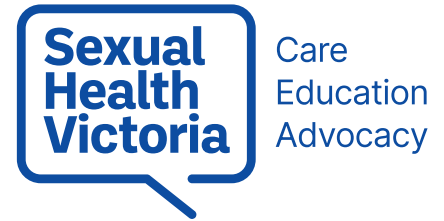


# MEDICATION ABORTION: CLIENT INFORMATION



This information is for people who plan to have a medical abortion appointment at Sexual Health Victoria (SHV). If you have any questions, feel free to call us: (03) 9257 0100. To watch a short informative video and read general information about abortion see [Types of Abortions](#) under Pregnancy Options on our website: [www.shvic.org.au](http://www.shvic.org.au).

Please watch our short informative video on [medical abortion](#).

## Phone consultation with a nurse

If you ring and request a medical abortion at SHV, you will be booked in for a phone consultation with a nurse. The nurse will spend about 20 – 30 minutes talking to you. The nurse will ask you several questions about your health, pregnancy, and home situation. These questions help with working out what type of abortion is best for you. The nurse will give you some information about what happens during a medical abortion. If you are uncertain about your decision or feel you need some professional support, the nurse can help you find services that can help you.

## Clinic process

If you decide to have a medical abortion, you will firstly have an appointment with a nurse, followed straight after by an appointment with a doctor, either in our clinic or sometimes by telephone. You can expect your appointments to take 1-2 hours.

## Nurse appointment

The nurse will:

- explain what happens before, during and after a medical abortion
- help you plan the best time to take your tablets
- talk to you about situations when you need to seek medical advice or emergency care
- give you a 24-hour help line number
- discuss contraception if needed
- usually organise a blood test to check your pregnancy hormone level, even if you have had this done before
- organise follow up appointments, which are by phone or in the clinic.

## Doctor appointment

The doctor will:

- check that you have understood the information you have been given and answer any further questions that you may have
- explain the possible complications of medical abortion
- ask you to either sign a form or give your verbal consent to go ahead with the medical abortion
- give you a script for your tablets
- organise a follow up blood test in around 7 days, to check whether your pregnancy hormone level has dropped.

## Taking your tablets

### Step 1

Take your first tablet (mifepristone) at the time you have agreed to. This tablet does not usually cause any side effects except spotting, and you can continue with your normal activities until you take your second tablets. If heavy bleeding starts before you take your second tablets seek advice from our clinic or the 24-hour line, on 1300 515 883. You will still need to take your second tablets as planned.

### Step 2

You will need an adult with you from when you take your second tablets until the heaviest bleeding has settled. Take your second tablets (misoprostol) 36 – 48 hours after your first tablet. You will be given a prescription for additional tablets you can take 30 minutes before starting your second tablets to minimise side effects such as pain and nausea. You will need to stay within 1 – 2 hours of an emergency service for 2 weeks after taking your first tablet, as it is possible to have an unexpected heavy bleed during this time.

### After taking the second tablets (misoprostol) you may experience the following:

- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, dizziness, headaches, and fever
- Pain usually starts within half an hour and is generally quite a bit stronger than period pain.
- Vaginal bleeding usually starts 1 – 4 hours after taking the second tablets. It is heavier than a period and there may be large clots.
- The timing of the pain and bleeding can be unpredictable. Occasionally it starts before taking the second medication, but it may take up to up to 24 hours to start.
- You might see a piece of pink tissue, which is the pregnancy passing.
- After 2 – 6 hours the bleeding usually settles to the level of a normal period.
- The vaginal bleeding that follows is usually like that of a normal period and may continue for another 3 – 7 days.
- The bleeding becomes lighter and usually settles after a total of 2 weeks.
- A small number of people may experience unpredictable, irregular, or prolonged bleeding that can last for up to 5 weeks.
- Nausea and tiredness usually settle quickly.
- Breast tenderness can remain for 2 weeks.
- A home pregnancy test can remain positive for more than a month.

### Recommendations for managing vaginal bleeding

Use pads to decrease the risk of infection and so you can keep an eye on the amount of blood loss. Do not use tampons or menstrual cups.

### Recommendations for managing pain

- use prescribed pain medication
- rest
- massage your abdomen or apply a heat pack.

### Complications

- Small pieces of tissue left in the uterus (womb) requiring a minor surgical follow-up procedure to clear the lining of the uterus (around 1 in 20 – 1 in 33 cases). This procedure is done under a general anaesthetic.



- The medical abortion does not work, and the pregnancy continues (around 1 in 150 cases). The abortion tablets can be repeated if the pregnancy is not more than 9 weeks otherwise a surgical abortion may be required. This can be organised at a public hospital.
- Haemorrhage (very heavy bleeding). A blood transfusion is needed in fewer than 1 in 1000 cases.
- Infection requiring antibiotic treatment (around 1 in 100 cases). Symptoms include persistent pain, an unusual vaginal discharge, fever and feeling generally unwell.

### **Who can have a medical abortion?**

Most people who have a pregnancy from 5 to 9 weeks can have a medical abortion.

### **Medical abortion may not be suitable if you:**

- are more than nine weeks pregnant
- have not had an ectopic pregnancy ruled out (a pregnancy occurring outside the uterus, usually in the fallopian tubes)
- have certain medical conditions such as bleeding disorders, severe asthma, heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, or a liver, kidney, or adrenal condition
- are taking long-term steroid or blood-thinning medication
- have had an allergic reaction to the medication's mifepristone or misoprostol
- have an intrauterine device (IUD) – the IUD needs to be removed before taking mifepristone
- cannot stay somewhere within a 1-2 hours' drive of an emergency medical service from the time when the second tablets are taken until 2 weeks later
- do not have a support person who can stay with you from the time you take your second dose of tablets until the heaviest bleeding has settled
- cannot have a blood test – to check your pregnancy hormone level has dropped – 1 week after you have started your tablets
- cannot be reviewed by the clinic for at least one follow-up appointment.

### **Follow up**

- A nurse will call you a few days after you have taken your tablets to check how you are and answer any questions.
- You will need a blood test 7 days after you have taken your first tablet (mifepristone) to check that your pregnancy hormone level has dropped and that you are no longer pregnant. You will receive an SMS reminder to have this test.
- You will need a clinic or telephone consultation with a doctor in around 2 weeks after the tablets.

### **Contraception**

A new pregnancy can occur very soon after a medical abortion, so if you are at risk of pregnancy and want to prevent it, it is recommended you start contraception within 5 days of taking your first medical abortion tablet. A contraceptive implant can be inserted, or a contraceptive injection can be given before you start your abortion tablets. Pills can be started the day after you take your second abortion tablets. If you would like an intrauterine device (IUD) we can organise for it to be inserted at SHV around 3 weeks after your medical abortion.

### **How will i feel emotionally after the medical abortion?**

You may experience a range of emotions before, during and after a medical abortion. Generally, how you feel will depend on the reasons for having the abortion, how comfortable you feel about your decision and access to information and support. After an abortion most people feel relieved



that they made the decision that was right for them at the time. If you need emotional support, please let your SHV doctor or nurse know.

### **Looking after yourself**

After taking the abortion medications you may need one or two days off work. To lessen the risk of infection during the week after having the abortion, you should not:

- insert anything into the vagina (including tampons and menstrual cups )
- have vaginal sex
- perform any strenuous activity, including sport or heavy physical work
- go swimming or have a bath (you can shower).

### **Breastfeeding**

It is safe to continue to breastfeed.

### **What if i have any questions or concerns after leaving the first clinic appointment?**

You will be given detailed information about what to do if you have any questions or concerns.