

Patient Instructions for Medication Abortion

How does medication abortion work?

Medication abortion involves taking 2 medications - mifepristone (brand name Mifeprex®) and misoprostol (brand name Cytotec®) - to end an early pregnancy.

- **Mifepristone** blocks pregnancy hormones, which stops the pregnancy from growing. Taking this pill starts the abortion.
- **Misoprostol** causes the muscles in your uterus (womb) to tighten, which helps empty the uterus. This leads to cramping and heavy vaginal bleeding. Taking this pill helps to complete the abortion.

You will need to come in for a blood test 6-10 days after taking these medications to confirm that the abortion is completed. Sometimes, your doctor may do an **ultrasound** instead of blood test or after the blood test. An ultrasound uses sound waves to show the doctor images of the inside of your body, including your uterus.

What should I expect?

At your first appointment: preparing for your medication abortion

Your provider will see you in the office to review your medical history, make sure that a medication abortion is a safe option for you, and to confirm how far along you are in your pregnancy. This may require an ultrasound.

- You will need to review some state-required information and sign a consent form at least 24 hours before taking medications for abortion.
- Your provider will ask you to get your blood drawn to check your red blood cell count (**hemoglobin level**) and blood type. This helps them make sure a medication abortion is a safe option for you.

- You may go to the University Health Service lab for a blood test anytime during normal business hours Monday through Saturday. A list of business hours can be found here: uhs.umich.edu/hours.

At your next appointment: taking mifepristone to start the abortion

At a separate visit, you will take mifepristone with your provider in the office. You may feel a little nauseous or begin to have light spotting after taking mifepristone.

- During this visit, we will order a blood sample to measure your pregnancy hormone level (called the **hCG level**). You will need to go get your blood drawn at the lab that same day.
- You will also receive a prescription for 4 misoprostol pills, ibuprofen (a pain-relieving medication), and an anti-nausea medication. You will take the misoprostol pills at home.

At home: taking misoprostol to complete the abortion

You can either take the misoprostol by placing the 4 pills in your mouth or in your vagina. Many women have less nausea or vomiting when using misoprostol in the vagina.

Instructions for taking misoprostol by mouth:

1. 24-48 hours after you take the mifepristone, you can place the misoprostol pills between your cheek and gums and allow them to dissolve for 30 minutes.
2. After 30 minutes, swallow any remaining pieces of the pills that are left.

Instructions for taking misoprostol by vagina:

1. You may place misoprostol in the vagina as soon as 6 hours after you take the mifepristone. While lying down, put 4 misoprostol pills in your vagina and push them in far enough so they don't fall out. You will stay lying down for 30 minutes while they dissolve.

2. After 30 minutes, you can get up and move around. If any pieces come out of your vagina, you don't need to put them back in. You can dispose of them in the trash.

Most people will begin to have cramping and bleeding between 1-4 hours after taking misoprostol by mouth or by vagina. You can wear disposable menstrual pads to absorb the blood. Do not wear tampons.

- If you don't have any bleeding within 24 hours after taking misoprostol, call your nurse or doctor.

Follow up: after your abortion is complete

About 6 -10 days later (your doctor will tell you when), you will go to a lab to take a final blood test to measure the pregnancy hormone level. We will compare this test to the first test to make sure that the pregnancy hormone has decreased. You will also have a video visit with your provider 1-2 weeks after you take the medication, to make sure your bleeding has stopped and you don't have any problems or cramping.

How do I manage pain?

Most people manage pain well with ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®). You can take up to 800 mg every 8 hours with food to avoid an upset stomach. You can take the first dose of pain medication 30 minutes before taking misoprostol.

- You may also take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) as well as ibuprofen.
- Do not take aspirin, as it may make your bleeding worse.
- You can also use a heating pad or hot water bottle on your belly.

What symptoms are normal?

It is normal to have:

- Heavy bleeding with blood clots up to the size of a lemon
- Intense cramping that is similar to or worse than a normal period

- Nausea and occasionally vomiting

When should I call the office?

Call the office if you have any of the following symptoms:

- You vomit 30 minutes or less after taking mifepristone or misoprostol (because you may need to take the medication again).
- Your vaginal bleeding is soaking two large menstrual pads in less than an hour, for 2 hours or more.
- You have a fever of 101°F or more.

If you are experiencing an emergency (severe bleeding, uncontrolled pain, dizziness, feeling lightheaded), go to the nearest emergency room.

What is the contact information?

- For questions during normal business hours, call the Gynecology and Sexual Health Clinic at University Health Service at (734) 764-8320.
- After hours, if you have urgent questions, you can call a nurse at (734) 764-8320.

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