

Medication Abortion Fact Sheet

What is a medication abortion?

Medication abortion may be an alternative to aspiration abortion for some women, which involves using pills to end the pregnancy and expel the contents of the uterus. At Maine Family Planning we use Mifeprex™ (mifepristone) and misoprostol.

Where is medication abortion available?

In addition to our clinic in Augusta, medication abortion is available at 16 Maine Family Planning sites through the use of our telehealth system. When you call for an appointment, our staff will work with you to determine whether you can access services closer to where you live.

What medications are used?

- The first medication is Mifeprex (mifepristone, also known as RU-486). It blocks the hormone needed for a pregnancy to continue. It is one tablet that is taken by mouth in the clinic.
- The second medication is misoprostol. Four tablets of misoprostol are inserted into the vagina 6 - 48 hours after taking the Mifeprex (mifepristone). Misoprostol acts on the uterus to create contractions (cramps) and uterine bleeding, causing the uterus to expel the pregnancy. Approximately 93% of women pass their pregnancy within 6 hours of inserting the misoprostol.

What are the side effects of these medications?

Uterine cramping and bleeding are expected, and are necessary to complete the abortion. The cramping and bleeding usually begin within 2-12 hours of inserting the tablets at home. From one or both of the medications, possible side effects may also include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, headache, abdominal pain, back pain, dizziness, tiredness and/or hot flashes.

How effective is medication abortion?

Used as directed, the medications are 97% effective in ending a pregnancy. About 5-8 out of 100 women taking the medications will need an aspiration procedure to end the pregnancy or to stop too much bleeding. In cases where there is little or no bleeding, a second dose of misoprostol may be given at the follow-up visit.

Who is eligible to have a medication abortion?

A woman must be no more than 70 days (10 weeks) from the first day of her last menstrual period. She must be firm in her decision to terminate and able to consent without coercion, in good general health, and capable of fully understanding the informed consent materials. She must be willing to use the misoprostol at home, and have a support person with her during the time she is passing the pregnancy. She must also agree to come to the clinic for all scheduled visits, and have access to a telephone and transportation in case of emergency. If the patient is under 18, Maine law requires the involvement of a parent, a counselor, or other trusted adult. Finally, the patient must agree to have an aspiration abortion if her medication abortion is incomplete or unsuccessful.