



the ABORTION PILL

by David Hager, M.D.



A POSITIVE PREGNANCY TEST IS ONE OF THE MOST LIFE-CHANGING MOMENTS FOR A WOMAN.

Never is it more important to base your decisions on accurate information.

Try to think beyond the pressures you face right now and consider the long-term impact of your choices. You may have considered—or someone around you may have suggested—having an abortion.

Don't let anyone rush you into a medical decision before you understand the medical and emotional risks, and have considered your options. One of the options you may have been offered is the abortion pill. The following information is intended to help you understand the process and risks of a medical (chemical) abortion.

WHEN CAN A MEDICAL ABORTION BE DONE?

- This method of abortion is only approved for use if it's been 70 days or less since the first day of your last menstrual period. Doctors call this "LMP."
- When did your last period begin?

- How many days has it been since then?
_____ days

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

If an abortion provider doesn't follow the safety guidelines required by the FDA (and not all do), your health could be at significant risk.



HOW IS A MEDICAL ABORTION DONE?

According to the official safety guidelines issued by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), a medical abortion requires two office visits:¹

1. **At the first abortion-provider visit:** A woman takes one mifepristone pill, also known by the brand name Mifeprex[®]. This pill contains a drug that cuts off the supply of blood and nutrients to the developing embryo.*
2. **24 to 48 hours later:** The woman will take another drug, misoprostol, also called Cytotec[®]. This causes the uterus to contract and expel the embryo.
3. **Seven to fourteen days later:** The woman will have a second visit with her abortion provider to confirm that the abortion is complete.

**Many Women regret their decision to use mifepristone after taking it. It is possible to counter the effects of the drug and preserve the life of the baby using high doses of the hormone progesterone, but time is critical. For help or more information call 877-558-0333 or go to AbortionPillReversal.com*



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- She should expect to have vaginal bleeding or spotting for an average of 9 to 16 days.
- Up to 8 percent of women may experience some bleeding for 30 days or more.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Because of the potential for serious health risks, an abortion provider will typically schedule a follow-up visit to evaluate the woman's health.

ARE THERE HEALTH CONDITIONS A WOMAN NEEDS TO TELL HER DOCTOR ABOUT?

Yes—a health-care professional should be made aware of any of the following conditions. A medical abortion is more dangerous for people who have:

- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- bleeding problems
- anemia
- uncontrolled diabetes
- an IUD in place

SIDE EFFECTS

According to the FDA, here's what women who've taken these medications have experienced:²

- headache (up to 31%)
- nausea (43–61%)
- vomiting (18–26%)
- diarrhea (12%–20%)
- fatigue (10%)
- cramping & pain (96%)

WHAT KIND OF TRACK RECORD DOES THE ABORTION PILL HAVE?

- The abortion pill is used in about 31% of non-hospital abortions, according to the Guttmacher Institute³, although that number may actually be higher due to recent increases in telemedicine abortions
- Around 2 to 4 percent of women taking the abortion pill will need a surgical procedure or an additional dose of the abortion pill because the abortion was not complete.
- The FDA collects information about the drugs they approve to help people understand some of the risks they face in choosing certain treatments.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Since September 2000, the FDA has tracked complications following medical abortions in the United States.⁴

	Sept 2000 - Oct 2012	Nov 2012 - Dec 2018
Hospitalized	768	274
Blood Loss Requiring Transfusions	416	183
Infections	308	104
Severe Infections	57	12

Between 9/28/2000 and 12/31/2018 there were:

- *Ectopic pregnancies—97*
- *Deaths—24*

WARNING SIGNS

If you experience the following symptoms within the first 24 hours of taking mifepristone and misoprostol, contact your healthcare professional right away.⁵

- heavy bleeding that soaks through two thick, full-size sanitary pads per hour for two hours
- persistent stomach pain or discomfort
- weakness
- nausea
- vomiting
- diarrhea, with or without fever
- fever of 100.4° or higher for more than four hours

These symptoms, even without a fever, may indicate a serious and possibly fatal blood infection.



IT'S VERY IMPORTANT FOR WOMEN TO FOLLOW THE SAFETY GUIDELINES

According to the FDA report,⁴

- Eight women have died from a severe bacterial infection in their bloodstream
- Two women died from ruptured ectopic pregnancies
- Fourteen women died from various other causes



ARE THERE ANY ADDITIONAL SAFETY CONCERNS TO BE AWARE OF?

- The abortion pill can mask symptoms of an ectopic pregnancy, which can be very dangerous (see next section).
- Some abortion providers recommend taking the misoprostol pill vaginally rather than orally. This is hazardous, as introduction of misoprostol directly into the reproductive tract has been associated with deadly infections.⁶
- A woman undergoing a chemical abortion is typically recommended for a follow-up visit because of health risks and the possibility that, in the case of an incomplete abortion, the fetus may remain in the woman's uterus, requiring urgent surgery.⁷
- If this method of abortion is used more than 70 days after LMP, the likelihood of an incomplete abortion increases, as does the risk of adverse health effects.⁸
- Ordering the abortion pill online is a dangerous option because a woman could end up bypassing certain safety protocols.⁸ It could also be hazardous because there's no way a woman can be really sure of what she is getting."⁸
- A woman undergoing a medical abortion is typically recommended for a follow-up visit because of health risks and the possibility that, in the case of an incomplete abortion, the fetus may remain in the woman's uterus, requiring urgent surgery.⁸

WHAT'S AN ECTOPIC PREGNANCY?

- This is when the embryo is growing outside of a woman's uterus, usually in her fallopian tube.
- If the embryo is in the fallopian tube, the abortion pill won't end the pregnancy and the embryo will continue to grow and could cause the tube to burst.
- **Here's the danger:** The cramping and abdominal pain that are normal after the use of the abortion pill are a lot like the symptoms of an ectopic pregnancy. A woman might not realize until it's too late that she needs to seek emergency care—and this puts her life at risk.
- If a woman has little or no bleeding after taking misoprostol, it could also be a warning sign of an ectopic pregnancy.
- An ectopic pregnancy is an emergency—the woman's doctor or the emergency room at the hospital should be contacted right away.
- The best option is for a woman to get an ultrasound before having a chemical abortion.

DO YOU KNOW THE DIFFERENCE?

Sometimes these pills get confused.*

THE ABORTION PILL

An abortion method used to terminate an early pregnancy.

Medications are:
Mifeprex® (mifepristone) and
Cytotec® (misoprostol).

Must be taken within 70 days
of when your last menstrual
period began.

Pills must be prescribed by a
healthcare professional. At least two
visits to your provider are needed,
possibly more.

Will not prevent sexually transmitted
infections or diseases.

THE MORNING-AFTER PILL

A method used to prevent
pregnancy. It may cause a very
early abortion if fertilization
has already occurred.

Medications are:
Plan B One-Step® (levonorgestrel)
and ella® (ulipristal acetate).

Plan B One-Step® must be taken
within 72 hours after unprotected
sex; ella® must be taken within 5
days after unprotected sex.

Plan B One-Step® may be
purchased without a prescription.
A prescription is required for the
purchase of ella®.

Will not prevent sexually transmitted
infections or diseases.

*The choices offered when experiencing an unplanned pregnancy can be overwhelming. The medically factual information given here is not provided as a recommendation for either the abortion pill or the morning-after pill, but simply to give you relevant information as you make the best decision for yourself and the life growing inside you.

THOUGHTS FROM A DOCTOR...

Despite its known risks, the abortion pill has been called a major medical breakthrough. In fact, some groups go so far as to say that it's a real step forward for the health of women, even that it "saves lives."

This is just not true. As an obstetrician, I can tell you that an incredibly special and completely unique person is growing inside of every pregnant woman.

You can see for yourself, at the Mayo Clinic's website, that just six weeks after your last period, your baby's heart has already begun beating and he or she has the beginning of arms, legs, a mouth and eyes. Visit mayoclinic.org and search for "fetal development first trimester."

Many people feel that a chemical abortion is not as 'messy' as a surgical abortion, but the infant must be expelled from the mother's body, with all the cramping and bleeding that includes. And in the end a life is still lost.

Take time to consider all your options and get counseling from someone who does not have a financial or personal stake in your decision.



Author Note

Dr. W. David Hager is a board-certified obstetrician gynecologist currently practicing gynecology at Baptist Health Woman's Care in Lexington, Ky.



Source Notes

1. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration Medication Guide: Mifeprex® (www.fda.gov/media/72923/download)
2. Drug Label Information for Mifeprex® (www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2000/20687lbl.htm)
3. Guttmacher Institute - Abortion Incidence and Service Availability in the US (www.guttmacher.org/journals/psrh/2017/01/abortion-incidence-and-service-availability-united-states-2014)
4. Mifepristone U.S. Post-Marketing Adverse Events Summary through 12/31/2018 (www.fda.gov/media/112118/download)
5. U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health - Drug Information: Mifepristone (Mifeprex) (<https://medlineplus.gov/druginfo/meds/a600042.html>)
6. Mifepristone U.S. Post-Marketing Adverse Events Summary www.fda.gov/media/112118/download
7. MIFEPREX™ (mifepristone) Tablets, 200 mg For Oral Administration Only www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2000/20687lbl.htm
8. Drug Safety: Mifeprex Questions and Answers (www.fda.gov/drugs/postmarket-drug-safety-information-patients-and-providers/questions-and-answers-mifeprex)

All models were used for illustrative purposes only.



Benevolent Resources

PROGRAM

FOCUS ON THE FAMILY®



APPROVED BY THE
Physicians Resource Council

2010, 2014, 2016, 2019 Focus on the Family. Updated 2020.
Mifeprex is a registered trademark of Danco Laboratories, LLC.
Cytotec is a registered trademark of G.D. Searle LLC; and Plan B
is a registered trademark of Women's Capital Corporation.