



The Safety of Medical Abortion



Why do women in Ireland and Northern Ireland need access to abortion with medicines?

Unplanned pregnancy is a common reality. Whether they have difficulty accessing contraception, their contraception fails, or they have coerced sexual contact, an unplanned pregnancy can happen to any woman. When faced with an unwanted pregnancy, women will seek to end it, with safe or unsafe methods.

Abortion is highly restricted in Ireland and Northern Ireland, meaning that each year thousands of women are forced to travel to England or elsewhere in order to access a safe and legal abortion. Alternatively, some women seek to have an abortion with pills (medical abortion) at home. The non-profit project *Women on Web* exists to help women in countries where abortion is restricted to access a safe abortion in this way, which offers a very safe and effective way for women to end an early unwanted pregnancy. Millions of women around the world have used medicines for safe abortion, including women in Britain who have an early medical abortion via the NHS.

How does medical abortion work?

Medical abortion (abortion with pills) at home is a very well researched and recommended method, approved by the World Health Organization and other reputable agencies. It is very safe and has been used by millions of women around the world. It is 97-98% effective when used in the first 9 weeks of pregnancy.

Medical abortion causes a miscarriage. 15-20% of pregnancies end in spontaneous miscarriage anyway. The symptoms are exactly the same, including pain and cramping like a heavy period or naturally occurring miscarriage.

The most effective type of medical abortion requires the use of two different drugs/ pills. These medicines are Mifepristone (also known as RU486, Mifeprex or Mifegyne) and Misoprostol (also known as cytotec, and found in arthrotec). The mifepristone is swallowed. Generally, the mifepristone causes no symptoms. Then, 24 hours later, the woman puts 4 tablets of misoprostol under her tongue for 30 minutes, until they dissolve. 3 hours later, she puts an additional 2 tablets under her tongue for 30 minutes. Cramping and bleeding generally starts about 4 hours after taking the misoprostol (every woman's body is different), and these contractions in the uterus push out the pregnancy. The process is the same as with a spontaneous miscarriage.

Is medical abortion at home safe?

There is a very low risk of complication for medical abortions performed in the first 9 weeks of pregnancy. This risk is the same as when a woman has a natural miscarriage. Complications can easily be treated by a doctor. Out of every 100 women that do medical abortions, only 2 or 3 women have to receive further medical care.

What is Women in Web?

<http://www.womenonweb.org>

Women on Web (WoW) is an online non-profit organization that supports access to safe abortion and access to information about abortion. WoW's vision is that every woman will have the information she needs to decide safely when and if to have a child. Its mission is to provide reliable information about reproductive health, prevent unsafe abortions and to advance access to safe medical abortion in order to prevent maternal death and illness.

Further Information:

Further information about medical abortion, including a list of Frequently Asked Questions, is available on the Women on Web website: <http://www.womenonweb.org/>

If you live in Ireland or Northern Ireland and need information or practical support to access abortion in England you can contact the Abortion Support Network: <http://www.abortionsupport.org.uk/> Tel: +44 (0)7897611593