

Medical termination of pregnancy for fetal abnormality

Gynaecology Department



Patient information leaflet

Medical termination of pregnancy at less than 24 weeks gestation for medical reasons

We appreciate that ending a pregnancy due to a fetal abnormality is a very difficult time. You will have been given some verbal information about the procedure and what to expect during your admission. This is a written copy of that information for you to keep. Please read it carefully and we will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

About the procedure

The termination process takes place in two stages: the **initial stage** and the **continuation of treatment**.

Initial stage

The initial stage involves taking a medicine called Mifepristone, which is given orally (by mouth) as a tablet. It works by blocking the action of the hormone that helps the pregnancy to continue (progesterone). In other words, it switches off the pregnancy hormones.

This tablet is usually taken about **36 to 48** hours before you are admitted to hospital and will be given to you in the antenatal clinic area by a midwife. You will need to stay in the unit for approximately half an hour after taking the tablet to ensure you do not vomit the tablet up straight away. If you vomit the medication within 20 minutes you will need to take a repeat tablet of Mifepristone.

Are there any side effects with Mifepristone

Although mifepristone can be safely taken by most women, it may not be suitable for everyone. Your doctor/midwife will have checked your medical history and what other medicines you are taking, and considers that this treatment is suitable for you.

Like all medicines, people can experience side effects with mifepristone and these can vary from person to person. After taking the tablet, you must not smoke or drink alcohol. Some of those side effects more commonly seen include:

- Vaginal bleeding
- Cramps/period type pains
- Nausea/vomiting
- Headaches
- Skin rashes.

Very occasionally you may start bleeding and experience period-like pain before your next visit to hospital. However, there is a small chance that your bleeding may become excessive and you may have severe pain. You could also expel the pregnancy at this stage. Although this is very unlikely, there is obviously a chance that you might see the pregnancy. There is a small possibility that you may expel part or the entire pregnancy after taking the mifepristone. If you do experience this and any of the adverse symptoms such as those listed above please phone to speak to a member of staff for advice. Telephone numbers are at the end of this leaflet. (please do not use tampons).

Continuation of treatment

36 to 48 hours later, at an agreed date and time, you will go to either the Forget-me-Not-Suite on the G floor on the delivery suite if your pregnancy is more than 14 weeks of gestation or to a gynaecological ward if you are less than 14 weeks at the Royal Surrey Hospital, where the second part of the treatment process will be started. This will be a single room with bathroom facilities en-suite.

A tablet called **misoprostol** will be inserted into your vagina. The dose and frequency of the medication will depend on the gestation (how many weeks your pregnancy is) and whether you had a previous caesarean section or any operation on your womb. It is important that we inform you that misoprostol, the medication we use, is not licensed for this purpose, however it is used both in the UK and worldwide, and its use is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE).

This medication causes contractions which helps your body expel the pregnancy. You will be asked to use a bedpan every time you use the toilet so that the midwife can check to see if you have expelled the pregnancy. You may possibly see the pregnancy whilst using the toilet. Women vary in reaction to this treatment. Some ladies have significant bleeding and pain, while others have minimal bleeding and pain. Most women experience moderate bleeding and pain. Pain relief will be available to you at any stage if required.

Most women stay in hospital overnight. You may stay longer if you develop a complication or the initial treatment has been unsuccessful. Your partner, a relative or a friend will be able to stay with you. You will also be given the opportunity to meet with a specialist midwife or nurse who will be able to offer counselling and advice.

If your blood group is Rhesus negative you will need an injection of Anti D. The midwife will be happy to explain this to you. You will also be given written information about this if it is required.

Are there any side effects with Misoprostol?

Many women have used this treatment worldwide and it has proven to have a very good safety record. However, every form of medical treatment has some potential risks or side-effects though the chances of you experiencing them are small and these can vary from person to person.

Some of those more commonly seen are

- Abdominal pain
- Fever
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhoea

Please let us know if you experience any side effects or if you have any questions or concerns.

Can I spend time with my baby?

Before the procedure start, your midwife will ask you what your preference are in terms of seeing and spending time with the baby. We will respect and support you in whatever you decide. After the delivery, the baby will be wrapped in a personal blanket. You are welcome to bring your own cloths or blanket for this. If you would like a photograph of your baby, and/or foot or hand-prints and other memoir, please let us know.

What about post mortem?

The option of whether or not to carry out a post mortem or cytogenetic testing on the baby will be discussed with you whilst you are in hospital. These investigations may give us information that will explain the possible causes of your baby's abnormality and the chances that it may happen again in a future pregnancy. However, sometimes the causes cannot be found. The decision of whether or not to carry out a post mortem or cytogenetic testing is yours. We will not do one without your consent. A copy of SANDS "Deciding About A Post Mortem Examination: Information for Parents" booklet will be given to you help you in your decision.

What should I bring to hospital with me?

You may find the following items useful.

- Toiletries
- Slippers/flip flops
- Sanitary towels
- Towel
- T-shirt/nightdress for the delivery
- Disposable pants
- Light refreshments (water and snacks)
- Books/magazines.

What happens after the medical termination of pregnancy?

You may experience some lower abdominal pains. You can take Paracetamol or Ibuprofen tablets for any pain so long as these are not contraindicated for you. We will give you a short course of these to take home with you. If you need any more they can be bought over the counter at most pharmacies.

Your doctor will also offer you a drug (**Cabergoline**) to suppress lactation. This drug is to be taken orally within 24 hours of delivery.

You may also experience some bleeding. It is normal to bleed for seven to 12 days after the termination. If bleeding is heavy or smelly, please contact your GP urgently or go to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department. No tampons should be used until you have stopped bleeding after the treatment, due to the risk of infection.

You should not resume sexual intercourse until you have stopped bleeding, due to the risk of infection.

Your next cycle could take up to three to six weeks.

A pregnancy loss affects every woman differently. Some women come to terms with what has happened within weeks, while for others it takes longer. Many women feel tearful and emotional for a short time afterwards. Some women experience intense grief over a longer time.

A follow up appointment will be made with your consultant to discuss the results of any investigation and offer a plan for your future pregnancy. This usually is after 6 to 8 weeks. Your consultant secretary will contact you once all results are available to arrange a suitable time for your appointment.

Are there any other potential complications?

Retained products – in a small proportion of women, some products of conception (placental tissue) might be retained within the uterus after the medical process. This usually produces symptoms such as lower abdominal pain, continued heavy or smelly vaginal bleeding. In this case, you might need to have an operation performed to remove the tissue that is left behind. This will be performed under general anaesthetic.

The following organisations offer support and information:

Antenatal Results & Choices (ARC) is a registered charity who offer continued support and advice to parents who face difficult decisions regarding fetal abnormalities. They have unrivalled experience in assisting parents at this time and aim to offer both support and advice in meeting your unique needs.

73 Charlotte Street
London W1T 4PN

w: www.arc-uk.org **e:** info@arc-uk.org **t:** 020 7631 0285

Reference

Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists. Termination of Pregnancy for Fetal Abnormality in England, Scotland and Wales. Report of a Working Party. London: RCOG; 2010

- www.rcog.org.uk/termination-pregnancy-fetal-abnormality-england-scotland-and-wales

Contact details

Antenatal Screening Team

Monday to Friday, 0900 to 1700.

Telephone: 01483 402792 **ext** 6355

Outside these hours please contact your GP or in an emergency attend Accident and Emergency department.

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

Past review date: November 2017

Future review date: November 2020

Author: Chim kalumbi

PIN171128–1396

