

HEALTH MATTERS

Seeking Early Abortion Services

www.arhp.org/healthmatters

If you are pregnant and don't want to have a baby now, you can have an abortion. Some women choose to take pills that cause the pregnancy to end. Others prefer to have a procedure at the clinic to remove the pregnancy tissue from the body. This in-clinic option can also be called a 'suction,' 'surgical,' or 'aspiration' abortion. This fact sheet compares these two options for early abortion procedures where 'early' is defined as within the first 9 to 12 weeks of pregnancy.

If you decide to have an abortion, you will need to:

- Make an appointment with a clinic or a health care provider (doctor, nurse practitioner, physician assistant, or midwife)
- Have a way to get to and from the appointment

Finding an Abortion Provider

- Here are some ways you can find an abortion provider in your area:
- Call the National Abortion Federation hotline at 1-800-772-9100. The hotline gives referrals to abortion providers in the United States. They may also help you with financial assistance. You can also find a provider through their Web site at <http://www.prochoice.org/Pregnant/find/index.html>.
- Call Planned Parenthood at 1-800-230-7526. Planned Parenthood has clinics in every state. Some of the clinics provide abortions. You can also search for a Planned Parenthood clinic at <http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-center>.
- The National Network of Abortion Funds may be able to help you find a clinic or pay for an abortion. Visit www.nnaf.org/help.html for more information.
- Check Abortion Clinics OnLine at www.gynpages.com for a directory of abortion providers.
- Look up "Abortion Providers" or "Abortion Services" in your phone book or online.

Comparing Your Options for Early Abortion

	Medical Abortion ("The Abortion Pill")	In-Clinic Abortion ("Aspiration/Surgical/Suction Abortion")
What happens?	Your health care provider will give you several pills. You swallow the first pill, called mifepristone (also known as 'RU-486'), in the clinic at your appointment. You will leave the clinic with more pills (called 'misoprostol') and specific instructions. You will take these pills one to two days later at home. After you take the pills, you will have bleeding and cramping that will probably be heavier than a menstrual period. This bleeding and cramping will last for a few hours.	The procedure is performed by a health care provider. Medical instruments are gently inserted through the vagina into the uterus. The device that is used to suction the pregnancy tissue from the uterus may be powered by electricity (and make a noise) or it may be a "manual" device that looks like a syringe. The abortion takes just a few minutes.

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Will I go back for a follow up visit?	You should plan go back for a follow-up visit in 1 to 2 weeks. At the clinic, they will make sure the abortion was successful and that you are no longer pregnant. Some providers offer follow-up options that do not require returning to the clinic.	A follow-up visit is not typically necessary. But, in some cases, your provider may ask that you come back in 1-3 weeks.
When can it be done?	A medical abortion can be done in the first 9 to 10 weeks of a pregnancy, depending on the state laws and/or clinic policy.	An aspiration abortion can be done during the first 12 weeks of a pregnancy (and sometimes beyond the first trimester).
How painful is it?	Everyone's experience is different. Most women have mild to very strong cramps during the abortion. Pain pills can help. Some providers offer IV sedation with an in-clinic abortion.	
How much bleeding is there?	Many women have heavy bleeding with clots after taking the pills at home. Light bleeding or spotting may continue for a few weeks. After a couple days, the bleeding shouldn't keep you from your normal routine.	There is usually light to moderate bleeding or spotting for several days to a week after an aspiration abortion.
How effective is it?	Abortion pills are very effective. A few women (about 3 in 100) will need to have an in-clinic procedure to complete the abortion.	The aspiration procedure is almost always effective. If it does not work, it will need to be repeated.
How safe is it?	Medical abortions are very safe. Millions of women have used this method safely for over 25 years.	Aspiration abortion is a very safe. The risk of complications is low.
What are the advantages?	Some women think it feels more natural than an aspiration abortion. They compare it to a having a miscarriage or a heavy period. The abortion occurs in the privacy of your own home instead of in a clinic.	The procedure takes place in a medical facility with trained clinical staff and is over in a few minutes. You come in pregnant and leave not pregnant. This method can be used later in pregnancy than a medical abortion.
What are the disadvantages?	In some cases, the abortion can take up to 3 days (but it usually occurs in a few hours after taking the second medicine [misoprostol] at home.) Most women will experience bleeding and spotting longer with medication abortion than with aspiration. Bleeding that is similar to a menstrual period typically lasts for 7 days after medical abortion, and spotting typically lasts for another 5-6 days. But for some women, bleeding or spotting lasts longer. Generally, medical abortion is not provided after 63 days (9 weeks) of pregnancy. Some clinics offer medical abortion up to 10 weeks of pregnancy.	The procedure takes place in a medical facility with trained clinical staff and is over in a few minutes. You come in pregnant and leave not pregnant. This method can be used later in pregnancy than a medical abortion. You must have the procedure done in a medical facility.

Before Your Abortion

States have different laws and regulations which impact the things you need to do before you have an abortion. Some states have a waiting period, which requires a delay (24/48/72 hours) between your counseling visit and the abortion procedure. Some states require a woman who is under 18 to prove that she has told her parents about the abortion or that she has their permission to have an abortion (called parental notification or parental consent laws). The staff at your clinic will give you clear directions about what the law requires where you live.

After Your Abortion

As soon as 1 week after having an abortion, you are able to become pregnant again. If you don't want to get pregnant, you can ask your provider for a birth control method to use immediately. Some women have an intrauterine device (IUD), a contraceptive implant, or a vaginal ring placed at the time of the abortion. You can also get a shot (Depo-Provera®), which will prevent pregnancy for 3 months. If you are having a medical abortion, you cannot have an IUD inserted until the follow-up visit.

Backline is an organization that provides free support to women during pregnancy and after an abortion. For information on pregnancy, parenting, abortion, and/or adoption, visit www.yourbackline.org or call **1-888-493-0092**.

Exhale is an organization that provides free, confidential information and support to women who have had an abortion and want to talk about. Visit www.4exhale.org or call **1-866-439-4253** for more information.