



What to expect when ending a pregnancy at home



If you are having a medication abortion, here are some things to keep in mind. Medication for abortion is often called the abortion pill, but it is not just 1 pill. It involves taking 2 medications, mifepristone and misoprostol, early in the pregnancy. Both medications are available for sale in Canada under the brand name Mifegymiso®, which is used only if your last period started 63 days ago or earlier.

How to get the medications

When you present a prescription to a pharmacist, they can dispense both medications and explain when and how to take them.



How do the medications work?

Mifepristone is the first medication you take. It works by blocking progesterone, which is needed to keep pregnancy going. When progesterone is blocked, it triggers the end of the pregnancy. Mifepristone causes little to no symptoms, so you probably will not feel anything after taking it.



Misoprostol is the second medication you take 24–48 hours after mifepristone. Misoprostol causes the uterus to contract and relaxes the opening of the cervix, thereby expelling the pregnancy. Vaginal bleeding and cramping starts a few hours after taking the tablets. You need to be somewhere you can relax for this step.

How to take the medications

Take the **mifepristone** tablet by swallowing with a glass of water.



Take the 4 **misoprostol** tablets by placing them between your cheeks and gum; keep them in place for 30 minutes and swallow any pieces that are left with water.



| SYMPTOMS | NORMAL TIME FRAME | HOW TO MANAGE |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Nausea, vomiting & diarrhea | Nausea may occur right after taking misoprostol and for a couple of days afterwards. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take an antinauseant medication (e.g., dimenhydrinate) before taking misoprostol and ensure you have easy access to a bathroom. If vomiting occurs less than 1 hour after taking mifepristone or while taking misoprostol, contact the prescriber or pharmacist. No action is needed if vomiting happens after swallowing the small remaining pieces of misoprostol that were held in place for 30 minutes. |
| Pain & cramping | May start within 4 hours of taking misoprostol. Cramping often starts before the bleeding and often feels stronger than menstrual period cramping. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heating pads or hot water bottle provide comfort. Take over the counter (OTC) ibuprofen and naproxen as directed on the package or fill the prescription of pain medication that was provided. |
| Vaginal bleeding | Starts from 30 minutes to 24 hours of taking misoprostol; usually within 2–4 hours. May be heavier than a period for 2–3 days. You may see blood clots and tissue the size of a grape. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Obtain large menstrual pads before taking the medications. Do not use menstrual cups or tampons. Obtain thin liner pads for light bleeding; bleeding may be present up to 30 days after treatment. |
| Dizziness & weakness | Short term; typically lasts no more than 24 hours. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rest and do not drive or operate machinery. |
| Headache | Short term; typically lasts no more than 24 hours. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OTC ibuprofen or naproxen may provide some relief. |
| Breast tenderness | 1–2 weeks. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ice packs and a supportive bra may relieve discomfort. |

When symptoms become a medical emergency



| SYMPTOMS | TIME FRAME |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abdominal pain or discomfort, feeling sick - including weakness, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea (with or without fever) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than 24 hours after taking misoprostol |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heavy bleeding; enough to soak through 2 thick, full-size menstrual pads OR Prolonged heavy bleeding | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soaking through the pads each hour for more than 2 consecutive hours Passing lemon-sized tissues for more than 2 hours Heavy bleeding lasting more than 16 days |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abnormal vaginal discharge | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During and/or after the process |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prolonged pain and cramping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pain not relieved by pain medications or cramping lasting more than 16 days |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fever >38°C and chills | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lasting 6 hours or more |