



First Trimester Abortion: A Comparison of Procedures

Procedure	Early Medical Abortion	Uterine Aspiration
<p>How it works</p>	<p>Mifepristone is an oral medication that blocks the action of progesterone, a hormone needed to sustain a pregnancy. Mifepristone causes changes to the uterine lining so that the pregnancy can detach. It also causes the cervix—the opening to the uterus or womb—to soften and dilate (open). A second medicine called misoprostol, which causes the uterus to contract and expel the pregnancy, is commonly taken 1 day after mifepristone. Misoprostol can be placed inside the mouth between the cheeks and gums, placed in the vagina, or swallowed.</p>	<p>The cervix—the opening to the uterus or womb—is gently opened with dilators that gradually increase in size. A straw-like tube called a cannula is inserted through the cervix into the uterus. Suction is then used to remove the pregnancy from the inside of the uterus. The procedure usually takes 3-10 minutes.</p>
<p>Advantages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High success rate (95-98%) • The pregnancy is expelled within 24 hours of using misoprostol in 90% of women • Ability to take misoprostol and pass the pregnancy at home may offer women more privacy • A partner, loved one, or friend can be with the woman after she takes misoprostol • Can be used very early in pregnancy • Resembles a "natural miscarriage" or a heavy menstrual period • Approved in the U.S. for abortion up to 10 weeks of pregnancy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very low risk of continuing pregnancy (<0.1%) • High success rate (approximately 99%) • Only requires one clinic visit • Procedure is completed within minutes • Anesthesia or sedation can be used if desired • Can be used early or later in pregnancy
<p>Disadvantages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uterine cramping and opening of the cervix can be very painful for some women • About 2-5% of women will need a uterine aspiration after medical abortion • Bleeding after medical abortion may last longer than after uterine aspiration. • Women often see blood clots and may see pregnancy tissue. • Requires two clinic visits. • Success of the abortion may not be known until the follow-up appointment one to two weeks later • Risk of continuing pregnancy 0.5% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves a procedure in which medical instruments enter the uterus • May seem less private to some women • Partners and loved ones are not usually permitted in the procedure room • Some providers are reluctant to perform uterine aspiration in very early pregnancy because of slightly increased risk of a continuing pregnancy