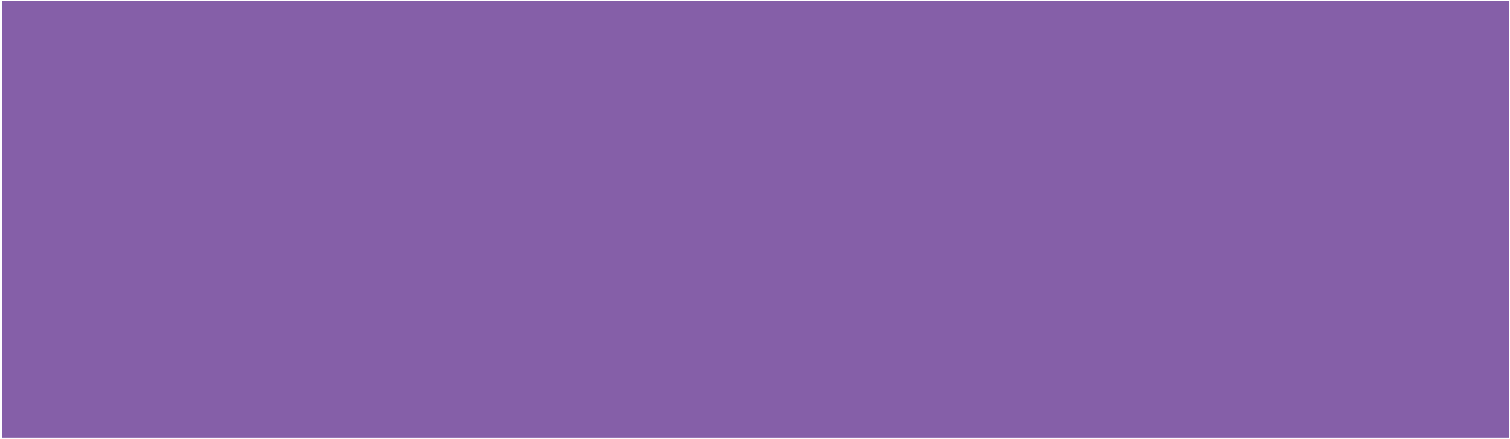


Preventing complications from unsafe abortion





This comic book was developed as a resource to help reduce harms from unsafe abortion in Myanmar.

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Graphic design by Thiha Maung Maung

Developed with funding from the Asia Safe Abortion Partnership and support from Cambridge Reproductive Health Consultants.

For more information or copies of this book, please email coordinator@asap-asia.org





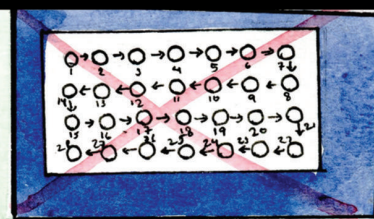
Have you heard about the woman next door? I heard she tried to end her pregnancy last night.




She and her husband could not afford to have more children. Her daughter was so upset today because her mother is now in the hospital.



Yes, I have heard. I am always so sad to hear these stories in our community.



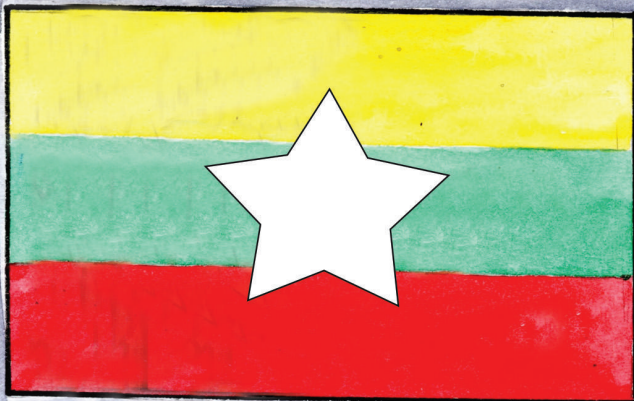
Sometimes a woman becomes pregnant even if she does not intend to. It may be because she did not use contraception or her contraception did not work, or sometimes, because she was sexually assaulted.

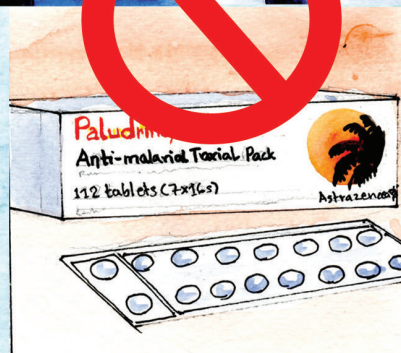


Can this happen even to young girls?

I'm afraid so. A girl can become pregnant once she has gone through puberty, which can begin at 8-10 years old. When a girl or woman becomes pregnant but does not want to be, she may try to end the pregnancy. This is called an abortion.

In Myanmar, abortion is only legal when a woman's life is at risk because of the pregnancy.





These things **do not** work.

Some women take kay-thi pan or drink alcohol, or take malaria medications to try to end a pregnancy. These things do not work.

They will not end the pregnancy.

Some medications will also make you sick.

There are some women who will help with these things, but the ways they use are not safe. They may use methods that can work and end the pregnancy, but they can hurt a woman very badly. Sometimes women die from these things. They are very dangerous.




Sometimes she will use a stick, a feather, or put herbs deep inside.

These things can cause a woman to bleed too much or get an infection.

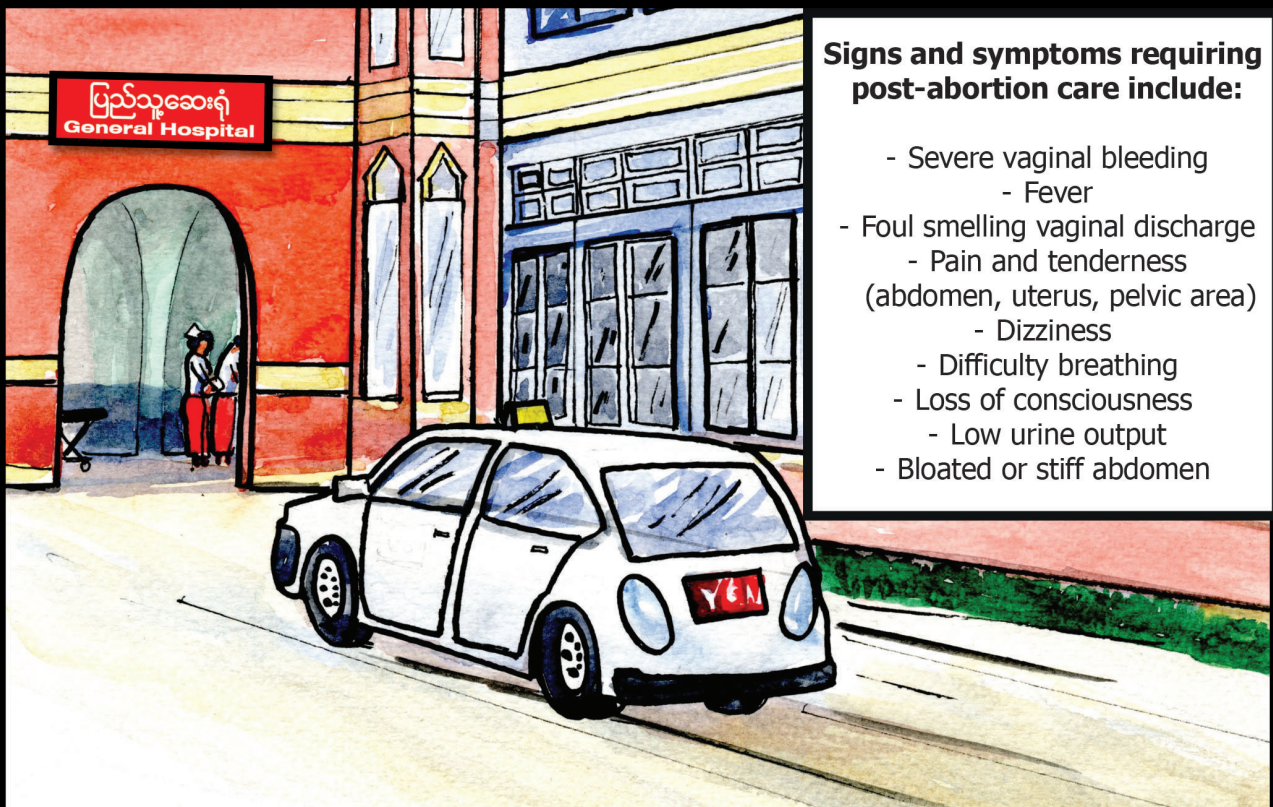


She may do a hard abdominal massage with hot bricks.



Oh auntie, is our neighbour going to be alright?

Some of those methods can cause lasting damage. But if a woman gets to a hospital early enough, her life may be saved. If she has a fever, heavy bleeding, or pain she should go to the hospital like the woman next door did.



Signs and symptoms requiring post-abortion care include:

- Severe vaginal bleeding
- Fever
- Foul smelling vaginal discharge
- Pain and tenderness (abdomen, uterus, pelvic area)
- Dizziness
- Difficulty breathing
- Loss of consciousness
- Low urine output
- Bloating or stiff abdomen



But auntie, if she goes to the hospital, will she get in trouble?

The hospital staff may be angry with her, but they must help her. Visiting the hospital could save her life.

Auntie, what do they do at the hospital?

At the hospital where I work, we take a medical history, do a physical examination, including a pelvic examination, and stabilize the woman if she is in shock. We will treat her complications, and offer counseling and family planning afterwards.

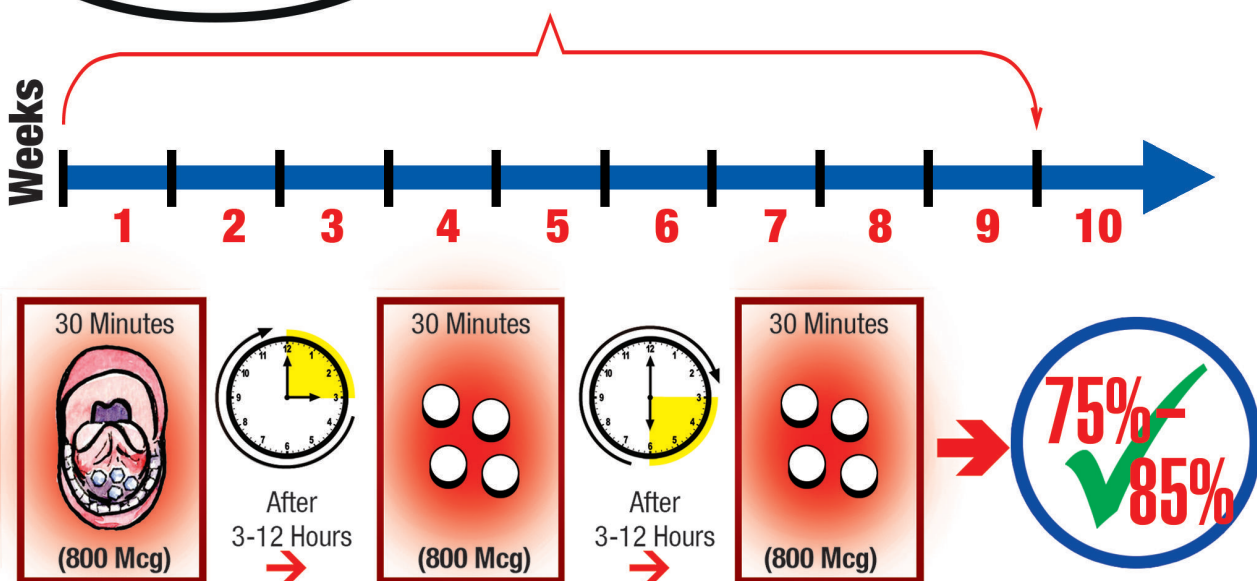


I'm glad you can help these women. But auntie you are a doctor – don't you know any other way to end a pregnancy safely?

There is a way. There is a medicine called misoprostol, but in Myanmar it is not currently legal to use for this. It will make the womb cramp and cause a miscarriage, ending the pregnancy.

When are women supposed to take this medicine?

Until 9 Weeks of pregnancy (63 days)



Misoprostol can be used up until 9 weeks of pregnancy (63 days). A woman should take four tablets (800 mcg) under her tongue and let them dissolve for 30 minutes. She can swallow anything left afterwards. She should use another four pills in this way after 3-12 hours. She should put another four tablets under her tongue 3-12 hours later, for a total of three doses. It works 75%-85% of the time.

What will happen after she takes all 12 pills?

She will have bleeding and cramping. The bleeding may be heavier than her period, and can last one or two weeks. Some women also have **fever, chills, vomiting or diarrhea**, but these symptoms do not last very long.



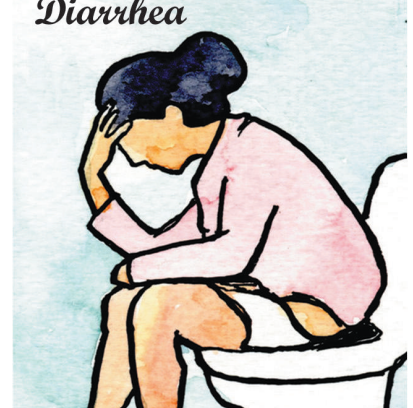
Bleeding



Fever and chills



Diarrhea



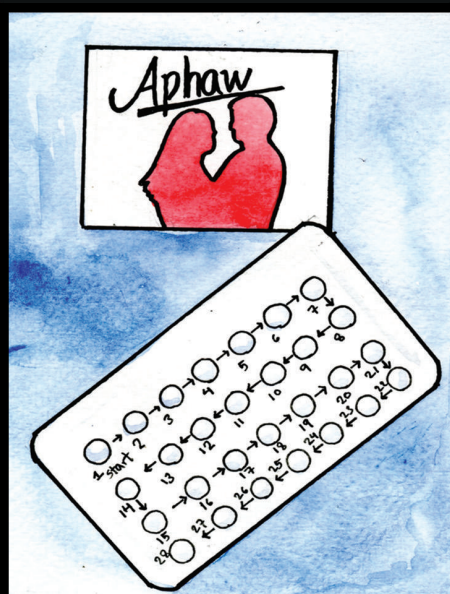
A woman should go to the hospital or clinic if she has heavy bleeding for more than 2 hours, if she starts bleeding heavily two or more weeks after she first took the pills, or if she has been bleeding for several weeks. She should also seek care if she has a fever for more than 24 hours, severe cramping, or if she is lightheaded or dizzy. If she does not have any bleeding, the pregnancy could continue, and she should also go to a clinic or hospital.



Misoprostol has been approved by the World Health Organization, but it is not currently legal to use for this purpose in Myanmar. However, it is safer to use than other methods. Women who do use the medication should not use another method with it, especially a sharp instrument. Misoprostol works by itself.



It is important that all women have access to information about sexual and reproductive health and rights so they can make informed and safe decisions for themselves.





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