

# Termination of pregnancy following fetal abnormality

## Medical termination over 18 week's 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 more than 18 weeks after conception.**

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 misoprostol and these can vary from person to person. A full detailed list is in the information leaflet you obtain 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 go to the Sands Suite on the seventh floor of North Wing, St Thomas' Hospital, where the process will be started. This will be a single room with bathroom facilities en-suite. A tablet called misoprostol will be inserted into your vagina every three hours. This medication causes contractions which helps your body expel the pregnancy. Pain relief will be available to you at any stage if required. Most women stay in hospital overnight. Your partner, a relative or a friend will be able to stay with you. You will also be 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 are listed on the next page.

- Abdominal pain
- Nausea and vomiting
- Diarrhoea.

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

## Can I spend time with my baby?

After the delivery, the baby will be wrapped in a personal blanket. You are welcome to bring your own cloths or blanket for this.

If you would like a photograph of your baby, and/or foot or hand-prints, please let us know. You can also keep their wristbands if you would like to.

The option of whether or not to carry out a post mortem will be discussed with you whilst you are in hospital. A post mortem may give us information that will explain the possible causes of your baby's abnormality and the chances that it may happen again in a future pregnancy. However, sometimes the causes cannot be found.

The decision of whether or not to carry out a post mortem is yours. We will not do one without your consent.

## What to bring to hospital with you

- Toiletries
- Towel
- Disposable pants
- Sanitary towels
- Slippers/flip flops
- T-shirt/nightdress for the delivery
- Light refreshments (water and snacks)
- Books/magazines.

## 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. Bleeding – It is normal to bleed for seven to 12 days after the termination. If bleeding is heavy or 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, 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 Midwives (office hours)	020 7188 2321
Hospital birth centre (24 hours)	020 7188 2975/6867/0746

## Further information

You can contact the Day Surgery Unit on 020 7188 3222, Monday to Friday, 8.30 to 6.30pm.

Contact EPAGU on 020 7188 0864, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 7.00pm, weekends 9.30am to 3.15pm, if you need advice or have:

- heavy, vaginal bleeding
- severe, lower abdominal pain
- a high temperature (38 degree C/100.4 degree F or above), or
- an offensive, smelling vaginal discharge.

If you think it is an emergency, please go straight to your nearest accident & emergency (A&E) department.

## 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](http://www.arc-uk.org)

**e:** [info@arc-uk.org](mailto: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](http://www.careconfidential.com)

**FPA (Family Planning Association)**

2-12 Pentonville Road

London N1 9FP

t: 0845 310 1334 w: [www.fpa.org.uk](http://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**

8<sup>th</sup> 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](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.nhs.uk)

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