Having an early medical abortion

the women's
the royal women's hospital

Early medical abortion is a safe and effective way to end a pregnancy.

What is early medical abortion?

Early medical abortion is when you take medicine to end a pregnancy. In Australia the medicine is called MS2Step or Arzestra.

The pack contains two different medicines that work together to stop the pregnancy.

- **Step 1: Mifepristone.** This tablet blocks the pregnancy hormone (progesterone) to stop the pregnancy from growing.
- **Step 2: Misoprostol.** These tablets soften and open the cervix, and cause cramping and bleeding to empty the uterus (womb).

Both medicines must be taken to end the pregnancy. They are taken 36 to 48 hours apart.

What to expect

Step 1. Most people will not notice any changes after taking their first tablet. A few may have some vaginal bleeding.

Step 2. This is the day of the abortion. It's important to prepare and rest at this time.

You can expect bleeding and cramps one to six hours after taking Step 2.

Bleeding is often like a heavy period with clots. Heavy bleeding may last for two to six hours but should lessen once the pregnancy has passed.

Cramps will also reduce once the pregnancy is passed. Cramping pain usually lasts no longer than 24 hours.

For the first 24 hours, some people may also feel:

- a headache
- nausea
- diarrhoea
- fever and chills.

Caring for yourself

- Be in a safe, quiet place and rest as much as you can.
- Take pain and nausea medicine every four to six hours for the first 24 hours. It is important to take your medicine when it is due to reduce the side effects of the abortion tablets.
- Use heat packs, warm showers (not a bath) or massage to help relieve pain.
- Have clean underwear and pads ready to wear. Change your pads often. Do not use tampons or menstrual cups.
- Drink plenty of water and eat light foods.
- Have someone around to support you until the heavy bleeding has settled.
- Know where your nearest emergency medical care is in case you are feeling unwell or are not comfortable staying at home.

Normal bleeding after the abortion

Bleeding will be less once the pregnancy has passed.

On average, bleeding lasts for 10 to 16 days but may continue for up to 30 days.

Expect the bleeding to be:

- like a period for five to seven days, then lighter
- less and less each day.

A normal period may start four to six weeks after the abortion. Some people have bleeding until the next period is due.

When to get help

Some people may have problems when taking the early medical abortion tablets. Go to your nearest hospital Emergency Department if you:

- have very heavy bleeding (you fill two or more pads per hour, for more than two hours in a row)
- pass clots the size of a small lemon
- feel faint and think your bleeding is heavy
- have signs of infection. These can include:
  - a temperature more than 38°C more than 24 hours after taking Step 2
  - ongoing abdomen (tummy) pain more than 24 hours after taking Step 2
  - pain with sex
  - unusual vaginal discharge.

Contact your treating clinic if you:

- have little or no bleeding after Step 2
- still feel pregnant after a week
- are still passing clots after a week
- have ongoing cramping pain or bleeding that is heavier than a period.

After the abortion

Once the pregnancy has passed, give yourself time to recover and rest as much as you can. The clinic can give you a medical certificate if you need. Gently ease back into normal daily activities.

For 14 days after the abortion do not place anything in your vagina. This is to reduce the chance of infection. This includes no:

- vaginal sex
- tampons or menstrual cups
- swimming
- baths; however, showering is safe.

Emotional health after an abortion

It is normal to have many different feelings after an abortion. These may depend on why you had the abortion, how you feel about it, if you have people around who support your decision and your abortion experience overall.

If you would like extra emotional support, the clinic can help you talk through your feelings and arrange other supports if you want.

Follow up appointments after the abortion

Remember to go to your follow up appointment.

Follow up appointments are important to check that:

- the abortion is complete
- the pregnancy has ended
- you are feeling well physically and emotionally.

Contraception after an abortion

You can get pregnant again very soon after an abortion. Your clinic appointment is a good time to talk about a contraception method that is right for you. Contraception will help to avoid getting pregnant again until you are ready.

You can start contraception with or straight after an early medical abortion.

- The contraceptive implant or contraceptive injection can be given with Step 1.
- The oral contraceptive pill or vaginal ring can be started the day after Step 2.
- An intrauterine device (IUD) can be inserted once the abortion is complete, usually from 14 days after Step 2.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

Support for people impacted by sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.
1800 737 732 (24-hour support service)
1800respect.org.au

Do you need an interpreter?



If you need an interpreter, remember you can ask for one.

Contact numbers

Royal Women's Hospital

Abortion and Contraception Service

T: (03) 8345 2832

My local emergency department

Hospital name: _____

Hospital address: _____

_____

For more information

Royal Women's Hospital

thewomens.org.au

Better Health Channel

betterhealth.vic.gov.au

1800 My Options

1800 696 784

1800myoptions.org.au

Sexual Health Victoria

1800 013 952

shvic.org.au

Women's Medicines Information Service
(03) 8345 3190
drug.information@thewomens.org.au

Related information from the Women's

To learn more about your contraception options visit our website. Information is also available in a range of community languages.

thewomens.org.au/hi-abortion

thewomens.org.au/contraception

Disclaimer: This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.
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Having an early medical abortion: patient instructions

How do I take the medicine?

Step 1: Mifepristone

Swallow one tablet of mifepristone with water.

Take Mifepristone:

Date: _____ Time: _____am/pm

Continue your usual activities. Most people will not notice any change.

If you vomit within one hour of taking this tablet, contact your clinic.

Step 2: Misoprostol

Step 2 is the time of the abortion. It is important to prepare and rest at this time.

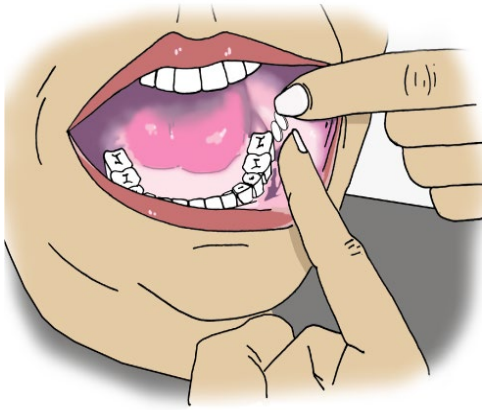
Take pain and anti-nausea medicine 30 minutes before commencing Step 2.

Date: _____ Time: _____ am/pm

Take Misoprostol:

Date: _____Time: _____ am/pm

Take all four misoprostol tablets. Put the tablets in your mouth between your cheek and gum, two on each side.



Let them sit there for 30 minutes.

After 30 minutes, swallow any leftover pieces of tablet.

Expect cramps and bleeding one to six hours after Step 2. This is often like a heavy period with clots. Heavy bleeding may last for two to six hours but should be less once the pregnancy has passed.

Cramps will also reduce once the pregnancy is passed.

Continue to take pain and anti-nausea medicine regularly for at least 24 hours. It's helpful to write down the date and times you take all of your medicines.

My follow up plan

The clinic will:

- give you a form to have a blood test
- send your local doctor a letter to say you had the early medical abortion medicine. Let us know if you don't want this letter sent.
- phone you two to three days after Step 2.

Expect a phone call from this date:

- Date: _____ Time: _____ am/pm

You need to:

Have a blood test 14 days after taking Step 2. This checks for the pregnancy hormone level (bhCG) to ensure the abortion has been successful.

My blood test is due from this date:

Date: _____

Make an appointment to see your local doctor 1 to 2 days after your blood test:

Date: _____ Time: _____ am/pm

My contraception plan

There are many things to think about when choosing the type of contraception that best suits you, including how easy it is to use, how effective it is, and how much it costs.

Write down what matters to you.

It is important to me that my contraception is:

_____

_____

_____

I am interested in / have chosen:

_____

_____

Contact numbers

Royal Women's Hospital

Abortion and Contraception Service

T: (03) 8345 2832

My local emergency department

Hospital name: _____

Hospital address: _____

Related information from the Women's

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thewomens.org.au/hi-abortion

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