



University Hospitals  
Bristol and Weston  
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service  
**Central Health Clinic**  
Pregnancy advisory service

# Early medical abortion at home

– up to 9 weeks and 6 days of pregnancy



**We provide a confidential service to all our patients, including under 16s. Information will only be given to the medical teams providing your care.**

**We recommend that your GP is informed of ongoing treatments or conditions – but we would only contact them with your agreement.**

**The only reason why we might have to consider passing on confidential information without your permission would be to protect you or someone else from very serious harm. We would always try to discuss this with you first.**

**Staff will not judge you. They will treat you with respect. The decision about whether or not to continue with a pregnancy is difficult. Staff will be supportive of people who may have conflicting emotions.**

The abortion pill is a medicine that ends the pregnancy.

The medical name for the abortion pill is **mifepristone**. It works by blocking the hormone progesterone. Without progesterone, the lining of the uterus breaks down and the pregnancy cannot continue.

You must be certain that you wish to end the pregnancy when you take this medication. If you were to take the medication and then continue the pregnancy, it could have harmful effects on the development of the fetus.

The abortion pill is followed by another medicine called **misoprostol**, which makes the womb contract, causing cramping and bleeding similar to a miscarriage.

For pregnancies up to and including 9 weeks and 6 days gestation misoprostol can either be administered in the clinic so you can return home to complete the abortion or you can administer the medication yourself at home. Your nurse will discuss this with you.

Misoprostol tablets should be inserted as high as possible into your vagina. Like a natural miscarriage you will have pain and bleeding, which will be different for each person. You will be given pain relief and advice on what you can take at home.

Most people pass the pregnancy within four to six hours of taking the misoprostol.

## **What are the side effects?**

If you vomit within one hour of taking the mifepristone tablet, you will need to take a further dose. Please phone the clinic as soon as possible on [REDACTED].

In addition to pain and bleeding misoprostol may also cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, rashes and dizziness.

If you experience very heavy bleeding and soak more than two pads per hour for more than two hours in a row, you should contact the helpline or access medical help as appropriate.

## **What is the risk of the abortion failing?**

A medical abortion is around 99% effective when the interval between mifepristone and misoprostol is 24 to 48 hours.

## **How safe is abortion?**

For most people, an abortion is safer than carrying a pregnancy and having a baby, but all medical and surgical procedures have risks.

## **Are there risks at the time of the abortion?**

Problems at the time of abortion are not very common. Excessive bleeding (haemorrhage) happens in around one in every 1,000 early medical abortions. A blood transfusion is rarely required.

## **Are there risks after the abortion?**

You are more likely to get problems in the two weeks after the abortion than at the time of the procedure itself.

## **Infection**

Around one in 1000 people will get an infection after a medical abortion which could sometimes cause damage to the womb.

## **Retained products**

Approximately seven in 100 medical abortions, the womb does not completely empty and you may need further treatment. This may involve a brief general anaesthetic or a short course of tablets.

## **Will an abortion affect my future chances of having a baby?**

If there are no problems with your abortion, it will not affect your future chances of becoming pregnant.

## **Does abortion cause breast cancer?**

Research evidence shows that having an abortion does not increase your risk of developing breast cancer.

## **What about afterwards?**

Bleeding may last up to three weeks and you may have spotting for a few weeks after this.

Use sanitary towels - not tampons or a menstrual cup.

Do not have sex until the bleeding has settled.

## Who should I contact if I am worried?

If you experience problems, it is important that you seek advice.

You will be given written information telling you where to call if you are concerned about anything.

Please call PAS directly if you have any of the following as it could be suggestive of a ongoing pregnancy if:

- you do not bleed within 24 hours of administering misoprostol
- you have less than four days of bleeding
- you still 'feel' pregnant or have symptoms of pregnancy including sore breasts, nausea or weight gain
- you remain concerned you may still be pregnant.

In the weeks after an abortion you should seek urgent treatment if you develop any of the following:

- lower abdominal pain
- an offensive discharge or a fever
- increased bleeding.

These can be signs of infection and, if you are not treated, it can lead to a more severe infection known as pelvic inflammatory disease.

Central booking line number: 

## After your abortion you should have:

- written information telling you where to call if you have any problems
- contraception to use straight away or information on where to get help if you want to discuss contraception at a later date
- a pregnancy test to perform four weeks after the abortion and information on what to do if this test is positive.

## How will I feel emotionally after an abortion?

How you react will depend on the circumstances of your abortion and the reasons for having it. You may feel relieved, sad or a mixture of both.

Some women who have experienced mental health problems in the past, may experience further problems after an unplanned pregnancy.

If these feelings don't settle, it may be helpful to talk to someone you can trust or seek professional advice from:

- your own **GP**
- **Brook Young Peoples' Clinic** (for under 20s only)  
Telephone: [REDACTED]
- **Avon Psychotherapy and Counselling Service**  
Telephone: [REDACTED] (small fee)
- **Off the Record** (counselling under 25s)  
Telephone: [REDACTED]
- **Womankind** – Bristol Women's Therapy  
Telephone: [REDACTED]

As well as providing clinical care, our Trust has an important role in research. This allows us to discover new and improved ways of treating patients.

While under our care, you may be invited to take part in research.  
To find out more please visit: [REDACTED]

**Help us prevent the spread of infection in hospital. Please make sure your hands are clean. Wash and dry them thoroughly/use the gel provided. If you have been unwell in the last 48 hours please consider whether your visit is essential.**

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death. For support in stopping smoking contact  
**NHS Smokefree on 0300 123 1044.**

Drinkline is the national alcohol helpline. If you're worried about your own or someone else's drinking, you can call this free helpline in complete confidence.  
**Drinkline on 0300 123 1110.**

For access all patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:  
**<http://foi.avon.nhs.uk/>**

**Bristol switchboard: 0117 923 0000**  
**Weston switchboard: 01934 636 363**



For an interpreter or signer please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in large print or PDF format, please email [REDACTED]

