



# WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE ABORTION PILL?



## WHAT IS IT?

The term "Abortion Pill" actually refers to two pills containing different medicines: **mifepristone** (also known as RU-486) and **misoprostol**.<sup>1</sup> The intended outcome of taking these medications is to end a known pregnancy.

*\* The abortion pill is not the same as "emergency contraception." Emergency contraceptives include drugs such as the Morning After Pill, Plan B, and ella, and are intended to prevent pregnancy.*

## HOW DOES IT WORK?

A medication abortion has 3 steps:

- **Mifepristone** is given first to block the hormone progesterone, cutting off the blood supply and nutrients to the developing embryo.
- **Misoprostol** is then given 24 to 48 hours later to cause the uterus to expel the embryo, inducing early labor.
- Lastly, the woman returns to her abortion provider 7 to 14 days later to confirm that her uterus was completely emptied.<sup>2</sup>

*\* The abortion pill may also be referred to as "chemical," "medical," or "medication" abortion.*

## WHY IS IT SO RISKY?

Without an in-person visit, before or after ingesting the drugs, a doctor **will not perform an ultrasound** to confirm:

- the gestational age of the baby (to ensure pregnancy is <10 weeks and avoid added risks to the woman of a later-term abortion)
- the pregnancy is in the uterus (to rule out an ectopic pregnancy, which can be life-threatening to the woman)
- the uterus has been completely emptied (to avoid complications due to infection)

## IS IT SAFE?

**No.** Abortion is fatal to the unborn child in the womb. A woman who takes the abortion pill will experience the physical symptoms of a miscarriage, possibly issues such as PTSD and depression, and potentially severe complications such as hemorrhaging, infection, future infertility, or death.<sup>3</sup>

## CAN IT BE REVERSED?

**Yes,** but time is of the essence! **Abortion pill reversal** is a process that can reverse the effects of the abortion pill. The goal is to begin the process within 24-72 hours of the first drug in the combination (mifepristone). A medical provider will prescribe the natural hormone progesterone in an attempt to overcome the effects of the mifepristone on the pregnancy.<sup>4</sup>

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## IS IT RARE?

**No.** According to the Guttmacher Institute, the abortion pill accounted for **(54%)** of all abortions in the United States in 2020 (up from 39% in 2017).<sup>6</sup>

Organizations providing access to the abortion pill have reported increases in demand since the Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson* ruling on June 24, 2022.<sup>7</sup>

## AREN'T CURRENT RESTRICTIONS ENOUGH?

**No.** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration determined mifepristone to be a drug dangerous enough to require specific regulations concerning its dispensing, known as REMS (Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategy). Those regulations were loosened in 2020 to allow for dispensing of the drug through the mail, and in 2021 to remove the requirement for in-person medical oversight. Additionally, in 2016 the FDA amended the Adverse Event Reporting System requirement for mifepristone to apply only to maternal deaths, drastically under reporting other serious complications.<sup>8</sup>

**No.** Telehealth practice does not ensure that the woman to whom the medication is prescribed is the person who actually takes it. This lack of accountability poses even greater risk to victims of the sex trafficking industry who may be forced to undergo unwanted abortions.<sup>9</sup>

**No.** The abortion pill is readily available from online resellers who market it as "safe," "private," "gentle," and "self-managed." In states such as North Carolina where law prohibits purchasing the abortion pill online, these companies openly suggest options for woman to purchase it illegally.<sup>10</sup> Medical guidance and regulations are missing from the websites offering the abortion pill regimen. These sites direct women not to disclose that they've taken the abortion pill should they have complications that require emergency care.<sup>11</sup>

**No.** Some providers may choose to skip the first drug, mifepristone, and prescribe only the second drug misoprostol, in order to avoid state regulations.<sup>12</sup> By skipping the first step of mifepristone which blocks progesterone, the woman will deliver her living unborn baby and the option for abortion pill reversal is effectively eliminated.<sup>13</sup>

- One systematic review of 12,000 misoprostol-only abortions found that 22% (nearly 1 in 4) required surgical completion because the drug failed to completely empty the uterus.
- One study of 60 women showed that 25% of those misoprostol-only abortions failed.<sup>14</sup>

1,2,3. <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/pro-life/abortion/the-abortion-pill-how-does-it-work/>

4. <https://www.abortionpillreversal.com/abortion-pill-reversal/faq>

5. <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/postmarket-drug-safety-information-patients-and-providers/mifeprex-mifepristone-information>

6. <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2022/02/medication-abortion-now-accounts-more-half-all-us-abortions>

7. <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/07/11/teleabortions-high-demand-abortion-pill-00044005>

8. <https://lozierinstitute.org/analysis-fda-decision-ignores-data-on-complications-puts-women-at-risk/>

9. <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/pro-life/sex-trafficking-and-abortion-the-silent-public-health-crisis/>

10. <https://www.plancpills.org/states/north-carolina>

11. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FPGbYEVaMgo>

12. <https://www.nationalrighttolifenews.org/2022/09/abortionists-are-skipping-mifepristone-mailing-misoprostol-alone-for-home-abortion/>

13. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6309472>

14. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/31065120/>

## BUT ISN'T IT FDA-APPROVED?

**Yes.** The U.S. Food & Drug Administration approved the abortion pill drug combination for use to end a pregnancy:

- **only** through 70 days (10 weeks) gestation, &
- **only** by the 3-step regimen detailed previously<sup>5</sup>

However, the rise in "**telehealth**" **medicine** has created a market which facilitates the prescription and use of these medications without proper medical oversight. The elimination of in-person visits between doctor and patient greatly increases risks to the woman's health and well-being.

## IS IT LEGAL?

**Yes.** Abortion is legal in North Carolina up to 20 weeks of pregnancy, including **medication abortions**. Qualified physicians must be licensed to practice medicine in the state of NC.

NC G.S. 14-45.1

## REFERENCES

