



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 before your appointment. It contains 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, making 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**.

Once you have given us your PIN and password over the phone our team of aftercare nurses can access your medical history.

The information that you give to us on the phone call is documented. This is to make sure that any member of our aftercare team can support you if you call us another time.

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 a mixture of both.

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

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

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:

- Vaginal bleeding
- Brown watery discharge
- Pain in your shoulder
- One-sided pain in the lower part of your abdomen (“tummy”)

Please call our advice line on **0345 122 1441**.

During the medical abortion it is normal to get pain and bleeding. Please see pages 22-26 “Pain relief” for information about the pain and bleeding that can be expected. If you have concerns during your medical abortion, please call our aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

If you experience any of the following after taking all the misoprostol tablets (once the initial heavy bleeding has settled or if you only ever had light bleeding*):

**Please see page 28 “How do I know the abortion has worked?” if you only have light bleeding after taking the tablets.*

- Worsening one-sided pain in the lower part of your abdomen (“tummy”), often with pain in your shoulder
- Feeling very unwell including very dizzy and passing out
- Looking very unwell or pale

You should call 999 or be taken to your nearest A&E department. If in doubt, please contact the aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

What's in your medical abortion package

You will receive a package containing the following items. The medication is for your own personal use in this current pregnancy. This medication must be taken before you reach 10 weeks gestation (from the first day of your last menstrual period or as calculated by scan).

- Example 1 - Medabon

In your box labelled Medabon, you will receive 1 tablet of mifepristone and 4 tablets of misoprostol.



Or you may receive separate boxes of medication labelled mifepristone (1 tablet) and misoprostol (4 tablets).

- Example 2 – Mifepristone & Misoprostol



Most people will also receive an additional box of misoprostol containing 2 tablets.



Your medical abortion package will also include:

- 1 box containing codeine tablets (unless opted out / medically unsuitable after consultation)
- 1 pregnancy test (N.B. this is not a normal pregnancy test and is only designed to check whether the abortion has been successful – please keep this safe as you will need to use this 3 weeks after taking your tablets)
- Sexual transmitted infection (STI) screening kit and contraceptive pills (if requested)

What to expect during treatment

Step one: Taking the first tablet (mifepristone)

Once you receive the package, take your first tablet (mifepristone). Don't wait too long once you receive the pack as you need to be less than 10 weeks pregnant when taking the tablets.

Open the Medabon box containing 1 tablet of mifepristone and 4 tablets of misoprostol (or the box containing mifepristone if you have been given the mifepristone and misoprostol separately).

Remove only the mifepristone from the blister pack 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 20 minutes of swallowing the tablet, ring the 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 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 GP as soon as possible to arrange antenatal care.

Step two: Taking the second tablets (misoprostol) 24-48 hours after completing step one

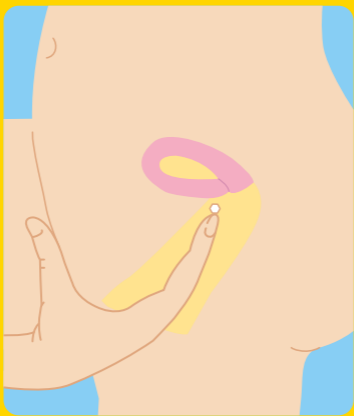
The tablets work best if you leave 24-48hrs between the first and second steps.

- You can take your chosen method of pain killers 10 minutes before you plan to take the misoprostol (see p22 “Pain relief” for detailed instructions).
- Remove the 4 tablets of misoprostol from the blister pack.
- 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 boxes on next page).

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.

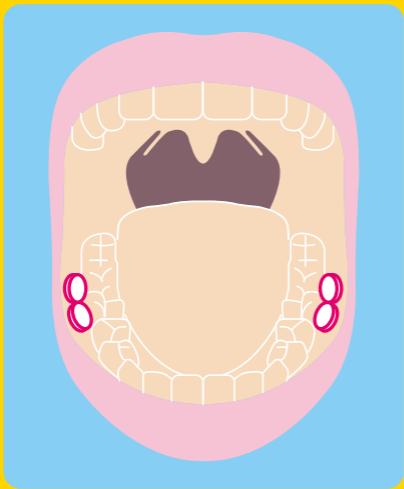
Dissolving the tablets in your vagina:

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. If tablets fall out in the first 30 minutes, re-insert them.



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 for them to dissolve.
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 extra tablets (misoprostol) 3 hours after completing step two

- After 3 hours take the remaining 2 tablets of misoprostol unless you are sure you have already passed the pregnancy. You will need to place these 2 misoprostol tablets in the vagina or between your cheek and gums (see boxes on previous page).
- If more than 72 hours pass and you have not taken the misoprostol tablets, please ring our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 1221441** and speak to one of our healthcare professionals. You may need to come back to the clinic to repeat the treatment.

If you've taken your tablets 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 (as shown in the boxes above) unless you are sure you have already passed the pregnancy. If you have not started bleeding within 48 hours, please ring our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441** and speak to one of our healthcare professionals.

Pain relief

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:

- Take 400-600mg (2-3 tablets) of ibuprofen immediately. You can repeat two tablets every four hours as needed for up to 48 hours. Do not take more than 12 ibuprofen (200mg strength, 6 tablets if 400mg strength) in 48 hours.

- You can also take two tablets of paracetamol regularly, making sure you do not take more than 8 paracetamol tablets in any 24-hour period.
- A hot water bottle, heat pack or bath can also be helpful.
- 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. Severe pain is usually short lived and is relieved when the pregnancy passes.

If you cannot take any one of these pain killers (e.g. due to an allergy) then the others should still work well.

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 been reduced after following the advice above, please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

Bleeding and cramps – 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. During this time, 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. As the gestation increases the pregnancy tissue may be more recognisable but most people will not clearly see a fetus. At 9 weeks the fetus is 3-8cm long. You may be more comfortable having a private toilet nearby to pass the pregnancy. You can also dispose of pregnancy products by wrapping them up within a plastic bag and putting in a normal waste bin.

Once the pregnancy has been passed, both the pain and bleeding will usually reduce. It may be quite heavy for a day or two as your womb returns to its normal size. It is usual to pass clots for a few days, but it should get less each day. It is normal to have some bleeding or spotting for 2 to 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. If you ever feel worried, please call our 24-hour aftercare line on **0345 122 1441** to speak to a healthcare professional.

Side effects

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 48-72 hours after taking the second tablets
- 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 34 “Pregnancy symptoms and testing” for more information on pregnancy testing).

We may need to book you in for a follow up appointment to check the abortion has been successful.

Occasionally, some pregnancy tissue and/or blood clots can remain in the womb after a medical abortion. If you have ongoing heavy bleeding beyond 72 hours after taking the misoprostol tablets or experience “gushes” of blood and/or moderate lower abdominal pain, please call us on **0345 122 1441**. If the pain and bleeding is mild, any 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 surgery.

Abortion aftercare

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.

- You can use any sanitary wear during and after the abortion, but sanitary pads can be easier to track 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 sanitary pads instead for 48 hours after taking the second tablets (misoprostol) and if you use them, please change them regularly.
- 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 lightheaded.
- 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.

Serious complications have warning signs. Please call us straight away on [0345 122 1441](tel:03451221441) if you experience:

- Very heavy bleeding that soaks through more than 2 sanitary pads an hour for 2 hours. These pads should be suitable for a heavy flow.
- Abdominal pain or discomfort that is not helped by pain relief medication, or by using a heat pad.

Infection after an abortion is uncommon, but if it occurs it is easily treated. If you have:

- Vaginal discharge that smells unpleasant
- Fever, feeling shivery or like you have the flu lasting more than 24 hours

Please call us on 0345 122 1441

Sepsis can be caused by an infection and whilst after an abortion it is rare, it can be serious especially if it is not detected.

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

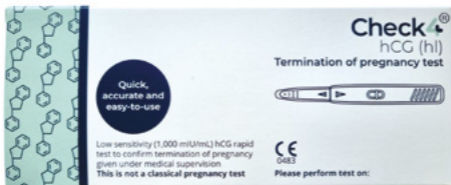
Step four – Pregnancy symptoms and testing

3 weeks after step three

It is important that you take the pregnancy test included in the medical abortion pack 3 weeks after you have completed Step 3. Please use the pregnancy test we have provided as it is different to the shop bought tests.

Some pregnancy hormones 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.

It is important that you wait for 3 weeks after your abortion before taking the pregnancy test and use our specially calibrated test (not a shop-bought one).



If your pregnancy test is positive, call our aftercare line on **0345 122 1441** to speak to a healthcare professional. Our team can help you to book an appointment for an assessment, and further treatment if needed.

If you are breastfeeding

The drugs we provide are safe to take if you are breast feeding, and breastfeeding can continue as normal. 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.

Sexually transmitted infection (STI) testing

You may have had an 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.

If your STI test result is positive, your partner(s) will need to contact a sexual health clinic for testing and for treatment if needed. If you need antibiotics, make sure you take all the tablets you are given as directed. If we are unable to contact you about a positive test, we will contact your GP instead to ensure you get the right treatment.

Using contraception

It is very important to know that it is possible to get pregnant almost immediately after an abortion. If you do not want to become pregnant, we recommend that you have contraception ready to use. This section will give you information on when you can start using the contraceptive method.

Please keep in mind 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.

If you did not choose contraception at the time of your appointment and you have now chosen a contraceptive method that you would like, please contact the booking line on **0345 300 8090** to arrange this.

Contraceptive pill

There are two 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

The injection will be given during your treatment appointment or posted to you. The injection lasts for 12 weeks. You will need to visit your GP or family planning clinic every 12 weeks for repeat injections or there is also the option of an injection that you can give yourself at home.

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 your arm in cling-film when you have a shower. You can remove the bandage after a few hours and remove the dressing after 2 – 3 days. You will have a small puncture mark where the implant was inserted into your arm, but it should not be painful. If you have any concerns about your wound, call our aftercare line on **0345 122 1441**.

Intrauterine Device (IUD) / Intrauterine System (IUS)

The best time to have an IUD or IUS fitted is immediately after the pregnancy has passed. If it is not possible to organise an appointment within this week, we can provide you with a short-term method of contraception, such as the pill, so you can be reassured you are protected until this can be arranged.

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.

Effectiveness of contraceptive methods post-abortion

Contraceptive method	If taken within 5 days of the abortion	If taken after 5 days of the abortion
Progesterone 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 IUS	Works straight away	Takes 7 days to work (use condoms or abstain from sex to avoid a pregnancy)
IUD	Works straight away	Works straight away

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.



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@msichoices.org.uk

www.msichoices.org.uk

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.



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