



ABORTION PILLS 101: DEMYSTIFYING THE PROCESS

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Medication abortion, also called abortion pills, is a way to end a pregnancy using two types of pills: mifepristone and misoprostol. This guide explains what abortion pills are, how they work, and how to use them safely. With this information, you'll be better prepared to have an abortion or help someone else who needs one.

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED: This guide does not cover security recommendations or the global context.

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Abortion pills are used around the world, but how easy it is to access them depends on where you live. In the US, the laws vary by state. While abortion pills are safe, effective, and FDA-approved, some states have passed laws that make having them illegal. In other states, you can get them legally with a prescriber's help, either in-person or through the mail.

Even in places where abortion pills are illegal, they're not necessarily hard to access. Abortion pills are available right now in all 50 states, and this will remain true no matter what happens in the courts. You can get abortion pills in advance, whether you're pregnant or not, just to have on hand. Using abortion pills does not require the presence of a doctor. Some people

WHO THIS GUIDE IS FOR

This guide is for anyone looking for a basic understanding of abortion pills. Whether you're seeking an abortion or helping someone who is, this guide provides the essential information you need to understand the process and access care.

find and take the medications safely on their own. This is called self-managed abortion.

Laws vary state to state, and there may be legal risk in possessing, using, or sharing abortion pills. This risk is significantly higher for marginalized people and people in restricted states. It's important to know the laws where you live, so that you can assess the potential legal risk, decide what you're comfortable with, and take appropriate precautions. For more on this, see SYA's [Security for Abortion Seekers Field Guide](#).

TODAY, PEOPLE CAN GET ABORTION PILLS IN SEVERAL WAYS:

ABORTION CLINICS:

Where legal, providers at clinics can prescribe and administer abortion pills. The average cost for medication at a clinic is about \$600. To find an abortion provider, visit [INeedAnA.com](https://www.ineedana.com).

ONLINE CLINICS:

You can have a medical consultation using your phone or computer, either by filling out an online form or through a video visit. After the consultation, the pills are mailed to you, and you can take them at home. Follow-up support by phone or text is available if needed. Some online clinics serve all states and territories, even those with bans. Telehealth services and online ordering usually start at \$150, but many offer sliding scale pricing, which means the cost can be adjusted based on what you can afford. To find pills through an online clinic, visit PlanCPills.org.

WEBSITES THAT SELL PILLS:

Some international websites sell abortion pills without requiring a prescription or medical screening. After ordering, the pills are mailed to you, and you can take them at home. Free follow-up support is available by phone or text through MAHotline.org, if needed. These services are available in all states. To find pills through an international website, visit PlanCPills.org.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT NETWORKS:

Some state-based abortion support groups offer free help to people seeking abortion options. You can receive the pills in person or by mail and take them at home. Free follow-up support is available by phone or text through MAHotline.org, if needed. These networks are available in states with restrictions. To find pills through a community support network, visit PlanCPills.org.

OTHER COUNTRIES:

Some people get abortion pills from pharmacies in other countries, like Mexico. They can take the pills at home, with free follow-up support available by phone or text through MAHotline.org, if needed.

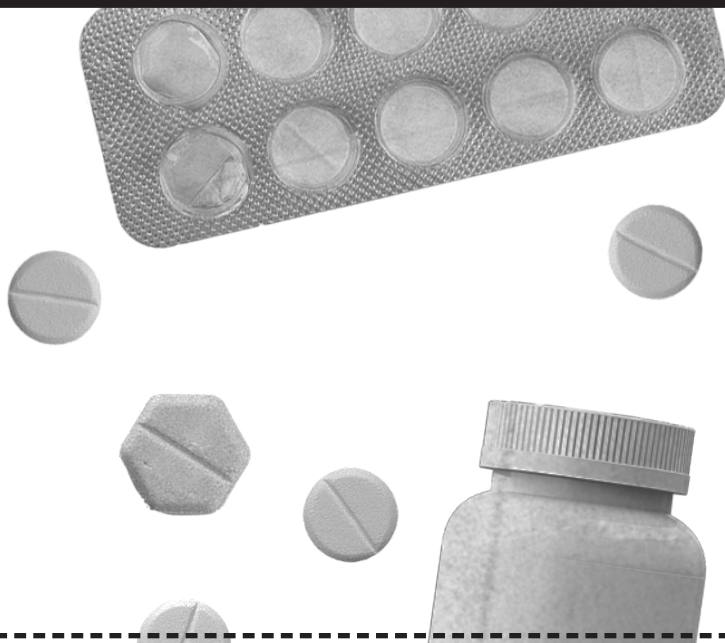
Each provider packages abortion pills differently. If you've ordered pills online through telehealth or a distributor, they may arrive in various packaging or forms. Pills could come in blister packs, bottles, or even loose in baggies. They might be 6-sided, round, or oval, and can be white or yellow in color.

All medications from providers listed on the Plan C website have been tested to make sure they are real and work, but since these websites aren't regulated by the US government, their availability may change over time.

BACKGROUND

French researchers developed mifepristone in the 1980s to be taken with misoprostol for medication abortion care. It was approved in the US in 2000 for medical abortions.

Misoprostol was first developed in 1973 under the name Cytotec to treat stomach problems like ulcers. When it became available in Brazil in 1986, activists discovered it could be used off-label to cause an abortion. Word spread, and soon it was being used in other countries as a safe option for ending pregnancies.



HOW ABORTION PILLS WORK AND WHEN TO USE THEM

Mifepristone blocks a hormone called progesterone, which is needed for a pregnancy to grow. By blocking progesterone, mifepristone stops the pregnancy from developing.

Misoprostol causes the uterus to contract and empty, similar to a miscarriage. It leads to cramping and bleeding, which helps remove the pregnancy tissue from the uterus.

Abortion is safe and very effective when done properly, with serious complications being extremely rare. It can be used by anyone who is pregnant, regardless of age or weight.

Calculate how many weeks pregnant you are by visiting [DueDateCalculator.com](https://www.ineedana.com/pills-after-12-weeks).

In the United States, abortion pills are approved for use up to 10 weeks of pregnancy. However, research shows they can be safely and effectively used after 10 weeks, and this is common in many parts of the world.

The process may take more time, involve multiple doses of misoprostol, and result in passing more developed pregnancy tissue, including a fetus and placenta. Having accurate information, knowing what to expect, and being aware of where to find medical, emotional, and legal support is essential.

Visit [INeedAnA.com/pills-after-12-weeks](https://www.ineedana.com/pills-after-12-weeks) for more information on what to expect. You can also contact the [M+A Hotline](#) or [Reprocare](#) to talk about later pregnancy care.



I NEED AN A:
PILLS AFTER
12 WEEKS

HOW TO USE ABORTION PILLS

You can end a pregnancy with pills by taking the medication mifepristone and misoprostol together, or just misoprostol on its own. Instructions for both are included.

Both the combined regimen of mifepristone and misoprostol and the misoprostol-only regimen are safe and effective options. When used together, the process may feel smoother with less intense cramping and bleeding. Using only misoprostol can take longer and may involve stronger cramping, heavier bleeding, and more side effects like nausea or diarrhea. However, both protocols are considered safe, and the choice between them can depend on individual circumstances and availability.

PREPARATION

The following suggestions can make your experience easier.

- ☐ Plan the timing of medication doses before starting the process.
- ☐ Take the day off when using misoprostol, and seek alternative arrangements for childcare.
- ☐ Ibuprofen (avoid aspirin)
- ☐ Anti-nausea medication (such as Dramamine or Pepto-Bismol)
- ☐ Anti-diarrheal medication (such as Imodium AD)
- ☐ Heavy-flow maxi pads
- ☐ Heating pads or something warm to ease cramping pain
- ☐ Water to stay hydrated
- ☐ Comfortable, loose clothes
- ☐ Light snacks
- ☐ Ask a trusted friend to support you and your needs for the day.
- ☐ A plan for which hospital to go to in an emergency, and what you will say to the staff.

Remember, you NEVER have to tell medical staff that you've taken abortion pills, and doing so might be legally risky.

You can simply say, "I'm bleeding abnormally and think something is wrong." THERE IS CURRENTLY NO WAY TO DETECT ABORTION MEDICATION IF TAKEN ORALLY. The treatment for a miscarriage and an abortion are the same, so you'll get the appropriate care even if you don't mention taking pills. See the [Security for Abortion Seekers Field guide](#) for more information or visit the [Digital Defense fund](#) for digital security information at [DigitalDefenseFund.org](#).

MEDICATION ABORTION STEPS

MIFEPRISTONE + MISOPROSTOL ABORTION:

1. Swallow 1 mifepristone pill (200 mg) with a glass of water.
2. Wait 24-48 hours. Mifepristone needs 24 hours to work and stops being effective after 48 hours.
3. Take 800 mg ibuprofen plus anti-diarrheal and anti-nausea medications 1 hour before starting misoprostol. This step is optional but can make your experience easier.
4. Place 4 misoprostol pills (200 mcg each) between the gums and cheek, or under the tongue, and let them dissolve. After 30 minutes, swallow any remaining pill residue with a glass of water.
5. Wait 3 hours. If cramping or bleeding has not happened at this point and you have more misoprostol, take another dose of 4 misoprostol pills as before. If heavy bleeding hasn't occurred 3 hours later, call the [Miscarriage + Abortion Hotline](#) at (833)246-2632.

MISOPROSTOL-ONLY ABORTION:

1. Take 800 mg ibuprofen plus anti-diarrheal and anti-nausea medications 1 hour before starting misoprostol. This step is optional but can make your experience easier.
2. Place 4 misoprostol pills (200 mcg each) between the gums and cheek, or under the tongue, and let them dissolve. After 30 minutes, swallow any remaining pill residue with a glass of water.
3. Wait 3 hours.
4. Repeat step 1.
5. Wait 3 hours. If cramping or bleeding has not happened at this point and you have more misoprostol, take another dose of four misoprostol pills as before. This process can be repeated every 3 hours until the pregnancy tissue leaves your body (see below for more info).

WHAT TO EXPECT

HOW TO TELL IF IT'S WORKING:

- Expect cramping and bleeding, which will get more intense as the process continues.
- The process will be painful. Some people report pain that's similar to a heavy period and others report severe pain. Both are normal.
- Clots of tissue may be expelled from the body. The process typically takes 6-10 hours, but times can vary widely.

Common Mifepristone Side Effects:

Side effects from mifepristone are minimal but can include nausea, dizziness, or very light bleeding.

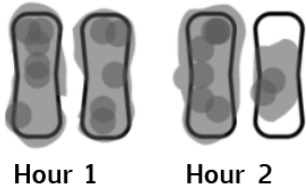
Common Misoprostol Side Effects:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------|
| • Shivering/chills | Nausea |
| • Low-grade fever | Vomiting |
| • Diarrhea | Headache |
| • Abdominal pain | |

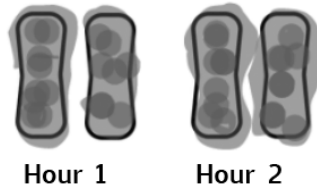
ABNORMAL SIDE EFFECTS:

- Soaking 2 or more heavy-flow maxi pads in an hour for 2 hours in a row is abnormal. Soaking means saturated top to bottom and side to side. This is rare but will require an immediate visit to the hospital.

NORMAL



NOT NORMAL



TIP: Place an empty trash bag next to the toilet for used pads, and empty it every 2 hours to monitor bleeding.

Call or text the Miscarriage + Abortion Hotline at (833)246-2632 or visit [MAHotline.org](https://www.mahotline.org) for guidance if no blood is expelled after taking all medications, or if pregnancy side effects do not diminish within a few days or worsen.

SIGNS OF AN INFECTION:

- Chills and a fever of 101° F or higher in the days following an abortion.
- Severe pain or cramping after the abortion that is not helped with pain medication.
- Nausea, vomiting, and/or diarrhea that lasts more than 24 hours.
- Vaginal discharge that is itchy, painful, or smells bad.

AFTERCARE:

- It is normal to experience off-and-on bleeding similar to a heavy or light period for 4-6 weeks.
- It could take 4-6 weeks for a period to return. Mucus-like vaginal discharge is common.
- It is normal to experience a range of strong emotions, or no emotions at all. The body will be adjusting to a fluctuation of hormones.
- Urine pregnancy tests may give a false positive for weeks after an abortion (due to lingering hormones). Wait 6-8 weeks before testing to confirm.
- The biggest indication that the abortion was successful is if pregnancy symptoms have gone away.

PLAN YOUR MEDICATION TIMING

Abortion pills must be taken on a schedule. Refer to the instructions on page 4 to plan the timing of each medication in the chart below. Taking misoprostol throughout the night is not recommended.

EXAMPLE:

TIME:	MEDICATION:
Thursday @ 10pm	(1) MIFEPRISTONE
24-48 HOURS	
Saturday @ 10am	(4) MISOPROSTOL
Saturday @ 1pm (if cramping or bleeding has not happened)	(4) MISOPROSTOL

TIME:	MEDICATION:

KEY WORDS

Abortion Pill: Medication used to end an early pregnancy, usually involving two medicines: mifepristone and misoprostol.

Medication Abortion: A process that ends a pregnancy using abortion pills.

Mifepristone: The first pill in a medication abortion, which blocks the hormone needed for pregnancy to grow.

Misoprostol: The second pill in a medication abortion, which causes cramping and bleeding to empty the uterus.

Self-Managed Abortion: When someone takes abortion pills on their own, without a doctor present.

Telehealth: A way to see a healthcare provider online, using a phone or computer, to get abortion pills mailed to you.

RESOURCES

ALL-OPTIONS TALKLINE:

Provides free and confidential support about any pregnancy related experiences.

1(888)493-0092 or [All-Options.org](https://www.all-options.org)

DIGITAL DEFENSE FUND:

Provides information about digital security and abortion so you can have a private and secure abortion.

[DigitalDefenseFund.org](https://www.digitaldefensefund.org)

DUE DATE CALCULATOR:

Helps you figure out how far along your pregnancy is by using the date of your last period.

[DueDateCalculator.com](https://www.duedatecalculator.com)

I NEED AN A:

A directory of abortion providers, funds, and abortion-related resources in every state.

[INeedAnA.com](https://www.ineedana.com)

MISCARRIAGE + ABORTION HOTLINE:

Talk to pro-abortion doctors anonymously. Call or text (833)246-2632 or visit [MaHotline.org](https://www.mahotline.org)

PLAN C PILLS:

An information resource for self-managed, at-home abortion with pills.

[PlanCPills.org](https://www.plancpills.org)

REPROCARE:

Anonymous peer-based emotional support and medical information. Call or text (833)226-7821 or visit [Reprocare.com](https://www.reprocare.com)

THE REPRO LEGAL HELPLINE:

Provides free and confidential information about abortion laws in your state, help you if the police have contacted you about an abortion, or help you if you are being denied an emergency abortion.

1(844)868-2812 or [ReproLegalHelpline.org](https://www.reprolegalthelpline.org)