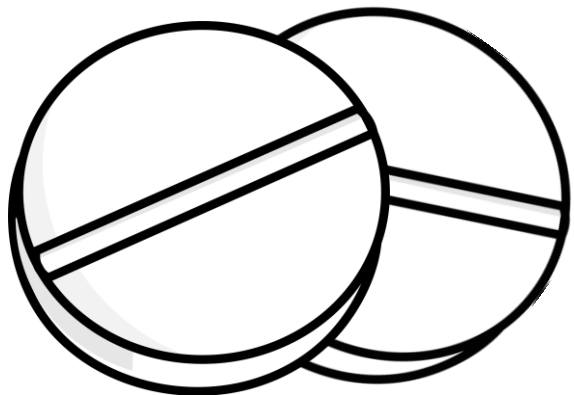


# Second trimester medical abortion

National Women's Health  
Gynaecology



## Key Points

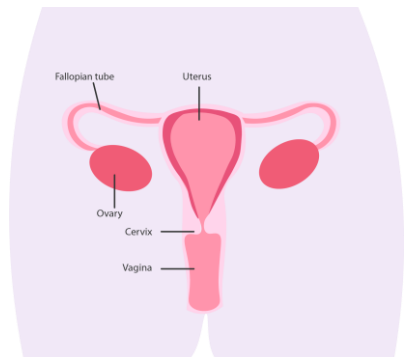
- ◆ A second trimester medical abortion can be offered between 13 and 20 weeks gestation.
- ◆ A second trimester **medical** abortion involves the use of medications to terminate your pregnancy. No surgery is needed.
- ◆ There are two medications called **mifepristone** and **misoprostol**. They cause an induction of labour, like starting delivery. These are given two days apart.

## How do mifepristone and misoprostol work?

### Mifepristone

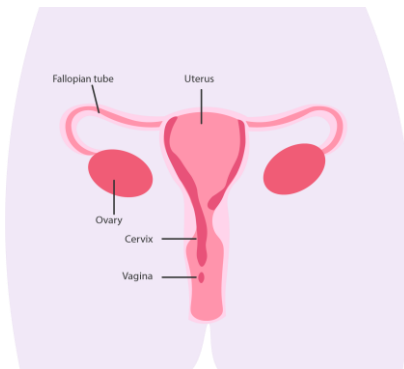
**Mifepristone** blocks the action of progesterone. This hormone is responsible for making the lining of the uterus (womb) maintain the pregnancy.

Taking mifepristone will get the uterus ready for delivery by causing the lining to break down.



### Misoprostol

Around 36 to 48 hours after taking mifepristone you will be given another drug called **misoprostol**. This is put into the vagina or given buccally, (between the cheek and gum so the medicine dissolves). Misoprostol causes your cervix to soften and the uterus to contract; this will lead to labour and the delivery of the fetus.



## Do I have any pre-abortion counseling?

You will meet with a counsellor in our abortion service on your first visit. This counsellor will discuss your options with you, explain the abortion process and provide support.

## Can I bring someone with me?

We recommend you have a support person with you.

## Can I change my mind?

Yes. It's important to be sure of your decision to have a medical abortion. You may opt out at any time; let a staff member know straight away if you are unsure or want to change your mind.

**There may be risks to your pregnancy if you change your mind after having the mifepristone. This is because the abortion process will have started. You can talk about these risks with the doctor.**

## Are there any risks with the procedure?

Although uncommon, the main risks are heavy vaginal bleeding, or the placenta not entirely coming out. In this case you may need to go to theatre to have **curettage** to remove any placental tissue left being. Around 15% of women will need this.

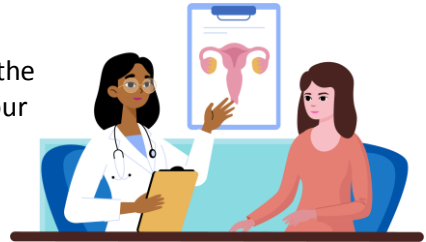
## Your first appointment

You will meet with a specialist doctor who will check:

- **You are clear in your decision** and are satisfied you understand what is involved.
- **Your general health** for the procedure as using mifepristone is not suitable for all women.
- **Your blood group and rhesus status.** If you are Rh negative you will need an injection to stop any antibodies forming to prevent issues if you become pregnant again. This is given at your admission to Auckland City Hospital.

If you need or are thinking about contraceptive options, talk about this with the doctor as they can prescribe contraception for you.

**Please note:** We try our best to give the first appointment the same day as your consultation with the counselor. Sometimes we aren't able to do this and a third visit may be needed.



## What are the next steps?



If it has been agreed between you and the specialist doctor to have the abortion, a day stay appointment will be organised for you at **Ward 97, Auckland City Hospital**.

You will be given the **mifepristone** 36-48 hours before this appointment (this is a tablet swallowed with water).

## What are the side effects of this medication?

- During the next 36 to 48 hours you may start to bleed vaginally and have some period type pain.

**Please take the pain relief and anti-nausea medicine you have been provided to help you.**

- Other side effects, although uncommon, can include:
  - Nausea
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea
  - Hot flushes
  - Dizziness
  - Chills
- There is a very slight chance you could deliver the fetus at home (less than one in 100 chance). Please call Ward 97 straight away if this happens (**09 307 4949 ext 24971**). We will arrange for you to come into hospital for a checkup and assistance.

**If your symptoms become severe, call the Women's Assessment Unit on 09 631 0784**

## Your second visit

Please come to **Ward 97, Level 9 Auckland City Hospital by 07.30am** on the day you have been scheduled.

1. On arrival, the nurse will check how you feel and record your blood pressure, temperature and pulse.
2. The staff will discuss a plan of care with you and your support persons.
3. A plastic tube (IV cannula) will be placed into a vein in your arm to administer medication, including pain relief.
4. You will then start the abortion process by taking the Misoprostol tablets.
5. Within about 2-3 hours, you should begin to experience period type cramp pain and vaginal bleeding.
6. Misoprostol will be repeated 3 hours up to a maximum of four times until you pass the fetus. After having the first dose of Misoprostol, it is expected that the fetus will be delivered in 6-8 hours although the time can vary.

### Pain relief

- Let staff know when you need extra pain relief. We give this in either tablet form or as medication through an IV line.
- There are other options for coping with pain, such as relaxation massage or homeopathy.
- You may feel sick, dizzy; have chills and hot flushes or diarrhea. These are the effects of the misoprostol and will soon wear off.

### Going home

- After the fetus has been delivered, you will be assessed to see if you are able to be discharged home.
- After discharge you may continue to have period like bleeding for up to two weeks following the delivery.
- Follow up arrangements will be discussed with you before you are discharged.

## Discharge Advice

- **You may experience some discomfort for the next few days.** Take regular pain relief such as paracetamol or ibuprofen as directed to help you.
- **Complete taking any antibiotics** that have been prescribed for you.
- **Do not put anything inside your vagina for two weeks** after your procedure; this includes no sexual intercourse/activities or use of tampons.
- **Do not go into a swimming pool, bath or spa** until the bleeding stops.
- **Contact your GP if you develop flu like symptoms;** get a temperature over 38°C; have pain or difficulty passing urine; the bleeding becomes heavy and you pass clots or if you have a smelly vaginal discharge.
- **You may experience fullness in your breasts.** This will depend on how many weeks you were pregnant. Wear a firm, supportive bra and do not express milk. The doctor will prescribe a medicine called cabergoline that will stop the milk supply if taken within 12 hours of delivery. A nurse will give you advice on how to use cabbage leaves to suppress the milk supply.
- **We advise you not to drive for 24 hours.** We recommend you don't return to work until you feel able, or as discussed at discharge. Please let us know if you need a medical certificate for time off work.

**If you are worried about anything, are bleeding heavily or feel unwell please contact the ward** and a nurse will give you advice.



## Feelings and emotions after your abortion

Some women often feel a sense of relief after the abortion. Others have a feeling of sadness which can be immediate or days to weeks later. Women may experience a sense of loss and grief. Some women who choose abortion feel guilty about expressing the grief that may follow.

Dealing with your feelings can take time and there is no right or wrong way to move through this process. Set aside time to think about your experience and what it means. If you feel you are going over and over it, talk to a counsellor or friend to help move forward in your life.

Whatever your emotions the most important aspect is to be able to talk about your experience. We encourage you to find a safe place to talk and share your stories with people who are supportive and understanding.

During and following any significant experience in your life you are likely to reflect on yourself, your relationships, your life and goals. This is a normal and healthy response to a life event. To get further support around your feelings and emotions book in with our social work counsellors available at Epsom Day Unit.

If you want to speak with a social work counsellor, call Epsom Day Unit for an appointment on  
**09 630 9943 ext 27722**

Another good resource is: [www.abortionconversation.com](http://www.abortionconversation.com)



## Contact phone numbers

**If you think you have an emergency, call 111 for an ambulance, or go to your nearest hospital**

### **Ward 97**

(09) 307 4949 ext 24971

### **Women's Assessment Unit (After hours assistance)**

(09) 307 4949 ext 25900

### **Epsom Day Unit (EDU) Monday – Friday 0730-1600hrs**

(09) 307 4949 ext 27728

Another good resource is: [www.abortionconversation.com](http://www.abortionconversation.com)

