologist. You do not need to make an appointment with a gynaecologist every time you need a new prescription. It is enough to ask your gynaecologist to give you a note at the first visit with information on the recommended birth control method. You can buy hormonal contraceptives at a pharmacy. The pharmacist **must not** refuse to dispense prescription contraceptives due to their personal beliefs. If the pills you need are not available in a given pharmacy, the pharmacist must have them delivered at the patient's request.

Emergency Contraception

It is the so-called “morning after pill” taken in the event of a risky sexual intercourse or when the used birth control methods failed. The most commonly used morning after pills are ellaOne or escapelle. The pill should be taken as soon as possible, within 120 hours (ellaOne) or 72 hours (escapelle) after sex. You can receive the emergency birth control pill prescription from any doctor. First see a primary care physician, a gynaecologist or a night-time and holiday medical assistance clinic (after 6 p.m., at weekends and during holidays). Before you are recommended or prescribed emergency contraception no medical examination is required.

Intrauterine devices (IUDs; the coil inserted for a few years; this method requires a few follow-up visits after the device has been inserted but no other actions beyond that)

Your gynaecologist may also insert an IUD. Inserting and removing an IUD is performed for free (in order to find an appropriate institution, contact the Federation —

federacja@federa.org.pl). However, you do need to pay for the IUD. It costs about PLN 100–400, but works for several years.

Female condoms

You can buy them in a pharmacy without a prescription. In contrast to the standard condoms, it is the woman who puts them in place and controls the situation.

Family planning counselling

Your gynaecologist, primary care physician or a midwife should provide counselling regarding the best birth control method for a given patient as part of the patient visit. Do not be afraid to ask about it.

The doctor/midwife may not refuse to provide such counselling or provide you a prescription for reasons other than medical (for instance their personal beliefs). However, if you experience such a situation, contact the Legal Team of the Federation for Women and Family Planning by calling at **22 635 93 95**, or send an e-mail to zespol_prawny@federa.org.pl.

PRENATAL EXAMINATIONS

Every pregnant woman has the right to a number of free examinations (e.g. ultrasound, CTG, complete blood count, general urinalysis) performed in accordance with the examination schedule published in the Minister of Health Regulation of 16 August 2018 on the organizational standards of perinatal care¹. Do not hesitate to ask your doctor or midwife to which detailed examinations you are entitled. In case of any doubts, call the Federation at **22 635 93 95** or the Childbirth with Dignity Foundation at **22 887 78 76**.

If you are 35 years old or more or if you have a family history of genetic diseases, you are entitled to more specific testing under the Prenatal Examinations Program. Ask your doctor about these exams (foetal ultrasound for diagnostics of birth defects, amniocentesis), if you would like to check whether the foetus does not have any irreversible defects or an incurable illness.

TERMINATION OF PREGNANCY

In Poland, pregnancy termination is allowed in only three instances:

- a) the pregnancy poses a threat to the life or health of the pregnant woman (no time limitation)
- b) prenatal examinations or other medical conditions indicate that there is a high probability of a severe and irreversible foetal defect or incurable illness that threatens the foetus's life (permissible until the foetus is capable of living independently outside the body of the pregnant woman, that is until about pregnancy week 22–24)
- c) there are reasons to suspect that the pregnancy is a result of an unlawful act (if not more than 12 weeks have elapsed since the beginning of the pregnancy)

¹ <https://pulsmedycyny.pl/badania-u-kobiet-w-ciazy-obowiazujace-od-1-stycznia-2019-r-949172>

Termination of pregnancy is performed for free at a hospital. In the instance described in item c), pregnancy may be terminated at a doctor's surgery. However, in such circumstances it is necessary to provide a certificate issued by a public prosecutor to whom the sexual assault was reported. The certificate is supposed to confirm that there are reasons to suspect that the pregnancy is a result of an unlawful act. In instances a) and b) a medical opinion based on exam results is required.

If a hospital refuses to perform pregnancy termination, they are required to refer the patient to a different hospital in which the patient will not be met with a refusal.

If you experience problems with access to the procedure, contact the Legal Team of the Federation for Women and Family Planning by calling at **22 635 93 95**, or send an e-mail to zespol_prawny@federa.org.pl.

CERVICAL CANCER PREVENTION PROGRAMME

If you are 25–59 years old, you are entitled to a free examination called a pap test. This test is designed to detect precancerous and cancerous conditions in the cervix, even when no symptoms are present. At the same time, it allows the doctor to see if you suffer from any vaginal infections. The test is performed free of charge, but only once in 3 years, unless you are a patient with risk factors. You do not need a referral to have this test. To find out where you can have a free pap test performed in your place of residence, call the 24h toll-free helpline at **+48 800 190 590**. Show the test results to your gynaecologist during a consultation.

BREAST CANCER PREVENTION PROGRAMME

If you are 50–69 years old, you can have a mammography performed free of charge. Mammography is a breast cancer screening examination. The exam can be performed for free only every two years, unless you are a patient with risk factors. You do not need a referral to have this test. To find out where you can have a free mammography performed in your place of residence, call the 24h toll-free helpline at **+48 800 190 590**. Show the test results to your gynaecologist during a consultation.

TEENAGERS

If you are a teenager, you are entitled to consultations with doctors of any specialty, including gynaecologists. If you are under 18, a consent (which can be written) of one of your parents will be necessary for the visit. However, you may request that your parents are not present during the examination. The doctor is required to answer any questions you may have about your health.

WHERE TO LOOK FOR HELP?

If you experience **violence** but are afraid to report it, you can talk about it with your doctor and ask him or her to report this to the police and to submit the “Blue Card” application. The “Blue Card” is a procedure by means of which the police specially protects families and checks

whether the acts of violence happen again, offers therapy for the abuser and isolates them from other family members, if necessary.

In case of any doubts, questions or problems regarding **reproductive health**, you may contact the Federation for Women and Family Planning by calling at **22 635 93 95**.

You can also obtain information at Petra Medica Sp. z o.o. in Warsaw, which coordinates medical assistance for persons in the procedure of international protection, at **22 740 20 20**.

Other institutions supporting foreigners:

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights — phone: **22 556 44 40 ext. 2, Mondays from 10:00 a.m. to 1 p.m.**

Association for Legal Intervention — phone: **+48 880 145 372, Monday through Friday from 3:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

Ocalenie Foundation: **tel. 22 828 04 50**