



# Information guide

## Pregnancy Termination using Medications



Clinique des femmes  
de l'Outaouais

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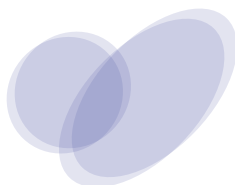
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You can call the Clinique des femmes at 819 778 2055 Monday to Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. If you have any medical concerns outside these times, contact Info-santé by dialling 811, option 1.



## INTRODUCTION

You have decided not to go on with this pregnancy. You have the right to make that choice, abortion being legal in Canada since 1988.

For some people, the decision is relatively easy to make; for others, it is more difficult.

Your decision will be respected by all the staff here at the Clinique des femmes. We are skilled at our jobs and will treat you with care and understanding.

Our role is to provide you with an abortion in the very best of conditions, both medically and for you as an individual. All our services are strictly confidential.

We will call you by your first name in order to create a respectful and equal exchange. If you wish to be addressed differently, please inform the receptionist. You may also indicate your pronouns and we will abide by your wishes.

We offer abortions by surgery and by medications. You have received this guide because you have decided on the medication method or because the medical team suggested this method.

This guide will provide you with the information you need to properly prepare for your abortion. Please keep it to refer to in case you have any doubts about what is or is not normal after taking the pills. A full version of the pamphlet is also available on line at [www.cliniquedesfemmes.com](http://www.cliniquedesfemmes.com).

If you have any questions or concerns, we prefer that you call us at the Clinique des femmes first, since abortion is our specialty.

We are here for you, at every stage of the process, from making your decision, to prior, during and after the procedure. If you are worried or have any questions, do not hesitate to call us.

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La Clinique des femmes de l'Outaouais is a non profit feminist organisation founded in 1981. It offers health services in family planning, in particular, pregnancy termination and contraception.

We offer a wide range of care, information, awareness, education and referral services. We work with health and community organizations to ensure a continuum of sexual and reproductive health services. In addition, we defend freedom of choice in exercising a monitoring role, in collaboration with organizations that share similar objectives.

Our philosophy is expressed in four main principles:

- Accept every person unconditionally by recognizing and respecting their personal circumstances.
- Support people in their choices and the course they take.
- Ensure that our services are fully accessible.
- Adapt our services to the needs of each person.

We are concerned about creating a safe and inclusive environment for all people who could benefit from our services.

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After discussing with the nurse and considering both methods available, you decided to terminate your pregnancy with medication. This means that you are taking control of the abortion, and you feel confident that you can remain calm throughout the process.

A minimum of 3 appointments are necessary for pregnancy termination with medication:

### **3.1 Initial appointment**

On this first visit, you will meet with a nurse, who will complete your medical file and take a blood sample to determine your blood type. There will also be a vaginal or abdominal ultrasound to assess the stage of the pregnancy. It is not necessary to drink water to have a full bladder for the ultrasound. The ultrasound image cannot be given to you at this appointment because it has to be read and signed by a doctor.

The nurse will first see you in private. Afterwards, if you wish, the person accompanying you can join you for the rest of the meeting.

This first visit will last approximately 50 minutes. The nurse will explain how the pregnancy is terminated and the risks associated with the medication. You will have the opportunity to discuss contraception and talk about your decision, if you want to.

For many people, this is a chance to speak to an impartial and understanding person. Feel free to ask us any questions and let us know about any concerns you may have. Any question is a good one.

If you remain uncertain and feel the need to talk more about your decision, you can request an appointment with our counsellors.

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### **3.2 Second appointment: meeting with the nurse and the doctor**

Plan on being at the clinic for approximately 45 minutes. The nurse will check your medical file and take a blood sample to determine your level of pregnancy hormones. She will review and have you sign the consent form.

The nurse or the doctor could do a vaginal ultrasound as well as a pelvic examination if needed. You will be asked to provide a self-test sample for the screening of chlamydia and gonorrhea, two sexually transmitted infections. We do not test for any other sexually transmitted infections such as HIV, hepatitis, etc.

The nurse and the doctor will review the steps necessary for the termination of the pregnancy with medication and will schedule a follow-up appointment 10 to 14 days later. It is usually possible to do the follow-up appointment over the phone.

If your blood type is negative, a vaccine will be administered to avoid problems in subsequent pregnancies. An information leaflet on Anti-D RH Immunoglobulins can be provided to you if you require more information on this topic. The leaflet is also available on our website.

If you have chosen a method of contraception, our staff will tell you when to start it.

The doctor will give you the drugs needed to terminate your pregnancy. The doctor will also fax a prescription for a painkiller and an anti-nausea medication directly to your pharmacy.

An abortion by medication is done in two stages with two types of medications: mifepristone and misoprostol.

#### **STEP 1:**

You will need to take the mifepristone tablet at the Clinic. This medication blocks the effect of the progesterone, which then interrupts the pregnancy. From this moment on, the process cannot be reversed.

#### **STEP 2:**

You will go home with 4 tablets of misoprostol that you will take buccally 24 to 48 hours after taking the mifepristone. This means that you will have to put the 4 tablets in your mouth, 2 tablets in each cheek, between the lower gum and the cheek. You will need to let the tablets melt for at least 30 minutes and then take a glass of water to swallow what has not been dissolved.

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The second medication is a prostaglandin that stimulates the contractions of the uterus to expel the pregnancy. Make sure you choose an appropriate time and a comfortable area for this process to take place.

In the following hours, you will experience uterine cramps and vaginal bleeding. You may see pregnancy tissues and clots. Remain calm as this means that the process is in place. If you have intense cramps and bleeding, this should only last a few hours. They should then decrease in intensity.

In 60% of cases, the abortion occurs within 4 hours after taking the misoprostol. In 40% of cases, the abortion occurs within 24 to 72 hours. After the expulsion of the pregnancy, bleeding decreases and lasts an average of 16 days.

Slight bleeding can persist for up to 30 days.

If you have no contraindication, an anti-inflammatory can be used to control the pain as per the recommendations of the manufacturer. To help prevent pain, you could take the anti-inflammatory with a little bit of food one hour before taking the misoprostol. If your cramps are severe, you can take the painkiller as prescribed by the doctor.

You may experience diarrhea or chills after taking the misoprostol. To prevent nausea or vomiting, you can use an anti-nausea (eg Gravol) one hour before taking misoprostol. Repeat the anti-nausea medication every 6 to 8 hours, as necessary.

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### **3.3 Mandatory follow-up appointment**

You will have a follow-up appointment 10 to 14 days after taking the mifepristone. This appointment is mandatory and very important to ensure that the process is completed.

By choosing a pregnancy termination by medication, you agree to be available for the follow-up appointment. Be aware that misoprostol can cause embryo malformations if the pregnancy continues.

The doctor will question you about your experience, pain level, bleeding, and pregnancy symptoms. The doctor will confirm if the pregnancy has been fully terminated or will give you recommendations to ensure the process is complete.

Know that occasionally, the process might not be over, even if you have had bleeding with clots. If the termination of pregnancy is not completed, we will inform you of your options. You might have to take a second dose of misoprostol or a curettage might be necessary.

Do not bring expelled tissues at the clinic.

The doctor may insert an IUD or a contraceptive subdermal implant if you have chosen this method as a contraceptive. If no hormonal contraceptive is used, you can expect your next period in less than 6 weeks.

You can take a urinary pregnancy test 5 to 6 weeks after the abortion.

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## POTENTIAL RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS

As with all medical procedures and treatments, there are possible complications. Complications related to abortions are very rare and generally easy to treat. You need to be aware of these risks for legal reasons so that you can sign an informed consent.

Here are the complications that may occur, in order of frequency :

### **Retention and incomplete abortion**

Placental tissues or membranes may remain in the uterus after taking the medication. In this case, various options will be offered to you. It is very important to know that misoprostol can cause embryo malformations if the pregnancy continues. Hence the importance of being available for your follow-up appointment.

### **Infection**

Despite all the precautions, people sometimes spontaneously develop an infection of the uterus or fallopian tubes. If you develop one or more signs of infection, that is, fever, abdominal pain, or odorous vaginal discharge, call us or contact your doctor. An infection rapidly treated with antibiotics is generally of no consequence.

Although very rare, a toxic shock can lead to death, the risk being 0.001%. This infection is manifested by flu-like symptoms such as muscle pain, fatigue, headache, and dry cough.

### **Hemorrhage (excessive bleeding)**

This consists of you filling a maxi pad every half hour for 3 consecutive hours. In this case, go to the hospital emergency room.

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## Allergic reaction to medication

You must notify us of any drug allergy or intolerance to any medication. We will also question you about this.

The risk of a reaction to the pharmaceutical products that you will use does exist, just as it does for any medication available from a pharmacy.

## Danger of infertility

The risk of infertility is very low although an untreated complication could lead to a fertility problem. Be sure to watch out for any signs of infection.

### To Summarize

**You need to call the Clinique des femmes or see a doctor if you experience any of the following problems:**

- High temperature (above 38 °C ou 101.3°F) for more than 6 hours. It is very important to take your temperature if you feel feverish because feeling warm does not necessarily mean that you have a fever.
- Severe and persistent pain in the lower abdomen not relieved but taking analgesics at regular intervals.
- Flu-like symptoms such as muscle pain, fatigue, headache, or dry cough.

**You need to go to an emergency department if you experience:**

- Very heavy bleeding, such as a super absorbent sanitary pad that is soaked every half hour for more than 3 hours.

If you have any questions or if you are worried, please call us. If the clinic is closed, please call 811.

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## GENERAL ADVICE

### 5.1 At home

- If you have young children, plan on having someone look after them for the next few hours after taking the misoprostol.
- Eat whatever you like, and drink lots of fluids.
- Avoid overly intense physical activities for a few days.
- Take time to rest if you feel the need for it.

### 5.2 Prevention of infection

For 7 days after taking misoprostol (the pills melting in your cheeks):

- Do not put anything in your vagina :
  - no sexual intercourse with penetration;
  - no tampon or menstrual cup;
  - no vibrator or sex toy;
  - no douche or vaginal deodorant.
- Use sanitary pads only.
- Do not go swimming in a pool, lake, or at the beach.
- Do not go in a whirlpool or hot tub.
- You can take a shower or bath at home.

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### 5.3 Bleeding

Bleeding varies with each person and from one procedure to another.

- It may start after taking the mifepristone but will generally start after taking the misoprostol.
- It may be heavy but will gradually decrease over a period of two weeks.
- Clots may be passed, and the discharge may be red or brownish in colour.
- It may seem heavier when you get up in the morning, when you go to the toilet or if you are very active physically.
- People who are accustomed to using tampons may think that their bleeding is heavier when using sanitary pads.

### 5.4 Cramps

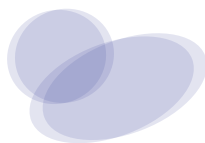
It is normal to have cramps during an abortion with medication. It may worry those that have never felt them before. Cramps can occur after taking the mifepristone but will most likely start a few hours after taking the misoprostol. They can be stronger than menstrual cramps.

To ease cramping:

- You can take anti-inflammatories as recommended by the manufacturer, if you have no contraindications.
- Take painkiller tablets as prescribed.
- Rest and put something hot or cold on your lower abdomen or lower back.

If you are worried, call us.

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## **5.5 Take care of yourself**

### **YOUR EMOTIONS**

You are likely experiencing some strong emotions at times. Every person may experience different emotions, and this is normal.

Many people feel relieved after the procedure, which does not mean that they might not feel sad, disappointed, guilty, alone, or have a feeling of loss.

Some people will go through a period of mourning. Sadness is a healthy emotion, and it will subside with time.

You may also feel that you are more mature and more responsible or even feel proud for making an important decision.

For many people, this experience is an opportunity to think about their life, to get to know themselves better and to become more assertive. If you want to talk about what you are feeling, whether now or later on, do so. It can be a relief to share your thoughts with someone you trust. Your emotional health is just as important as your physical health.

You can also call us, and we can set up an appointment or refer you to other services that could help you. We offer individual and group support appointments.

### **YOUR SEXUALITY**

You can resume sexual activity after your follow up appointment with the doctor, when the abortion process is completed.

Remember that you are fertile immediately after the abortion and that you can use some form of contraception if you want to avoid a pregnancy.

After a pregnancy termination, you may notice changes in your sexual activity, for example, you may not have any desire to have sex for a period of time even though there is no medical contraindication.

Listen to your body, and take time to regain your sexual desire.

If you are unhappy with any aspects of your sexuality, here too, take the time to talk about it and find a solution.

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## REMINDERS

Gestational age \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_

1) Mifepristone will be taken on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ am / pm at the Clinique des femmes.

2) One hour before taking the misoprostol, you can take an anti-inflammatory pill, as prescribed.

3) Dissolve the misoprostol tablets in your cheeks 24 to 48 hours after taking mifepristone, therefore between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ at the latest.

4) Mandatory follow-up appointment on \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

Other appointment as necessary \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_.

It is very important to be on time for your appointments. If you are unable to do so, let us know in advance by calling : 819-778-2055, extension 122.

Bring with you :

- Your valid medical insurance card, your temporary certificate or your proof of coverage by the Interim Federal Health Program. If you do not have it with you, you will have to pay for the cost of the appointments (cash, visa or Interac).
- La Clinique des femmes accepts donations. It is important to show solidarity towards those who might not otherwise have access to the clinic's services.
- For a smooth process, please make sure you have sanitary pads with you. We also advise you to get anti-nausea (ex Gravol), anti-inflammatory and painkillers from the pharmacy. The doctor will be able to fax a prescription for these directly to your pharmacy.

**If you are worried or if you have any questions, call us at 819-778-2055. We are here to help. Outside of business hours, call Info-Santé dialing 811.**

**For any emergency that requires immediate care, dial 911.**

**In case of emergency, please go to the nearest hospital emergency room. In the Outaouais region, there are gynecologists at the Gatineau hospital, but if the situation is urgent, all the emergency rooms will be able to treat you.**

**Please keep this guide and bring it to all stages of the pregnancy termination.**