

Termination of pregnancy following fetal abnormality

Medical termination from 14 weeks to 17 weeks and six days gestation

We appreciate that ending a pregnancy due to a fetal abnormality is a very difficult time. This leaflet aims to explain what will happen if you decide to end your pregnancy between 14 weeks and 17 weeks and six days after conception.

An early medical termination of pregnancy for an abnormality can be performed from 14 weeks gestation.

Following the decision to end your pregnancy, the termination process takes place in two stages.

Stage one

The first stage involves taking a medicine called mifepristone, which is given orally (by mouth) as a tablet. Mifepristone works by blocking the action of progesterone (a hormone needed to maintain a pregnancy). In other words, it switches off the pregnancy hormones.

This tablet is taken about 48 hours before you are admitted to hospital and will be given to you in the Fetal Medicine Unit at St Thomas' Hospital by a midwife. You will need to stay in the unit for approximately half an hour after taking the tablet to ensure you do not vomit the tablet up straight away. Although mifepristone can be safely taken by most women, it may not be suitable for everyone. Your doctor/midwife will have checked your medical history and what other medicines you are taking, and considers that this treatment is suitable for you.

Side effects of mifepristone

Like all medicines, people can experience side effects with mifepristone and these can vary from person to person. A full detailed list is in the information leaflet that comes with the medication, but some of those side effects more commonly seen include:

- Vaginal bleeding
- Cramps/period type pains
- Nausea/vomiting
- Headaches
- Skin rashes.

Very occasionally you may start bleeding before your next visit to hospital. There is a small possibility that you may expel part or the entire product of the pregnancy after taking the mifepristone.

If you do experience any adverse symptoms such as those listed above please phone to speak to a member of staff for advice. Telephone numbers are at the end of this leaflet.

Stage 2

Forty eight hours later, at an agreed date and time, you will be admitted to a side room on the gynaecology ward on the eighth floor of North Wing, St Thomas' Hospital, where the process will be started. A tablet called misoprostol will be inserted into your vagina every three hours. This medication causes contractions which helps your body expel the pregnancy. The length of contraction and delivery differs from woman to woman. You should plan to be in hospital at least one night. Pain relief will be available to you at any stage if required. You will be also given the opportunity to meet with a specialist midwife who will be able to offer counselling and advice.

Side effects of misoprostol

Like all medicines, people can experience side effects with misoprostol and these can vary from person to person. A full detailed list is in the information leaflet that comes with the medication, but some of those more commonly seen include:

- Abdominal pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhoea.

Please let us know if you experience any side effects or if you have any questions or concerns.

Follow up advice

1. Lower abdominal pain – You can take paracetamol or ibuprofen tablets for any pain. We will give you a short course of these to take home with you. If you need any more they can be bought over the counter at most pharmacies.
2. Vaginal bleeding – It is normal to bleed for seven to 12 days after the termination. If bleeding is heavy or is smelly please contact your GP urgently or go to your nearest accident and emergency (A&E) department. No tampons should be used until you have stopped bleeding after the treatment, due to the risk of infection.
3. You should not resume sexual intercourse until you have stopped bleeding due to the risk of infection.
4. Your next cycle could take up to three to five weeks.

Potential complications

Retained products – in a small proportion of women, some products of conception (placental tissue) might be retained within the uterus after the medical process. This usually produces symptoms such as lower abdominal pain, or continued heavy or smelly vaginal bleeding. In this case, you might need to have an operation performed to remove the tissue that is left behind. This will be performed under general anaesthetic.

Useful telephone numbers

Fetal medicine unit (FMU) midwives (office hours):	020 7188 2321
Gynaecology ward (24 hours):	020 7188 2704

The following organisations offer support and information:

Antenatal Results & Choices (ARC) is a registered charity who offer continued support and advice to parents who face difficult decisions regarding fetal abnormalities. They have unrivalled experience in assisting parents at this time and aim to offer both support and advice in meeting your unique needs.

73 Charlotte Street

London W1T 4PN

w: www.arc-uk.org

e: info@arc-uk.org **t:** 020 7631 0285

CareConfidential

Clarendon House

9-11 Church Street

Basingstoke

RG21 7QG

t: 0800 028 2228 **w:** www.careconfidential.com

FPA (Family Planning Association)

2-12 Pentonville Road

London N1 9FP

t: 0845 310 1334 **w:** www.fpa.org.uk

Pharmacy medicines helpline

For information about any medicines that you have been prescribed at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals, you can speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

Fetal Medicine Unit

8th floor, North wing

St Thomas' Hospital

Specialist midwife phone: 020 7188 2321 (office hours)

Bereavement midwife phone: 020 7188 6871 (office hours)

Pre assessment clinic

Ground floor, Gassiot House

St Thomas' Hospital

t: 020 7188 0835

Day surgery

Ground Floor, Lambeth wing

St Thomas' Hospital

t: 020 7188 3222

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust's services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:

t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC) – For more information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to search the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, St Thomas' Hospital.
t: 020 7188 3416

Language support services – If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.
t: 020 7188 8815 **fax:** 020 7188 5953

NHS Direct – Offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses over the phone 24 hours a day.
t: 0845 4647 **w:** www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

NHS Choices – Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.
w: www.nhs.uk