

**Medical abortion:**  
**A safe and effective option**  
**for terminating unwanted**  
**pregnancy**



## What is medical abortion?

Medical abortion is a way of terminating a pregnancy using pills. It is a safe alternative to surgical abortion. Usually, two medications (mifepristone and misoprostol) are used in medical abortion, and this combination is most effective (96-98%). If mifepristone is not available, misoprostol alone is also highly effective (up to 87%). Repeat doses of misoprostol may be required to complete the abortion, especially in later pregnancies.

## Why choose medical abortion?

There are many reasons to choose an abortion with pills, and some examples are:



Pills for medical abortion can be taken at home where it is more **comfortable and private**.



Pills can be taken at a **time that is most convenient**, for example, on a weekend.



It is **less invasive** than a surgical abortion and has a low risk of infection or complications.



For some, it **feels more natural** because it is similar to menstruation.

## Why not to choose medical abortion?

There are many reasons to choose surgical abortion, and some examples are:



Some people prefer to have a **procedure completed by a provider** at a medical facility.



Bleeding after taking medical abortion pills **may last longer** than bleeding after surgical abortion.



Some people may not feel comfortable **disposing of a pregnancy tissue** at home.



A procedure completed at a medical facility may offer **greater privacy** than having a medical abortion at home.

## Who can have a medical abortion?

**The vast majority of patients** can terminate their pregnancy with pills, but there are a few health conditions that are not compatible with medical abortion. These include:



Previous allergic reaction to mifepristone or misoprostol.



Severe problems with adrenal glands or the liver.



A rare blood disorder called porphyria or bleeding disorders.

## Is medical abortion safe?

Medical abortion is very safe and effective, and millions of patients throughout the world use medical abortion to terminate their pregnancies. Approximately 2-5% of patients may require additional dose of misoprostol or surgery to complete the abortion or to control bleeding. Serious complications, such as infections or hemorrhage, are very rare. There is no impact on future pregnancies or health.

## What are the side effects of medical abortion?

After taking the medications, side effects may include such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea. Most of these side effects go away after a few hours without any treatment. Bleeding can continue for a week or longer. Pain from cramping can be managed by taking medication (e.g. ibuprofen).

During medical abortion, most patients are able to identify signs when to contact a provider. They are:



If there is **no bleeding** after taking medical abortion pills.



If **bleeding is very heavy** and soaks more than 2 maxipads per hour for more than 2 consecutive hours.



If **fever** lasting more than 4 hours or the fever developing more than a day after taking medical abortion pills.



If feeling sick **does not get better** after 2-3 days.

## Where to seek information and counseling about medical abortion?

Different types of trained health workers can provide information and counselling about medical abortion. These can include obstetrician-gynecologists and non-specialist doctors, nurses, midwives, and pharmacists.



To learn more about  
medical abortion,  
please call:

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