

# ABORTION PILL FACTS



## Are abortion pills legal?

In the United States, abortion is legal in every state, but there are many restrictions that apply. For legal abortion using pills, a person must consult with a medical professional who confirms that a person is pregnant and for how long before prescribing and dispensing the medication.

## How are abortion pills used?

Mifepristone blocks the hormone progesterone. Without this hormone, the attachment of a fertilized egg to the uterine wall is disrupted, and the uterus contracts. Under the World Health Organization's (WHO) guidance for safe abortion, a person would swallow one mifepristone tablet to start the process. Usually there are no side effects from mifepristone. Then, under the WHO Guidance, after 24 hours, a person would use misoprostol, 800 mcg (micrograms), usually four (4) 200 mcg tablets, every three hours for no more than 12 hours. The misoprostol can be put in the cheeks between the teeth and gums, without swallowing the pill, and left for 30 minutes to dissolve. Misoprostol causes contractions of the uterus. As a consequence, the uterus pushes out the pregnancy.

## What is the typical experience of taking abortion pills?

Abortion using pills can take anywhere from a day to 3-4 weeks to complete. Some experience cramps and vaginal bleeding after the first drug. This bleeding may be light, or it may be like a heavy period. Clinics provide written and verbal instructions, and the embryo is typically expelled at home. Other side effects may include: headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, chills, or fatigue. If flu-like symptoms occur for more than 24 hrs, patients are advised to call the clinic.

## Why aren't 'abortion pills' available in pharmacies?

The FDA has determined that the procedure provides a safe and effective way for patients to end a pregnancy in the first 10 weeks. Under current FDA rules, prescriptions for Mifeprex cannot be filled at retail pharmacies and can only be dispensed in doctor's offices, clinics, and hospitals by providers that have undergone a special certification process. These restrictions come from federal laws. The American Civil Liberties Union filed a lawsuit in April 2017 to end these restrictions so doctors can provide a prescription via telemedicine so people can pick it up at their local pharmacy.

Read more: <https://www.healthline.com/health-news/abortion-pill-restrictions#1>

## Safe Abortion Using Pills

Earlier abortions are the safest, so medical abortion with pills is an important medical advance. The World Health Organization Guidance outlines two methods of medical abortion:

- 1. The use of Mifepristone and Misoprostol. This is the most effective method and is 95-99% effective in the first 10 weeks of pregnancy. It is provided at abortion clinics in the United States up to 10 weeks.*
- 2. The use of Misoprostol alone. Misoprostol alone is 75-85% effective in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy.*

## GLOSSARY

### ABORTION PILL:

The abortion pill is used early in a pregnancy as an alternative to those who cannot access or prefer not to have a "surgical abortion." Either of two medications, mifepristone or methotrexate, can be used for medical abortion.

Each of these medications is taken together with another medication, misoprostol, to induce an abortion.

### MEDICAL ABORTION:

A medical abortion happens by taking medications in the form of pills that will end a pregnancy.

### MIFEPREX / MIFEPRISTONE:

Mifepristone is marketed in the United States under the brand name Mifeprex. It can be administered in combination with the drug misoprostol to induce miscarriage.

### SURGICAL ABORTION:

Also called "aspiration," surgical abortion, ends a pregnancy by emptying the uterus (or womb) using special instruments.