

Medical Abortion Treatment and Aftercare

What you need to know
and support for your
recovery at home

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Please read this booklet as it includes all you need to know about medical abortion, what to expect and how to look after yourself.

Before you come to your appointment, ensure you have read and fully understand the consent form (which you will receive at the time of booking).

The consent form summarises the key points you need to know, please make note of any questions or concerns you may have.

More aftercare and contraception information can be found on the MSI Reproductive Choices UK website:

www.msichoices.org.uk

Please call **0345 122 1441** if you need to speak to a healthcare professional.

If dialling from outside of the UK, call **+44 1454 45 7553**.



If you need to talk

Everyone is different and can feel a range of emotions around the decision to end a pregnancy. You may feel relief, sometimes sad, or other emotions.

There is not a right or wrong way to feel.

Our counsellors are here for you if you need to talk. We can arrange pre or post abortion counselling over the phone for you.

To know more about your counselling options please call our advice line on **0345 300 8090**.



The abortion medication is for your own personal use in this current pregnancy.

By law, you must take both abortion pills by 10 weeks gestation (this is calculated from the first day of your last menstrual period or by a scan).

This means that the latest you can take the first pill (mifepristone) is at 9 weeks and 6 days gestation, and second pills (misoprostol) the next day. Your exact gestation is discussed with you during your appointment. If you're unsure, please give us a call.

If for any reason, you think your gestation is over 10 weeks, please call us. You can legally have an abortion up to 24 weeks gestation, so we will re-assess your gestation and discuss your options.

Ectopic pregnancy awareness

Rarely, a pregnancy may be developing outside of the womb, an “ectopic pregnancy”.

Please watch out for these signs and symptoms of ectopic pregnancy:

- Brown watery discharge (can be vaginal bleeding)
- One-sided pain in the lower part of your abdomen (“tummy”) or pelvis
- Pain in your shoulder

Other symptoms include:

- Dizziness
- Discomfort when passing urine or pooing
- Diarrhoea and vomiting

These symptoms may not be a sign of anything serious but if you experience any of these, please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

If you have these symptoms, feel very unwell and have severe pain, please call 999 or be taken to the nearest Accident & Emergency (A&E) department.

During the medical abortion it is normal to get pain and bleeding. Please see pages 22-28 for information about the pain and bleeding that can be expected. If you have concerns that you may have an ectopic pregnancy during your medical abortion, please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.



Medical abortion medication: what's in your pack

A medical abortion involves taking the medication shown in this booklet to end a pregnancy. The first medication that is taken, called mifepristone, blocks the hormone needed for a pregnancy to develop.

The second medication, misoprostol, causes the body to expel the pregnancy from the womb. Misoprostol causes the softening and opening of the cervix (neck of the womb) and contractions of the womb, so that the pregnancy can pass through the vagina.

You could receive your medical abortion pack by post (if you are eligible and you choose this option) or receive it at one of our clinics (if you have a scan appointment or choose to collect your medication).

All packs contain the same medication but may be packaged differently.

Your medical abortion pack will include:

- 1 set of abortion medication, which includes 1 tablet of mifepristone and 4 tablets of misoprostol. These tablets could come:
 - in a box called “Medabon”
 - in separate boxes labelled mifepristone and misoprostol
 - in 2 plastic bags labelled “1” and “2”
- 2 extra misoprostol tablets. These could come:
 - in a box
 - in a plastic bag labelled “3”
- 1 pregnancy test (this is not a normal pregnancy test and is designed to check whether the abortion has been successful – please keep this safe as you will need to use it 3 weeks after taking your tablets)
- 1 box containing codeine tablets (unless opted out or medically unsuitable)
- Sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening kit (if requested)
- Contraceptive pills (if requested)

Step-by-step guide: how to take your medication

Follow the steps outlined in this booklet to complete your medical abortion treatment.

Step one: taking the first tablet (mifepristone)

Collected from clinic	Received by post
<p data-bbox="96 629 534 669">Either one Medabon box</p> <div data-bbox="122 701 353 839">A white rectangular box for Medabon medication. The text on the box includes 'Medabon', 'Mifepristone', and 'Misoprostol'. There is a small logo at the bottom right.</div> <div data-bbox="366 721 515 825">A blister pack containing six white, round tablets arranged in two rows of three.</div>	<div data-bbox="607 721 917 1065">A white plastic bag containing two sets of medication. The top set is labeled 'MIFEPRIS' mifepristone and has a black square with the number '1' on it. The bottom set is labeled 'MIFEPRISTONE LINEPHARMA 200 mg tablet' and 'Misoprostol'. The bag also contains instructions for use.</div>
<p data-bbox="96 900 534 985">Or separate Mifepristone and Misoprostol sets</p> <div data-bbox="138 1025 327 1144">A small white box for Mifepristone and Misoprostol sets. It contains instructions for use and a barcode.</div> <div data-bbox="346 1032 532 1136">A blister pack containing one white, round tablet.</div>	

Once you receive the pack, take your first tablet (1 mifepristone tablet). Remove only the mifepristone from the blister pack or from your plastic bag labelled “1” and swallow it with plenty of water.

Most people can continue their daily routine as normal after taking mifepristone. Occasionally you may experience some bleeding and pain.

If you vomit within 30 minutes of swallowing the tablet, call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**. If you think you have passed the pregnancy before taking the second set of abortion tablets (misoprostol) please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

Once the first tablet has been taken, if you change your mind and decide to continue with the pregnancy, there is a chance the pregnancy may miscarry. There is no evidence that a ‘reversal’ treatment is effective and is likely to cause side effects. We would advise you to see your doctor as soon as possible to arrange antenatal care.

Step two: taking the second set of tablets (4 misoprostol tablets) 24-48 hours after completing step one

Collected from clinic	Received by post
<p data-bbox="99 412 539 449">Either one Medabon box</p> <div data-bbox="99 483 346 629">A white box for Medabon tablets. The text on the box includes 'Medabon', 'Contains 4 misoprostol tablets', and '4 tablets (200 micrograms)'. There is a small logo at the bottom right.</div> <div data-bbox="360 503 522 609">A blister pack containing four white, round tablets arranged in a 2x2 grid.</div>	<div data-bbox="625 495 912 842">A blister pack for Cytotec 200 microgram Tablets. A large black square with the number '2' is in the top right corner. The text on the pack includes 'Cytotec® 200 microgram Tablets', 'misoprostol', and 'Not for use for pre-misoprostol unless using effective contraception'.</div>
<p data-bbox="99 679 539 765">Or separate Mifepristone and Misoprostol sets</p> <div data-bbox="149 798 356 931">A small white box for Mifepristone tablets. The text includes 'Mifepristone 200 microgram Tablets'.</div> <div data-bbox="370 802 501 926">A blister pack containing four white, round tablets arranged in a 2x2 grid.</div>	

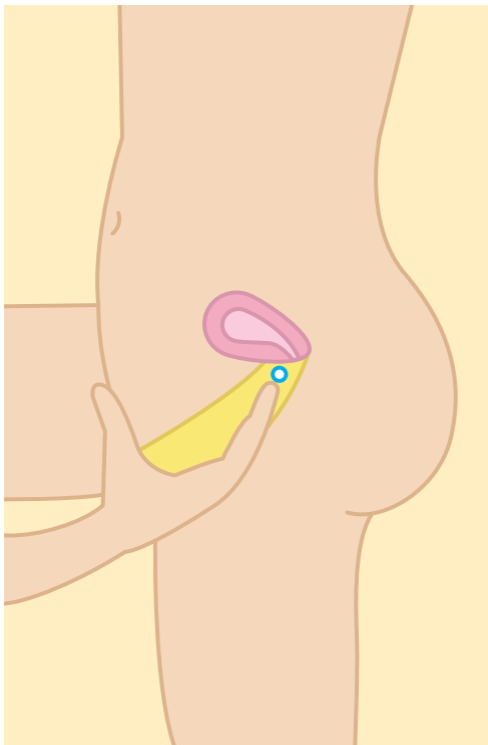
The tablets work best if you leave 24-48 hours between the first and second steps, but you can take them up to 72 hours after (please note that if more than 72 hours pass and you have not taken the misoprostol tablets you may need to come back to the clinic to repeat the treatment).

- You can take your chosen method of pain killers 10 minutes before you plan to take the misoprostol (see pages 22-28 “Bleeding and pain” for detailed instructions).
- Remove the 4 tablets of misoprostol from the blister pack or from your plastic bag labelled “2”.
- Place all 4 tablets either vaginally (which we recommend as there are fewer side-effects), or if you prefer in your mouth between your gum and cheek (see illustrations page 19).

Please remember that if you are 9 weeks and 6 days gestation on the day of taking the first tablet (mifepristone) you must take this second set of tablets (misoprostol) no more than 24 hours later.

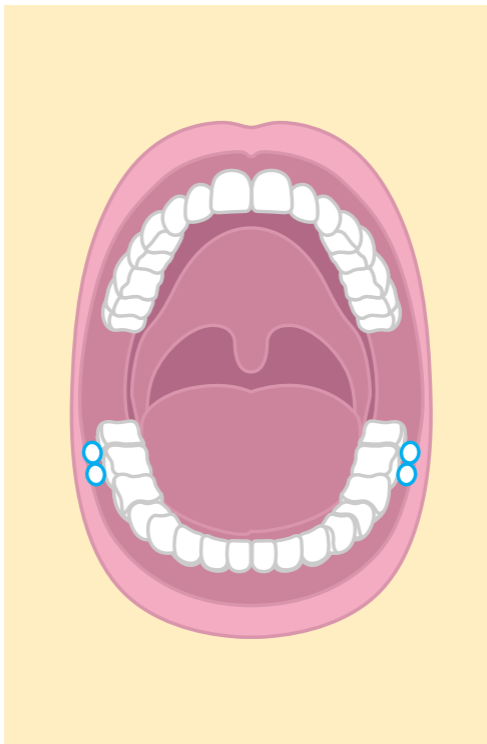
Dissolving the tablets in your vagina

- 1.** Empty your bladder.
- 2.** Wash your hands.
- 3.** Using your finger, push the misoprostol tablets up into the vagina one at a time. Insert them as far as you can
- 4.** Please try to lie down for at least 30 minutes to ensure the tablets don't come out of your vagina.
- 5.** If tablets fall out in the first 30 minutes, you can re-insert them. Please note that the tablets might come out of the vagina when you start to bleed. If the tablets come out at this point, don't worry as the medication will have been absorbed within 30 minutes.



Dissolving the tablets in your mouth:

- 1.** Put 2 misoprostol tablets on each side of your mouth between your cheek and gums.
- 2.** Keep them in your mouth for 30 minutes
- 3.** After 30 minutes, you can swallow any undissolved tablets with water. The tablets may leave an unpleasant taste in your mouth.



Step three: taking the 2 extra tablets (misoprostol) 3 hours after completing step two

Collected from clinic	Received by post
	

- If you are sure that you have already passed the pregnancy after completing step 2, you do not need to follow step 3.
- If you are not sure (which will be most people), please take the remaining 2 tablets of misoprostol 3 hours after completing step 2. You will need to place these 2 misoprostol tablets in the vagina or between your cheek and gums (see illustrations on pages 17 and 19).

- If you have very little or no bleeding by 48 hours after taking the second pills (misoprostol), it is possible the medical abortion has not worked so please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

If you've taken both tablets at the same time in one of our clinics

This section is for those who have taken mifepristone and misoprostol in clinic at the same time and were given 2 extra misoprostol tablets. Please take these 2 tablets 3 hours afterwards unless you are sure you have already passed the pregnancy.

Bleeding and pain: passing the pregnancy

Everybody is different, but the abortion usually starts within a few hours and is usually completed within 1-2 days. Occasionally, it can take up to 2 weeks to fully pass all the pregnancy tissue, and you may continue to bleed for up to 8 weeks.

You are likely to experience strong cramping and bleeding which can last a few hours, but pain and bleeding is different for each person.

Please read the following sections on bleeding and pain for more information.



How to manage pain during a medical abortion

Most people will have significant cramping pain and will find pain relief helpful. If pain is severe, this is usually short lived and is relieved when the pregnancy passes.

Pain relief should be taken before you take the misoprostol, or if preferred when you start to feel cramps building up.

Ibuprofen (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory drug)* Take 400-600mg (2-3 tablets) of ibuprofen. You can repeat 2 tablets (400mg) every 6 hours as needed for up to 48 hours. Do not take more than 6 tablets (200mg strength, 3 if 400mg strength) in 24 hours.

Paracetamol* You can also take 2 tablets of paracetamol every 4 hours, making sure you do not take more than 8 paracetamol tablets in any 24-hour period.

Codeine* If the pain becomes severe, take one tablet of codeine and if it isn't improving after 15 minutes take a second tablet. You can have two tablets of codeine every four hours for up to 48 hours.

Do not take more than 8 tablets of 30mg strength in 24 hours. Severe pain is usually short lived and is relieved when the pregnancy passes. Codeine can cause drowsiness so please do not operate machinery or drive whilst taking codeine.

Heat A hot water bottle, heat pack or bath can also be really helpful.

We do not recommend using aspirin as pain relief, but if you are taking it for medical reasons you should continue to do so.

If your pain has still not reduced after following the advice above, please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

*Please make sure you follow the instructions on the box for any medication taken. Do not take any medication that you have a known allergy to or have been told not to take by a healthcare professional.

Bleeding during the abortion

Bleeding can be light, moderate, or heavy during a medical abortion and it is different for everyone.

During the abortion, it would be expected for you to pass the pregnancy tissue and most people will pass blood clots which can be as large as a lemon. If the clots are larger than the size of a lemon, please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

As the gestation increases, the pregnancy tissue may be more recognisable but most people will not clearly see a foetus. You may be more comfortable having a private toilet nearby to pass the pregnancy. You can also dispose of the pregnancy tissue by wrapping them up within a plastic bag and putting in a normal waste bin.

Menstrual products advice

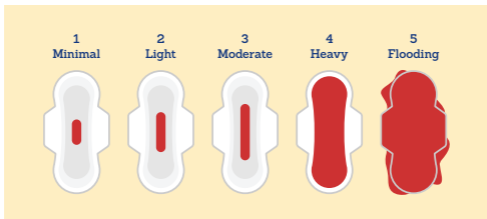
You can use any menstrual products during and after the abortion, but using period pads is easier to track and monitor your bleeding. On days your bleeding is heavy, we recommend wearing a suitable pad such as the thick maternity ones.

If you use tampons or menstrual cups, please consider using period pads instead for 48 hours after taking the second tablets (misoprostol), as this will help you monitor your bleeding. If you decide to use tampons or menstrual cups, please ensure you change them regularly.

When to ask for help

- If you experience bleeding that is soaking through more than 2 sanitary pads in one hour you should seek urgent medical advice.

- Call **999** if you have very heavy bleeding (example number 5 in the picture below) and you feel unwell.
- If you have very little or no bleeding by 48 hours after taking the second pills (misoprostol), it is possible the medical abortion has not worked so please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**. If you have light bleeding (examples number 1 and 2 in the picture below) and are not sure if the medical treatment has worked, please also call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.



Bleeding after the medical abortion

Once the pregnancy has been passed, both the pain and bleeding will usually reduce. The bleeding may be quite heavy for a day or two as your uterus (womb) returns to its normal size.

It is usual to pass clots for a few days and intermittently for 1-2 weeks. It is normal to have some bleeding or spotting, possibly with some small clots, for 2-4 weeks after a medical abortion and for some people it can be for up to 8 weeks after.

This bleeding may come and go and be quite irregular, and you may continue to pass some smaller clots.

If you ever feel worried, please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441** to speak to a healthcare professional.

Side effects of the medications

Side effects of the medication are fairly common and may include:

- Nausea or vomiting
- Headaches
- Diarrhoea
- Fever/chills, temporary flushes, or sweats

Any side effects may begin fairly soon after taking the medication, but usually settle once the pregnancy is passed.



How do I know the abortion has worked?

The tablets work for most people but if you have any of the following, please contact the aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**:

- None or only light bleeding by 48 hours after taking the second tablets (misoprostol).
- The pregnancy symptoms have not improved/resolved by 7 days after the second tablets.
- You still feel that you are pregnant 7 days after the second tablets.
- You have a positive pregnancy test 3 weeks after the abortion (please see page 35 “Pregnancy test after an abortion” for more information on pregnancy testing).

Retained products of conception (RPOC)

Occasionally, some pregnancy tissue and/or blood clots can remain in the womb after a medical abortion. If you have ongoing heavy bleeding and clots, or experience “gushes” of blood with or without moderate lower abdominal pain **beyond 1 week** after taking the second set of tablets (misoprostol), please call us our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

If the pain is manageable, the bleeding is within an amount that is safe for you, and you have no signs of infection, you may be advised to wait for the tissue to pass on its own. Most pregnancy tissue will usually come away without treatment though it may take days to weeks to do this.

Sometimes treatment is needed to help the womb get rid of this tissue and this can be more tablets or minor procedure to remove this for you.

Abortion aftercare advice

It is important that you take all the time you need to look after yourself. We are here to support you. Here are our recommendations to help your recovery after a medical abortion.

- Drink plenty of water and do not drink alcohol until you feel you are able to.
- Your vagina will clean itself with natural discharge. Do not use a douche or use any soap inside the vagina as this can disrupt the normal bacteria and increase the risk of infection.
- You may feel light-headed during or immediately after your abortion. For your safety, don't have a shower/bath if you are feeling light-headed.

- It is safe to have a bath, to go swimming and to exercise as soon as you feel comfortable to do so.
- It is safe to have sex when you feel ready. Please remember that fertility returns quickly after a medical abortion. You can get pregnant again within a week after the abortion.

Infection

Infection after an abortion is uncommon, but if it occurs it is easily treated. If you have any of the following symptoms, please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**:

- Vaginal discharge that smells unpleasant or is an unusual colour for you.
- Fever, feeling shivery or like you have the flu lasting more than 24 hours after taking misoprostol.
- Lower abdominal pain that persists or becomes worse after passing the pregnancy.

Sepsis can be caused by an infection and whilst after an abortion it is rare, it can be serious. Symptoms of sepsis can be like having the flu at first.

If you have any of the signs below it is important to seek urgent medical advice:

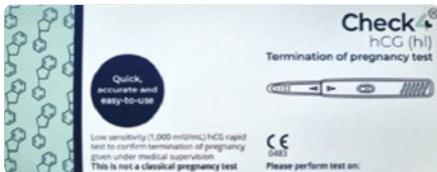
- Confusion
- Slurred speech
- Extreme shivering
- Severe muscle pain
- Being unable to urinate
- Severe breathlessness
- Cold, clammy and pale or blotchy skin
- Loss of consciousness

Pregnancy test after an abortion

It is important that you take the pregnancy test included in the medical abortion pack 3 weeks after you have taken the misoprostol tablets.

Please use the pregnancy test we have provided as it is different to the shop bought tests.

The pregnancy hormone can be present for up to two months after an abortion. This means that a shop bought pregnancy test may remain positive for up to two months, even though you are no longer pregnant, which is why you need to use the special one we provide.



Frequently asked questions

What do I do if I get a positive pregnancy test after an abortion?

There are a number of reasons you might get a positive result on your pregnancy test after your abortion, it does not always mean your abortion has not been successful.

If your pregnancy test is positive, call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441** and we will discuss what to do next.

When will I get my period after an abortion?

Your first period will usually return between four to eight weeks following a successful abortion. It is also normal to pass more clots than usual.

Some hormonal contraception can stop or change your periods, therefore if you started contraception around the time of your abortion, this may explain why your period has not returned.

What do I do if I am breastfeeding?

Small traces of the abortion medication could pass into your breast milk but only temporarily. You do not need to stop breastfeeding during the medical abortion. Although it is unlikely, some drugs may cause nausea and vomiting or drowsiness in the infant.

When will I hear from you about my STI testing?

You may have had a sexually transmitted infection (STI) test at your appointment or posted to you with your tablets.

We will only contact you if you have a positive test result. If you do not hear from us within 2 weeks, then your test is negative, and no action is required.

Contraception information

Following an abortion, your fertility will return almost immediately. An egg can be released from the ovary as soon as 5 days after your treatment. We offer a range of short-acting contraceptive methods (such as the combined pill, the mini pill, the patch or the ring) and long-acting contraceptive methods (such as the coil, the injection or the implant) to suit your individual needs.

If you choose not to start a method of contraception during your abortion care or would prefer to go away and think about your options, remember that you will be able to access our contraception services for **6 months** following your treatment. You can contact our booking line on **0345 300 8090** to arrange your contraception appointment.

Please remember that condoms are the only contraceptive method that will help protect you against STIs. For more information about types of contraception that we can provide and how effective they are, visit our website: www.mschoices.org.uk.

Contraceptive pill

There are 2 contraceptive pill options: the combined pill and the progestogen-only pill (also known as POP or 'mini pill'). You can start taking the pill the day after taking the second tablets. If you start the combined contraceptive pill after 5 days, please use condoms or do not have sex for 7 days. If you start the mini pill (POP) after 5 days, please use condoms for 2 days.

Contraceptive patch

Apply the patch to your skin on your abdomen, buttock, arm, shoulder or the top of your leg the day after taking the second tablets. It will work straight away. If you start using the patch more than 5 days after the abortion, use condoms or do not have sex for 7 days.

Contraceptive injection

If you choose the contraceptive injection, this can either be given to you at the clinic during your treatment appointment or it can be self-administered at home. This means that we will provide you with a home-kit and explain how you can give yourself the injection at home. The injection lasts for 13 weeks.

You will need to visit your GP or sexual health clinic every 13 weeks for repeat injections. The injection is the only method of hormonal contraception which may delay your return of fertility for up to a year.

Contraceptive implant

If the implant is fitted within 5 days of the abortion it will work straight away. If fitted after this time, it will take 7 days to work (use condoms or do not have sex for 7 days). In the first few days after insertion, keep the section of your arm where the implant was inserted clean and dry if you can.

You can wrap the affected part of your arm in cling-film when you have a shower. You will have a small wound where the implant was inserted into your arm.

The implant lasts 3 years. If you have any concerns about your wound, call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

Intrauterine contraceptive devices (IUD): hormonal and non-hormonal

We can fit a coil after you have passed the pregnancy. The hormonal coil (also known by multiple brand names such as “Levosert”, and formerly known as the IUS) is commonly used to treat period problems, so is an excellent choice if you have troublesome cycles or would prefer little or no bleeding. The hormonal coil lasts between 3 to 8 years.

The non-hormonal coil (also known as “copper coil”) lasts a long time (between 5 to 10 years) and is a good choice if you do not want hormonal contraception.



Online contraception counsellor: personalised contraception at your fingertips – Try “Choice” our online contraception counsellor to find the best contraceptive option for you. Scan this QR code to answer a few questions and get personalised contraceptive advice.

Effectiveness of contraceptive methods post-abortion

Contraceptive method	If taken after 5 days of the abortion	If taken after 5 days of the abortion
Progesterone only pill (“mini pill”, “POP”)	Works straight away	Takes 2 days to work (use condoms or abstain from sex to avoid a pregnancy)
Combined methods (pill, patch, ring), Implant and Injection and hormonal coil (formally known as IUS)	Works straight away	Takes 7 days to work (use condoms or abstain from sex to avoid a pregnancy)
Non-hormonal coil (formerly known as IUD)	Works straight away	Works straight away

We hope this booklet has answered all your questions about your treatment and aftercare. If you have any other questions, you can call us any time, day or night.

Aftercare line (24-hours):

- **0345 122 1441**
- **services@mschoices.org.uk**
- **www.mschoices.org.uk**



Fill in our feedback questionnaire to tell us about your experience:



We are always striving to give the best possible service to our clients, and we welcome your views on your experience with us. Please scan this QR code to fill in our client feedback questionnaire.

Find out more about the tablets included in your medical abortion pack:



If you want to know more about the tablets involved in your treatment, you can scan this QR code to find the patient information leaflets for the tablets included in your medical abortion pack.



MSI Reproductive Choices UK

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MSI Reproductive Choices is a registered charity in England and Wales (reg no. 265543).

Company reg no. 1102208

If you have any questions or comments about this booklet or would like information on the evidence used to produce it, please email marketing@msichoices.org.uk.

The information given in this booklet was accurate at the time of going to print. This publication will be reviewed annually.

For the latest information visit www.msichoices.org.uk

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