

## Abortion.

### What should I know?

- What **abortion** is and what the law says about it.
- Why a woman may want an abortion.
- Why people are in favour (pro - choice\_ or against abortion (pro - life).
- When life begins.
- The **Sanctity of life**.
- The **Quality of life**.
- What religion says about abortion?

### What is abortion?

A good definition is:

*'The removal from the womb of a growing **foetus**, whether it is tiny or well developed and recognisable as a growing human being'.*

### The law and abortion:

According to the law in the UK an abortion cannot take place after 24 weeks of pregnancy, unless there is serious risk to the mother's life, or of the foetus is severely handicapped. There are four conditions - at least one of which must apply if an abortion is to be allowed. They are:

1. The pregnancy risks the life of the mother.
2. The pregnancy poses a risk to the mother's physical or mental health.
3. An additional child could pose a risk to the physical or mental health of any children that already exist.
4. There is a serious risk that the child will be born severely physically or mentally handicapped.

2 doctors must agree to the abortion and it must take place in a specially licensed clinic or hospital.

### Why might a woman want an abortion?

There are many reasons for abortion being requested, but mainly under condition number 2. The risk to the mother's mental health may be due to the woman thinking that she is too young to be a mother or that it has happened due to rape.

### Why are people against abortion?

People against abortion fall into the Pro - life camp. They usually believe that the foetus is alive in the womb so abortion it is the same as killing it. Many religious people are against abortion because they believe that it is God's will for them to be pregnant. They believe that life is sacred and that they do not have a right to take this life away.

Most Christians (especially the Roman Catholics - absolute moralists) believe that abortion is wrong due to the idea of life being sacred, Some Christians believe that if it is more loving for an abortion to take place (relative moralists), it should be allowed under certain circumstances.

### Why do some people favour abortion?

Supporters of abortion are usually said to be 'Pro - choice'. This means that they believe that the woman has the choice to decide whether or not she wants an abortion. The decision is her alone, although she may be offered advice. They think that:

- The foetus is part of the woman's body.
- She will have to carry the child for 9 months then give birth to it.
- She will feed and nurture the child once it is born.
- She will have a natural attachment to the child.

It is important to know that the father may offer his ideas about what should be done but the law will back the mother up.

One of the biggest arguments in favour of abortion refers to the quality of life. If the child faces a poor quality of life for any reason, a pro - choice believer would say that it is more humane to deny the foetus life because it would be preventing suffering.

However whatever your view on abortion is should depend on when you believe life begins. No - one can answer this with a definite answer - after all there is much discussion on this. I would suggest that you know this and accept that there is not really an answer. Make sure that you state this in the exam and

give a few suggestions to show when some people think life begins and when you believe it to be so - after all this will affect how you view this subject!