No operation is so simple that it is entirely free of risk. While the morbidity and fatal potential of criminal abortion is widely accepted, the public has been misled into believing that legal abortion is a trivial incident, even a lunch-hour procedure, which can be used as a mere extension of a contraceptive practice. There has been almost a conspiracy of silence in declaring its risks."[1]

WHAT ARE THE RISKS INVOLVED?

immediate

Hemorrhage - blood loss exceeding 500 ml. Few clinics have provisions for patients needing transfusions.

Infection - from parts of the baby left inside of the uterus or lack of sterile conditions in the operating room. This can lead to tubal infection and subsequent sterility.

Damaged Cervix - caused by instruments used to open it during the abortion procedure. Miscarriage and premature delivery of future pregnancies may result.

Perforation of the uterus - by the curette. This could necessitate removal of the uterus, making a woman unable to have children.

Perforation of the bowel - necessitating surgery and possible bowel resection.

delayed

Stillborn and damaged babies - women with RH negative blood who fail to receive RHO-gam after the abortion procedure may be isoimmunized, endangering some future pregnancies.

Miscarriages - women who have had abortions experienced miscarriages at a 35% higher rate.[2]

Impaired child-bearing ability - women had complications in labor of future pregnancies.[3]

Premature births - after multiple abortions, there is a 2-3.3 fold increase.

Low Birth Weight - there is a 2-2½ times greater likelihood after abortions. Low birth weight and prematurity are causes of birth defects.[4]

According to Dr. Tietze of the Population Council, there is a growing concern because of the number of women using abortion as a method of contraception.[5] In Missouri repeats accounted for 25% of the 1979 abortions. This rose to 26.6% during the first 6 months of 1980. Dr. M. Bulfin of Florida strongly suggests that girls be educated to the dangers of abortion. Interestingly, recent studies of teen pregnancies show that if a young woman receives proper care, her pregnancy may be healthier than those in the 20-24 age bracket.[6]

Emotional Problems - in a Canadian study by Dr. Kent,[7] many women were found to have deep feelings of regret and love for the child that "should have been". He also indicated that many current psychological follow-ups of women are superficial, and therefore, unreliable indications of proper therapy. This situation has led Drs. Serton and Maddock[8] to contend that abortions may be producing serious emotional problems previously overlooked because earlier studies fail to look at the unconscious nature of the conflict and investigations have been terminated too early.