



# **MEDICAL ABORTION FACTSHEET**

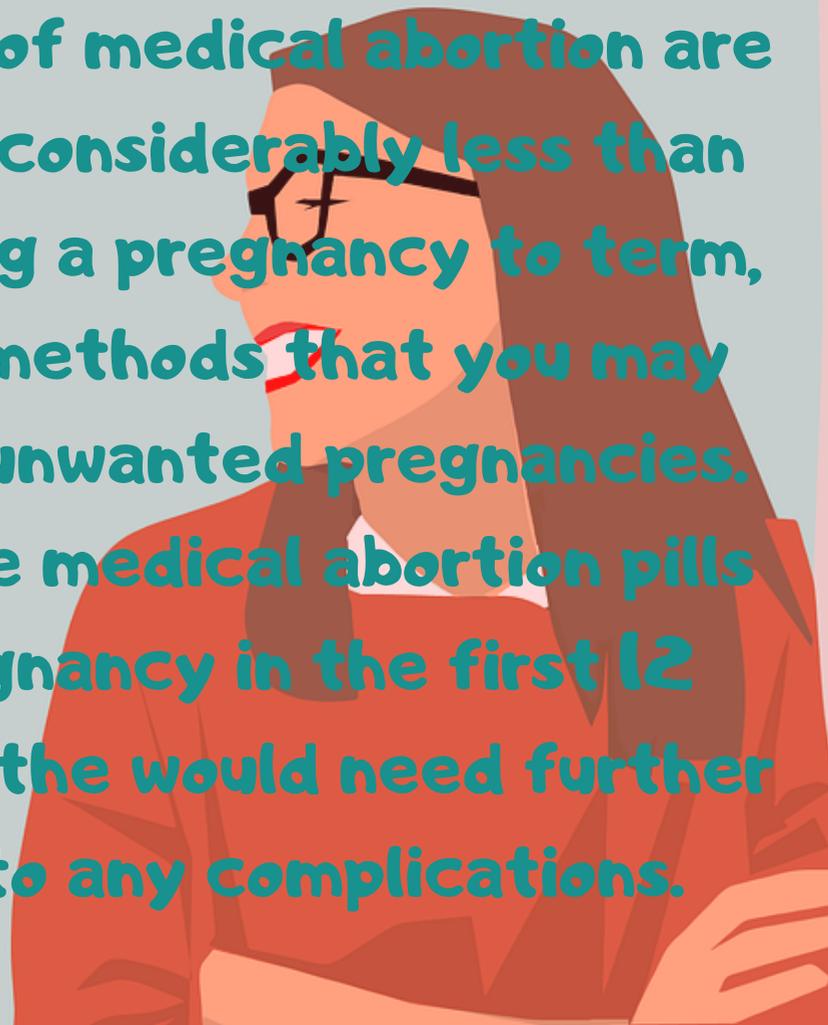


# WHAT IS A MEDICAL ABORTION?

Medical abortion is the termination of pregnancy through the use of a drug or a combination of drugs.

## HOW SAFE IS IT?

Very safe! The risks of medical abortion are extremely small and considerably less than the risks of continuing a pregnancy to term, or any of the other methods that you may resort to terminate unwanted pregnancies. If 100 women use the medical abortion pills to terminate a pregnancy in the first 12 weeks, less than 5 of them would need further medical care due to any complications.





**What drugs  
are used for  
medical  
abortion?**

**The most commonly used drugs for medical abortion are: Mifepristone, an anti-progestogen drug taken first, and Misoprostol, a prostaglandin drug taken 24-48 hours later.**

**Mifepristone stops the pregnancy from growing and causes the pregnancy to detach from the uterine lining. Misoprostol causes the cervix to soften and the uterus to contract, resulting in the expulsion of the uterine contents. The process is identical to a natural miscarriage.**

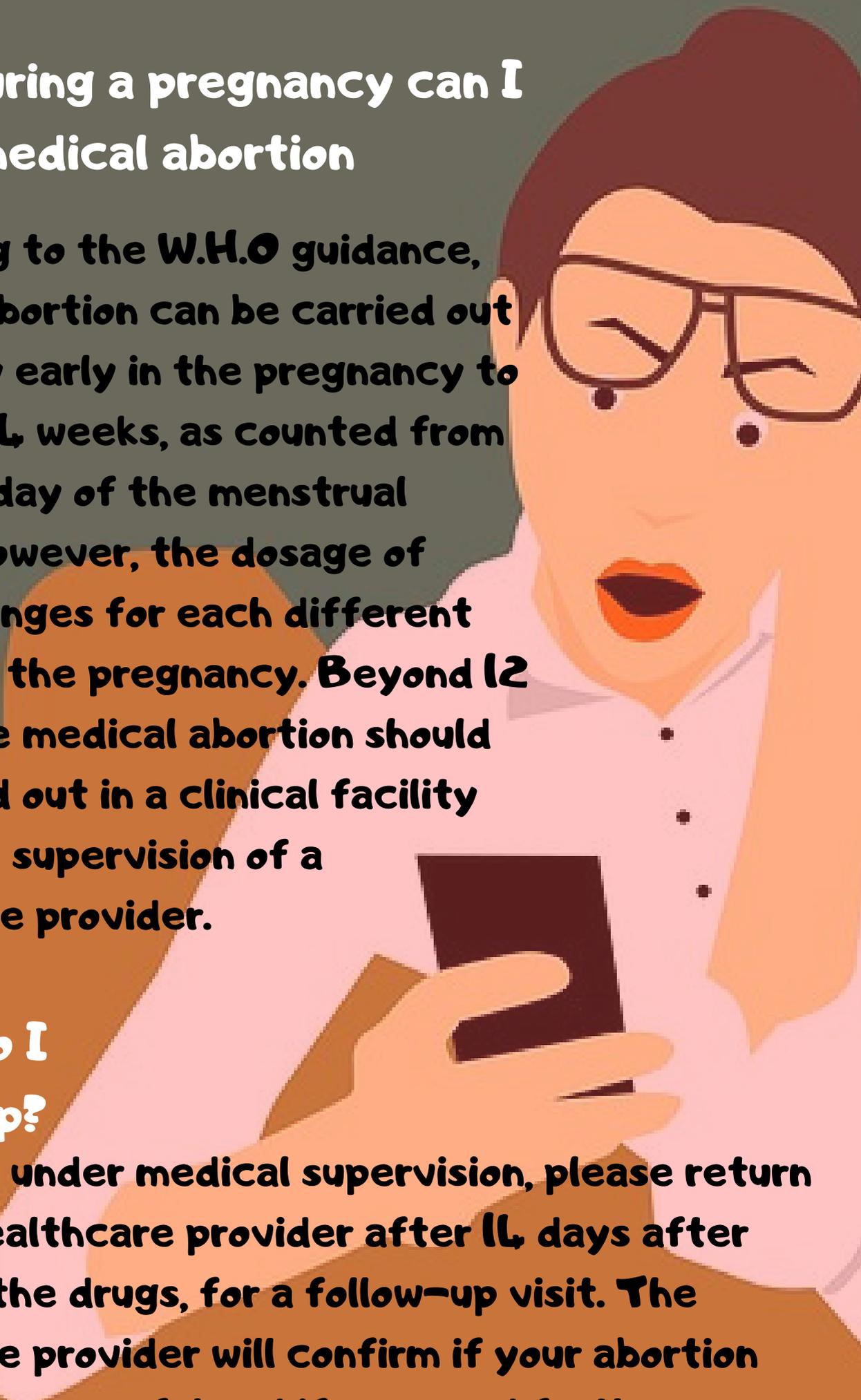
**In some cases, where mifepristone is not available, misoprostol alone may be used for a medical abortion.**

## **When during a pregnancy can I avail a medical abortion**

**According to the W.H.O guidance, medical abortion can be carried out from very early in the pregnancy to up until 24 weeks, as counted from the first day of the menstrual period. However, the dosage of drugs changes for each different stages of the pregnancy. Beyond 12 weeks the medical abortion should be carried out in a clinical facility under the supervision of a healthcare provider.**

## **When do I follow up?**

**If you are under medical supervision, please return to your healthcare provider after 14 days after you take the drugs, for a follow-up visit. The healthcare provider will confirm if your abortion has been successful and if you need further treatment.**



## Who cannot have a medical abortion?

It is very rare that a medical abortion cannot be done in early pregnancy, unless

- Your health care provider suspects that the pregnancy might be ectopic
- You have an allergy to either mifepristone or misoprostol
- You have a disease or a condition that affects the blood's ability to clot
- You are on a course of blood thinners
- You are on steroids such as those used to treat chronic asthma, arthritis or other allergies.
- If a woman has an IUD in place, the device should be removed prior to the medical abortion.

Will Medical Abortion affect my ability to have a child in the future?

Medical abortion has no effect on your ability to have a child in the future! Don't take our word for it, here's a study you can read!

# **What are the common side effects of first trimester abortion? How do I manage them?**

## **Bleeding**

**It is a good idea to be prepared with a larger than usual number of sanitary pads, even after the use of mifepristone alone. The bleeding is usually like a heavy period and with some clots being passed.**

## **Pain and Cramps**

**At home, pain could be dealt with by using a hot water bottle or a heating pad, or taking a warm shower. Take any painkiller you usually take for period pains or you can take paracetamol or Mefenamic Acid, Ibuprofen family of medicines. Keeping busy and distracted is also a good idea.**

## **Chills and Fever**

**Mild chills and a rise in temperature may rarely occur after misoprostol has been taken, and usually last for about two hours and is not a serious side effect nor does it need any treatment besides a warm blanket.**

## **Nausea**

**Some women may suffer from mild to severe nausea. Eating a light diet and consuming plenty of fluids will help. If you vomit within half an hour of an oral dose, the drug has to be taken again. For severe symptoms, you may contact a medical provider for medication to alleviate nausea.**

## **What Complications could I face after a medical abortion?**

### **Heavy Bleeding**

**In very rare instances, women may experience severe uterine bleeding. Severe bleeding is defined as: Two thick sanitary pads get soaked within the hour, and this happens two hours in a row then you should contact your healthcare provider. In the meanwhile, drink a lot of fluids to compensate for the loss of minerals.**

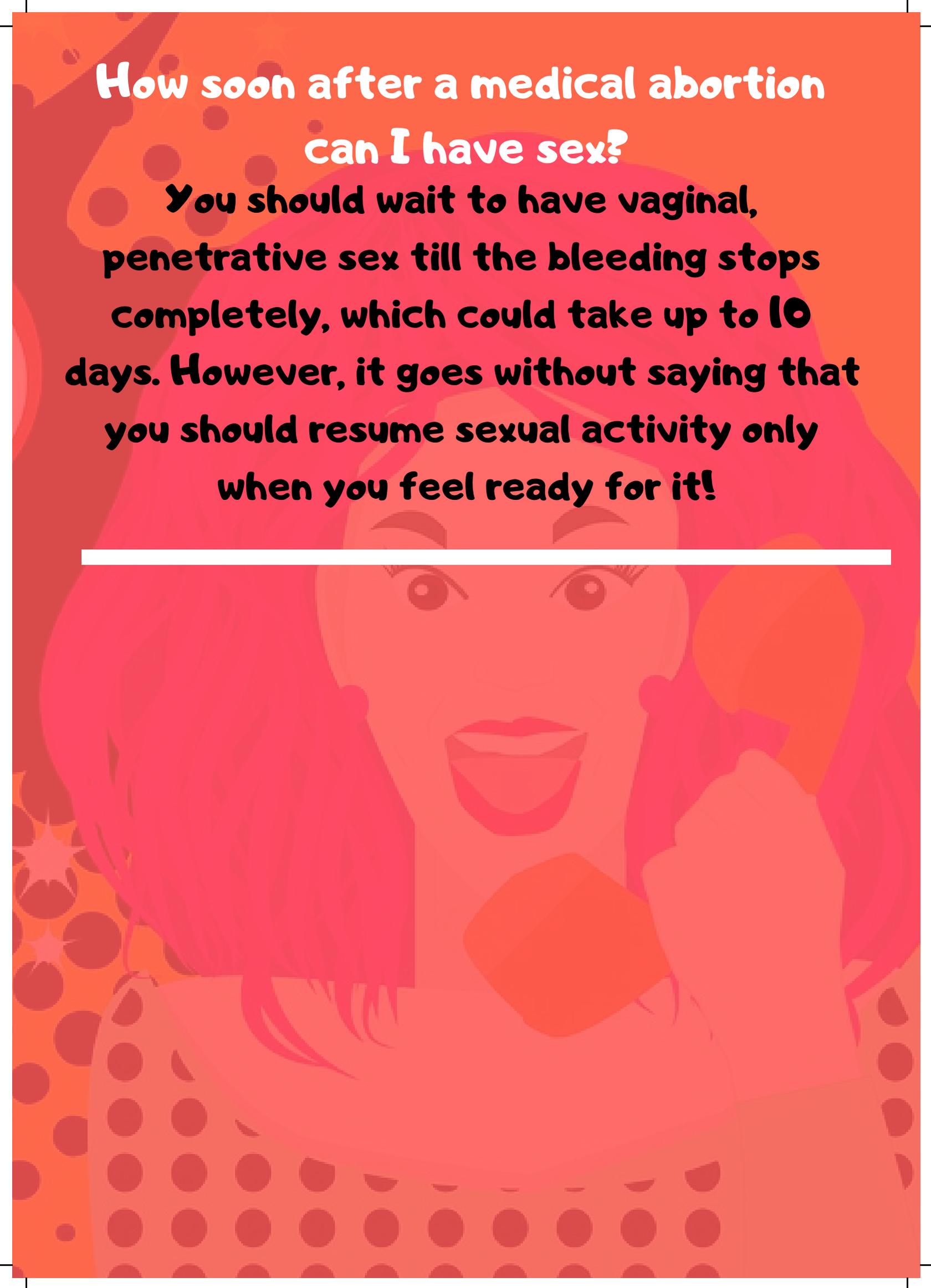
### **Infection**

**Although chills and mild increase in temperature are a side effect of the medication, if you, develop a fever of more than 100.4 F (38.00 C), that lasts more than four hours, or develop a fever after you start your course of misoprostol, You should contact your healthcare provider.**

## **How soon after a medical abortion can I have sex?**

**You should wait to have vaginal, penetrative sex till the bleeding stops completely, which could take up to 10 days. However, it goes without saying that you should resume sexual activity only when you feel ready for it!**

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**Treatment regimens for medical abortion less than (2 weeks (or 84 days) of pregnancy**

**MIFE PRISTONE & MISOPROSTOL**

**Up to 9 weeks (63 days)**

**2.5 Misoprostol 800 µg Vaginal, buccal or sublingual Single dose**

**OR**

**If no more than 7 weeks (49 days) Misoprostol 400 µg Oral Single dose**

**Use 24-48 hours after taking mifepristone**

**9-12 weeks (63-84 days)**

**Misoprostol 800 µg, then 400 µg Vaginal, then vaginal or sublingual**

**Every 3 hours up to 5 doses**

**Start 36-48 hours after taking mifepristone**

## **MISOPROSTOL ALONE**

**Misoprostol 800 µg Vaginal or sublingual  
Every 3-12 hours up to 3 doses**

**Ref: Clinical Practise handbook for Safe Abortion.  
World Health Organization. 2014**

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## **For More Resources on Medical Abortion see:**

**Safe Abortion: Technical and Policy guidance for  
health systems by the World Health Organization**

**Women on Web**

**Medical Abortion by Ibis Reproductive Health  
and Cambridge Reproductive Consultants**

**Medical Abortion: An overview by Gynuity  
Health Projects**



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