

# STAGES OF ACCESSING MEDICAL ABORTION



A medical abortion (MA) is the ending of a pregnancy with the use of medically-approved pills. MA is usually most effective in the first trimester of a pregnancy. A medical abortion does not require surgery and can be done at home or in a medical environment. Follow-up visits to a doctor are ideal and recommended.

## BASIC STAGES OF MEDICAL ABORTION

### 1 DIDI FINDS OUT THAT SHE IS PREGNANT AND STILL WITHIN THE FIRST TEN WEEKS OF GESTATION.

- With pregnancy tests, individuals are able to check for Human Chorionic Gonadotropin (hCG) levels in their urine or blood.
- Some tests may be able to tell how far gone a pregnancy is.

### 3 DIDI DECIDES TO HAVE AN ABORTION AND SO GOES OUT TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP.

- Individuals who choose to have an abortion should always seek accurate information on the legal provisions for abortion in their country.
- Individuals may also choose to get pre-abortion counselling as this can be a good opportunity for patient-centred care.
- Accurate and unbiased counselling should be free of stigma and should discourage people from unsafe abortions.
- Counselling can be gotten over a call to a hotline or in-person from a medical professional.

### 5 DIDI WILL THEN USE THE MEDICALLY APPROVED ABORTION PILLS.

- It is possible to self-manage a medical abortion or to use the drugs in a medical facility.
- Inaccurate information on proper use and cost barriers might lead to wrong administration of drugs.
- If necessary, get additional advice.
- Individuals may choose a self-managed medical abortion so that they have privacy

### 7 POST-ABORTION

- Some individuals may experience side effects after having an abortion.
- After a medical abortion, it is recommended that individuals have a follow-up visit to a doctor for post-abortion care.
- Individuals will feel a range of emotions – happiness, relief, loss, guilt, anxiety – after a medical abortion. A counsellor will be able to help with these emotions.
- Ovulation will usually occur in the two weeks following a medical abortion meaning that it is possible to get pregnant again. Depending on the reason for the abortion, individuals can seek contraceptive advice from a doctor.
- Individuals can also choose to share their abortion stories with others in order to debunk common abortion myths and to address the stigmatisation of abortions.

### 2 DIDI MAKES A DECISION ON WHAT TO DO WITH HER PREGNANCY.

- At this stage, individuals may make a decision to keep a pregnancy till term, put up a child for adoption after delivery or plan for an abortion.
- This decision process is usually influenced by individual circumstances and may also be based on advice from friends and family.
- Women may choose to have an abortion for different reasons peculiar to them. No abortion is more valid or more important than the other.

### 4 DIDI DECIDES TO HAVE A MEDICAL ABORTION

- MA pills may not always be available over-the-counter or in pharmacies.
- A medical abortion is not ideal for individuals who have an ectopic pregnancy. Before a medical abortion, an ultrasound exam is necessary.
- If someone else goes to get the pills, ensure that they convey accurate information.

### 6 DIDI GOES ON TO HAVE THE ABORTION.

- Medical abortion can be taken orally or inserted into the vagina.
- The experience of having an abortion will not be the same for all individuals.
- Some individuals might have to take pain relief tablets to manage pain during and after a medical abortion.
- Individuals must ensure that they have access to emergency medical services in case of possible complications.
- It is important that individuals are able to properly tell and understand the signs of possible complications.