

FACT SHEET – MEDICAL ABORTION

Fact sheet for patients having a medical termination of pregnancy

Medicines used for a medical termination

There are two drugs that are used for a medical termination of a pregnancy. The first one, which you will take in the clinic, is Mifepristone, and then between 24 and 48 hours after taking the Mifepristone, you will need to take some Misoprostol tablets at home.

Mifepristone blocks the effects of progesterone, which is a hormone that is needed for a pregnancy to continue.



Misoprostol is a prostaglandin medication, and it works by softening the cervix and making the womb contract to push out the pregnancy tissue.

In this way, Mifepristone and Misoprostol work together to end a pregnancy.

Before you are given any of the medicines, you will talk with the doctor who will perform an ultrasound examination. If the doctor assesses that your pregnancy is up to 63 days duration and if a medical termination is suitable for you, then you should be able to start the treatment.

Before you take the medicines

A medical termination may not be possible or might not be a good option for you if:

- you are pregnant and might wish to continue with your pregnancy
- your pregnancy is assessed as being of more than 63 days duration
- you have a known or suspected ectopic pregnancy (a pregnancy outside of the womb)
- you have known or suspected bleeding disorder
- you are taking blood thinning medications (anticoagulants)
- you are regularly taking steroid treatment for arthritis or asthma or any other illness that requires steroid medicines

- your adrenal glands do not work very well
- you have a known allergy to Mifepristone, Misoprostol or prostaglandins
- you have an intrauterine contraceptive still in the womb
- you have an infection in the womb or fallopian tubes
- you are already quite anaemic

You do NOT need to have your blood checked.

You WILL be offered screening for Chlamydia, which is a fairly common sexually transmitted infection, and can be present without a person knowing that they have it. Women who have a silent chlamydia infection who undergo medical abortion are at increased risk of infection, so we recommend that all women have a test. This can be a urine test, done at the pathology collecting centre. You will not have to see a doctor or nurse to organise the test; we will give you the request form and you can have it done locally.

How to take the medicines

There are two parts to the process of a medical termination:

The first step

You will take a single tablet of Mifepristone. This stops the pregnancy from developing further.

Some women will get some bleeding and cramping after the first table. If this happens, it is not a problem. Just wear a pad as you would normally. Do not use a tampon. Some women don't feel any different after the first tablet, though for some, the symptoms of pregnancy start to disappear.

The second step

The next part of the treatment is to take 4 Misoprostol tablets. It is a good idea to plan for a very quiet day when you are going to take the Misoprostol tablets, and it is helpful to have someone with you who can provide support and assistance, if needed.

You will need to take the Misoprostol tablets between 24 and 48 hours after you took the Mifepristone tablet. You can decide on the exact time that you take the Misoprostol, so plan to fit this in with your routine or daily schedule, though we do recommend you do this in the morning, so the process should be complete by late afternoon.

Take some pain-relief tablets, such as Paracetamol/Ibuprofen combination, at least 45 minutes before you intend to start taking the Misoprostol tablets. We can give you a prescription for stronger painkillers.

When you take the Misoprostol tablets, we recommend "buccal administration" - Misoprostol tablets are held in your mouth, between the cheek and gum for 30 minutes.

Any fragments of the tablets left after 30 minutes can be swallowed with a glass of water. This method of taking the tablets has been shown to be the most effective.

After this, you can expect some vaginal bleeding, cramps and possibly pass some pregnancy tissue. This commonly happens within four hours, but in some cases may occur anywhere between 30 minutes and 48 hours after taking the Misoprostol tablets. The bleeding lasts on average for 10 to 16 days and may be heavy, particularly in the first day or so.

Most women require no further medication. **However, if no bleeding has occurred within 24 hours after taking the Misoprostol, you should contact us as soon as possible.** Your doctor may then ask you to take a second dose of Misoprostol.

Signs and symptoms of the termination

The information that follows lists the most common symptoms you may experience as part of the medical termination process. It is important to understand these symptoms and any risks that may arise from using this treatment.

Vaginal Bleeding:

- The start of bleeding is usually within **4 hours** of taking the misoprostol tablets and most women will experience bleeding starting within 48 hours.
- Bleeding can range from light to heavy. Bleeding is usually more than a typical menstrual period.
- Bleeding should diminish once the pregnancy is expelled.
- Vaginal bleeding does not mean that the pregnancy has been expelled. **A follow-up assessment is necessary, to confirm the ending of your pregnancy.**
- The follow up is very important. If you have pregnancy tissue left behind and don't know about it, you could become unwell. You may need to have an additional ultrasound examination, and/or blood tests to make sure that your uterus is empty.
- Sometimes bleeding can occur after taking the Mifepristone but before taking the Misoprostol.
- The bleeding lasts on average for 10 to 16 days. Light bleeding can continue for 30 days or more but does not normally go beyond the first menstrual period following your treatment.

Problem bleeding:

- It is concerning if you saturate **two (2)**, or more sanitary pads per hour for **two (2)** consecutive hours ie more than 4 pads in two hours.
- If you experience bleeding that seems to be too heavy or are at all concerned about the amount of bleeding you are experiencing, then you should contact the clinic or your doctor or call the **MS Health 24-hour Nurse After-care Telephone Service on 1300 515 883.**

Cramping:

- Cramping usually starts quite soon after taking the Misoprostol tablets and will commonly start within 4 hours of taking the tablets. Cramping can range from mild to severe and is usually more than you would experience in a typical menstrual period.
- Significant cramping should diminish once the pregnancy is expelled from the uterus and does not usually last longer than 24 hours.

Pain Management

To help control your pain, you should:

- use a hot pack on your lower abdomen or back
- walk around and/or sit on the toilet
- massage your lower abdomen quite often; and
- take some pain relief medications, as directed by us or your doctor.

Other possible side-effects

Sometimes the medical termination treatment can cause headaches, breast tenderness, fainting, hot flushes, skin rashes or itching. Misoprostol tablets can cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, dizziness, pain or discomfort in the abdomen, cramps, fever and chills.

These side effects are usually experienced for only a short time and do not last more than 24 hours. If you experience problems or are at all concerned about side-effects you should contact the clinic, your doctor or the **MS Health 24-hour Nurse After-care Telephone Service on 1300 515 883**.

Possible adverse effects of the treatment

Although cramping and bleeding are expected as part of ending a pregnancy, rarely, serious and potentially life-threatening bleeding, infections or other problems can occur following a medical abortion. The use of this treatment is not risk free.

You should get immediate advice or seek medical attention if you experience:

- heavy vaginal bleeding- soaking **two (2)**, or more, sanitary pads per hour for **two (2)** consecutive hours or pass large, fist-sized clots.
- prolonged heavy bleeding. It is expected that, on average, bleeding will go on for 10 to 16 days after a medical termination and may initially be quite heavy. You should be seen at the clinic for any bleeding that continues for more than four weeks.
- severe cramping or abdominal pain which is not improved by pain-relief medication.
- a fever or chills that last for more than 6 hours.

- any abnormal vaginal discharge.
- feeling sick with weakness, fatigue, nausea, vomiting, or diarrhoea more than 24 hours after taking the Misoprostol tablets.

Follow up

It is extremely important that you stick to any follow-up arrangements or appointments that you have been advised to complete. Follow-up is essential to confirm that the termination of pregnancy is successful. If the termination is not complete, we will discuss any further treatment options, which may include surgery. We will advocate for you if you need to see another doctor or go to hospital

It is strongly recommended that you do not plan to travel during the time that you are bleeding so that you can visit the clinic or your doctor if it seems necessary.

For further information visit our website at: www.clinic66.com.au

<https://www.clinic66.com.au/surgical-vs-medical-termination>

<https://www.clinic66.com.au/medical-abortion>

<https://www.clinic66.com.au/medical-abortion-preparation>

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