



**University Hospitals  
Bristol and Weston**  
NHS Foundation Trust

Patient information service  
**St Michael's Hospital**

# Later medical abortion up to 18 weeks of pregnancy





**We provide a confidential service to all our patients. Information will only be given to the medical teams providing your care.**

**We recommend that your GP is informed of ongoing treatments or conditions – but we would only contact them with your agreement.**

**The only reason why we might have to consider passing on confidential information without your permission would be to protect you or someone else from very serious harm. We would always try to discuss this with you first.**

**Staff will not judge you. They will treat you with respect. The decision about whether or not to continue with a pregnancy is difficult. Staff will be supportive of anyone who may have conflicting emotions.**

**Ward 78 telephone number**

**0117 342 7789**

# You will need to attend the hospital on two separate days.

## First visit

Please attend ward 78 at St Michael's Hospital between

9am and 9.30am on ...../...../.....

On the first visit you will take a tablet called mifepristone. It works by blocking the hormone progesterone to the pregnancy, without progesterone the lining of the uterus breaks down and the pregnancy cannot continue.

You must be certain you want to end the pregnancy when you take this medication. If you were to take the medication and then continue the pregnancy, it could have harmful effects on the development of the fetus. After you take the tablet, you can go home and continue your normal activities.

One in two people will experience some spotting or light vaginal bleeding before the second visit. Other side effects are unlikely, but nausea, vomiting, headache and dizziness occur occasionally. Skin rashes are a rare side effect.

If you vomit within one hour of taking the tablet, you will need to take a further dose. You will need to phone the hospital to arrange this on **0117 342 7789**.

A few people will miscarry before the second visit. If you experience heavy bleeding, for example if you soak more than two pads per hour, for more than two hours in a row, you should seek advice. Even if you bleed heavily, you must attend for the second visit.

You will be given further written information telling you where to call if needed.

## **Second visit**

Please attend ward 78 at St Michael's Hospital between  
9am and 9.30am on ...../...../.....

On the second visit you will be given misoprostol vaginal tablets, these tablets make the uterus contract causing cramping and bleeding which is similar to a miscarriage. You can insert these yourself or you can ask your nurse to help you.

Further doses of misoprostol can be given orally as needed. Like a natural miscarriage you will have pain, the degree of this will vary and will be different for each individual. You will be offered pain relief to help with this.

In addition to pain, bleeding and uterine cramping, misoprostol may also cause nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, rashes, and dizziness.

The length of stay for the second visit is variable but will be at least six hours with the possibility of staying overnight.

## **How safe is abortion?**

For most people an abortion is safer than carrying a pregnancy and having a baby, but all medical and surgical procedures have risks.

## **Are there risks at the time of the abortion?**

On average if 1000 people have a later medical abortion, approximately 130 will need surgery afterwards to empty the womb.

Severe bleeding that requires a blood transfusion happens in around 14 in every 1000 cases.

Less than 1 in 100 people having a medical termination will have uterine rupture and usually only occurs in people who have had a previous caesarean section.

Approximately 4 in 100 people will get an infection following a later medical abortion. Follow the advice given to you in this leaflet and by your nurse to reduce the risk of infection.

## **Will abortion affect my future chances of having a baby?**

If there are no problems with your abortion it will not affect your future chances of becoming pregnant. Your fertility will only be affected if you have a serious infection such as pelvic inflammatory disease (PID).

## **Does abortion cause breast cancer?**

Research evidence shows that having an abortion does not increase your risk of developing breast cancer.

## What about afterwards?

Bleeding may last up to three weeks and you may have spotting for a few weeks after this.

Use sanitary towels (not tampons or a menstrual cup).

Do not have sex until the bleeding has settled.

After a couple of days the bleeding should not be heavier than a period. If you soak more than two pads per hour for more than two hours in a row you should seek advice; this may be a sign that the womb has not been completely emptied of its contents.

In the weeks after an abortion you should seek urgent treatment if you develop any of the following:

- lower abdominal pain
- offensive discharge
- fever.

These can be signs of infection and if not treated could cause further problems.

Breast milk may leak after the pregnancy has ended.

You are fertile immediately after an abortion, therefore it is important you start contraception immediately. Your nurse would have discussed this with you.

## **What happens to the pregnancy remains/tissue after an abortion?**

You can request the hospital to arrange and carry out collective cremation of the pregnancy remains. You can also choose to take the pregnancy tissue home.

Individual cremation and burial can then be arranged either by yourself or with the help of the hospital chaplain, who will assist with any practical arrangements.

Please let the hospital know if you would like to see a member of the bereavement team for further funeral options.

## **Who should I contact if I am worried?**

If you experience problems it is important that you seek advice.

Phone ward 78 on **0117 342 7789** or contact your GP.

## **What if I am RhD negative?**

If you have a RhD negative blood group, you will be offered an anti-D injection after your abortion.



# How will I feel emotionally after an abortion?

How you react will depend on the circumstances of your abortion and the reasons for having it. You may feel relieved, sad, or a mixture of both.

If you have had mental health problems in the past, you may experience further problems after an unplanned pregnancy.

If these feelings don't settle it may be helpful to talk to someone you can trust or seek professional advice from:

- your own **GP**
- **Brook Young Peoples' Clinic** (for under 20s only)  
Telephone: **0117 929 0090**
- **Avon Psychotherapy and Counselling Service**  
Telephone: **0117 930 4447** (small fee)
- **Off the Record** (counselling under 25s)  
Telephone: **0808 808 9120**
- **Womankind** – Bristol woman's therapy  
Telephone: **0845 458 2914**.

**Central booking line number: 0345 872 5435**

# Notes



As well as providing clinical care, our Trust has an important role in research. This allows us to discover new and improved ways of treating patients.

While under our care, you may be invited to take part in research. To find out more please visit: [www.uhbw.nhs.uk](http://www.uhbw.nhs.uk)

Help us prevent the spread of infection in hospital. Please make sure your hands are clean. Wash and dry them thoroughly/use the gel provided. If you have been unwell in the last 48 hours please consider whether your visit is essential.

Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death. For support in stopping smoking contact **NHS Smokefree on 0300 123 1044.**

Drinkline is the national alcohol helpline. If you're worried about your own or someone else's drinking, you can call this free helpline in complete confidence. **Drinkline on 0300 123 1110.**

For access all patient leaflets and information please go to the following address:  
<http://foi.avon.nhs.uk/>

**Bristol switchboard: 0117 923 0000**  
**Weston switchboard: 01934 636 363**  
**[www.uhbw.nhs.uk](http://www.uhbw.nhs.uk)**



For an interpreter or signer please contact the telephone number on your appointment letter.



For this leaflet in large print or PDF format, please email [patientleaflets@uhbw.nhs.uk](mailto:patientleaflets@uhbw.nhs.uk).

