

## Talking about abortion/ support around abortion

Not everybody needs support or has strong feelings about their abortion, but some people do, and being pregnant when you can't or don't want to continue a pregnancy can be stressful. Some people find it helpful to talk to friends, family, community, or other supports in their lives, but not everyone has people they can talk to about it without fear of judgment or shame. If you would like to talk to someone pro-choice and nonjudgmental about pregnancy options, abortion, or your feelings or experiences around pregnancy or abortion, check out these resources:

- PPT's Health Services volunteers and clinicians: in-person education, information, support, and active listening on pregnancy options and sexual health issues.
- To see a counsellor for more in-depth pre- or post-abortion support, contact PPT, the BCBC (416-351-3700), or Choice in Health Clinic (647-370-3203).
- Teen Health Source (below): education, information, & active listening on pregnancy options & sexual health by phone, text, email, & chat.
- All-Options (1-888-493-0092, toll-free): non-judgmental peer support for decisions/feelings/experiences around pregnancy.
- Faith Aloud (1-888-717-5010, toll-free): non-judgmental support for pregnancy options from trained clergy & religious counselors.
- wetestify.org: increasing the spectrum & building the power of abortion storytellers, especially those who are marginalized.
- Abortion doulas/full spectrum doulas aren't medical providers but give practical & emotional support around abortion, e.g. someone to talk to or to go to appointments with you. Doulas aren't covered by health cards or insurance but some offer reduced fees.

### For youth ages 13-29

#### Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services

Offers drop-in and scheduled appointments  
Call 416-961-0113 or visit [www.ppt.on.ca](http://www.ppt.on.ca)

### For youth ages 13-19

#### Teen Health Source

Offers anonymous and confidential sexual health information for teens by teens.  
Text (647) 933-5399, call (416) 961-3200, email [teenhealthsource@ppt.on.ca](mailto:teenhealthsource@ppt.on.ca)  
Chat online and visit [www.teenhealthsource.com](http://www.teenhealthsource.com)

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## pregnancy options series

# abortion

**Planned Parenthood Toronto (PPT) is a pro-choice organization. When you are pregnant, we believe that you have the right to access factual, caring and non-judgmental information and services on all three of your options: abortion, adoption, and parenting. If you need support with decision making, contact PPT to book an appointment.**

**There are many myths about abortion. Below is some information about abortion and abortion services in Toronto.**

### What is an abortion?

An abortion is a safe medical procedure that ends a pregnancy.

Abortions are fully legal in Canada.

### Types of abortion

There are 2 categories of abortion: medical (where medication causes the uterus\* to expel the pregnancy tissue), and surgical (where a clinician removes the pregnancy tissue from the uterus).

- The options you have depend on how long you've been pregnant (gestational age, or GA, calculated by the time since the first day of your last menstrual\* period) and what's offered at the clinic or hospital you go to.
- Medical abortions may feel more private or less invasive for some people, are similar to a miscarriage, can involve heavy bleeding and painful cramping, and can take longer to complete or require more appointments.
- Surgical abortions may feel more invasive, have more extensive pain management options, and are often completed more quickly and with fewer appointments.
- PPT offers a limited number of medical abortion appointments. PPT does not offer surgical abortions.

\*We know that these aren't the words everyone uses for their bodies (eg. trans folks), and support you using the language that feels best for you

## Medical abortion (the abortion pill, brand name: Mifegymiso)

- Medical abortion uses medication to stop a pregnancy from developing and make the uterus cramp and expel the pregnancy.
- In Toronto, medical abortion is available until 9-11 weeks GA.
- To get a medical abortion you have a counselling/education session, and may have an STI test, some blood tests, and/or an ultrasound. Most dedicated abortion clinics do this in one visit, but some providers do different parts at different times or send you to another place, like an ultrasound lab, for some things. Some clinics can offer some or all of your appointments by phone or video.
- If you and your clinician decide medical abortion is right for you, you get a prescription and plan when to take the medication.
- You take a pill called mifepristone, which detaches the pregnancy from the wall of the uterus.
- 24-48 hours after the first pill, at home or wherever is comfortable for you, you take 4 tablets by letting them melt between your cheek and gums or inside your vagina\* for 30 minutes. This medication is called misoprostol, and it makes your uterus contract (cramp) to expel the pregnancy tissue.
- You will likely have bleeding and cramping that is heavier and more painful than a typical period. You may pass large clots or pieces of tissue.
- Your clinician will plan with you what to take for cramping, and may give you a prescription for pain medication.
- Nausea, diarrhea, fever, chills, and headache can be side effects of misoprostol, so you may have some of these symptoms on the day you take the misoprostol.
- 90% of people have the pregnancy tissue expel within 24 hours after taking the misoprostol tablets. Many have it expel within 4-5 hours.
- You will need a follow-up test after your medical abortion to confirm that it worked properly and you are not pregnant anymore. Depending on your situation, this may be a blood test or ultrasound 1-2 weeks after the medical abortion, or a urine pregnancy test 5-6 weeks after the medical abortion.
- A small number of people who get medical abortions need more medication, more blood tests or ultrasounds, or a surgical abortion procedure before the process is finished.

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## Frequently asked questions about abortion

**Is abortion safe?** Yes. Both medical and surgical abortions are very safe, routine procedures. Chances of serious complications are very low. There's no evidence that abortion causes long-term health effects.

**Is abortion effective?** Yes. Medical abortion with mifepristone is 95-98% effective when used as directed. Surgical abortion is over 99% effective.

**Will I be able to have a baby in the future?** Yes. Having an abortion will not prevent you from getting pregnant or having a healthy pregnancy.

**Will anybody find out?** No. This medical information can't be released without your permission. After 2-3 weeks a doctor/healthcare provider can't tell, even with a vaginal exam, that you've had an abortion.

**Do I need permission from my parents/partner/ family doctor?** No. In Canada, anyone over 12 years of age can legally have an abortion. You do not need a doctor's referral to book an abortion appointment.

**Do I have to take time off work or school?** You may need time off for any appointments, and for a medical abortion most people want to be somewhere comfortable when the pregnancy tissue is coming out and the bleeding and cramping are heaviest. Some take a day or so off to rest after but some return to their usual activities the same or next day.

**Will a surgical abortion hurt?** You may feel pressure or cramping if you're awake. You get medication for pain and to help you relax.

**What happens if I vomit after taking the abortion pill?** If you vomit less than 1 hour after taking the first pill (mifepristone) for a medical abortion, contact your provider. You may need another dose.

**What happens if I swallow the misoprostol tablets (the second medication for a medical abortion) before 30 minutes are up?** The misoprostol tablets are safe if swallowed, but can be less effective or have more side effects.

**How do I know when a medical abortion is complete?** You'll likely have bleeding and cramping heavier than a period that gets lighter after the pregnancy tissue comes out. You'll do a blood test or ultrasound 1-2 weeks later, or a urine pregnancy test 4-6 weeks later, to confirm the abortion worked. If you don't have bleeding within 48 hours of taking misoprostol, contact your provider. You may need more screening or another dose.

**Does abortion make me more likely to get breast\* cancer?** No. There is no link between having an abortion and getting breast cancer.

**Does abortion cause depression?** No. The most common feeling after having an abortion is relief. Some people feel sadness or grief, which is a healthy response to loss. Having an abortion isn't associated with long-term emotional or mental health problems.

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## After an abortion

Instructions for abortion aftercare vary between providers. Here is some general information about caring for yourself after an abortion:

- For 1-2 weeks after an abortion (after pregnancy tissue expels for medical abortions), **you can reduce risk of infection by:**
  - not inserting anything into your vagina, including fingers, toys, penises, tampons, menstrual cups, or douches
  - not sitting in water: ie. not taking baths (shower instead), not going swimming, not using hot tubs or Jacuzzis
- **Signs of infection** can include fever, lower abdominal tenderness and vaginal discharge. If you have any of these symptoms, contact your doctor or clinic. Infections that are detected early can be treated easily and effectively with antibiotics.
- **Resuming normal activity:** Avoid heavy lifting or aerobic activity for 24 hours after the abortion (with a medical abortion, for 24 hours after you expel the pregnancy tissue). While some people return to work the same day as their abortion (or the same day they expel the pregnancy tissue), many may need to rest. Return to normal activities when you feel ready - listen to your body.
- **Next Menstrual Period:** Unless you are using hormonal birth control, your next period will start 4-6 weeks after the abortion.
- **Cramping** after an abortion is normal. Some people do not get cramps at all. You may have cramps off and on for 2-3 weeks after the procedure. You may feel pressure or pain in your lower abdomen, lower back or inner thighs. You can use a hot water bottle or ask a clinician about using Advil or Tylenol.
- **Bleeding** after an abortion is normal. Some people have bleeding similar to a period, pass clots, or have spotting for up to 4 weeks after a surgical abortion or 6 weeks after a medical abortion. Drinking alcohol, lifting heavy objects, or using marijuana or “period” medications like Midol or Anaprox may increase bleeding.
- **You may need medical attention if** you are bleeding so heavily that you soak through 2 or more menstrual pads per hour for 2 consecutive hours, feel faint or lightheaded, have severe pain that your pain medication doesn't help with, or if you have diarrhea, vomiting, or a fever over 38°C that lasts more than 6 hours. (Note that diarrhea, vomiting, and fever are side effects of misoprostol and may not require medical care if they happen the day you take the misoprostol, the second medication for medical abortion.)
- **Symptoms of pregnancy** will end a week or so after the abortion. Nausea is usually the first symptom to end.

## Surgical abortion

- Surgical abortion is available in Ontario up to 24 weeks and 6 days GA.
- To get a surgical abortion you have a 2-3 hour long appointment that includes a counselling/education session, ultrasound, blood test, and STI test. Depending on the clinic/hospital and gestational age (GA) you may have the abortion procedure in the same appointment.
- Depending on the clinic/hospital, you get general anaesthesia (where you are put to sleep) or local anesthesia, painkillers, and conscious sedation (where you are groggy or calmed, but awake). Hospitals tend to use general anaesthetic, while independent clinics use local anaesthetic, painkillers, and conscious sedation.
- The cervix (the opening to the uterus) is gently opened with medication and/or medical instruments. A flexible tube providing gentle suction and/or other instruments are inserted through the cervix and used to remove the pregnancy tissue from the uterus. This can take 2-15 minutes.
- There is no cutting and no stitches are needed.
- For pregnancies of more than 12 weeks GA, you may get medication or laminaria (sterilized compressed seaweed sticks inserted into the cervix to make opening the cervix easier) during your first appointment, and return to the clinic/hospital the next day for the abortion procedure.
- For pregnancies of more than 19 weeks GA, you may get more medication or laminaria on day 2 and/or day 3 and return on day 3 or 4 for the abortion.
- After the abortion procedure you stay in a recovery area until the medical staff are confident you can go home safely.
- You cannot drive yourself home after a surgical abortion.
- Many providers recommend a checkup 2-3 weeks after a surgical abortion. You can do this at the abortion clinic or hospital, or at a family doctor, walk-in clinic, PPT, or the BCBC if you prefer. This appointment is not required to confirm the procedure worked.
- Abortions past 24 weeks GA may require a special referral or travel to the U.S. PPT can help with referrals. The National Abortion Federation (1-877-257-0012, [www.prochoice.org](http://www.prochoice.org)) can help with referrals and sometimes costs.

**List of abortion providers in/near Toronto (as of March 2021)**

(for more providers outside Toronto visit [choiceconnect.ca](http://choiceconnect.ca))

**Toronto Abortion Clinic**  
727 Hillsdale Ave E, Toronto  
416-932-0446/1-800-556-6835  
[taclinic.ca](http://taclinic.ca)  
**Surgical:** up to 19 wks GA  
**Medical:** up to 10 wks GA  
**No admin fees**

**Choice in Health**  
301–1678 Bloor St W, Toronto  
647-370-3203/416-975-9300  
[choiceinhealth.ca](http://choiceinhealth.ca)  
**Surgical:** up to 15 wks GA  
**Medical:** up to 10 wks GA  
**No admin fees**

**Cabbagetown Women’s Clinic**  
302 Gerrard St E  
416-323-0642/1-800-399-1592  
[cabbagetownwomensclinic.com](http://cabbagetownwomensclinic.com)  
**Surgical:** up to 24wks GA  
**Medical:** up to 10 wks GA  
**No admin fees**

**Bay Centre (Women’s College Hos.)**  
76 Grenville St, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor  
416-351-3700  
[womenscollegehospital.ca](http://womenscollegehospital.ca)  
**Manual Surgical:** up to 8 wks GA  
**Medical:** up to 10 wks GA  
**Surgical in hospital:** up to 24wks 6d  
**No admin fees**

**Women’s Care Clinic**  
501–960 Lawrence Ave W  
416-256-4139  
[womenscareclinic.ca](http://womenscareclinic.ca)  
**Surgical:** up to 19 wks 6d GA  
**Medical:** up to 9 wks GA  
**Admin fees: \$100-\$300**

**Bloor West Village Women’s Clinic**  
403–2425 Bloor St W, Toronto  
416-849-4595  
[bloorwestwomensclinic.com](http://bloorwestwomensclinic.com)  
**Surgical:** up to 18 wks 6d GA  
**Medical:** up to 10 wks GA  
**Admin fees: \$60 - \$400**

**MATCH Midwives (Toronto, some telemedicine)** 416-461-2493  
[bit.ly/match-midwives](http://bit.ly/match-midwives)  
**Medical:** up to 11 wks  
**No admin fees**

**East End Women’s Clinic**  
301–520 Ellesmere Rd, Scarborough  
416-901-3278  
[eastendwomensclinic.com](http://eastendwomensclinic.com)  
**Medical:** up to 10 wks  
**Admin fee: \$60**

**Mississauga Women’s Clinic**  
905-629-4516  
[mwclinic.com](http://mwclinic.com)  
**Medical:** up to 10 wks 6 days GA  
**Surgical:** up to 18 wks GA  
**Admin fees: \$70**

**First Choice Women’s Clinic (Malton)**  
647-368-5877  
[firstchoicewec.com](http://firstchoicewec.com)  
**Medical:** up to 10 wks GA  
**Admin fees: \$60**

**Brampton Women’s Clinic**  
905-789-7474  
[bramptonwomensclinic.com](http://bramptonwomensclinic.com)  
**Surgical:** up to 14 wks GA  
**Medical:** up to 9wks GA  
**Admin fees: \$60 - \$200**

**Hamilton Women’s Clinic (HWC)**  
905-540-1900 (or book online)  
[hwclinic.org](http://hwclinic.org)  
**Medical:** up to 10 wks 6d GA  
**Admin fees: \$50**

**Telemedicine options:**

**Georgian Bay \*Women’s Clinic**  
705-527-4154/1-855-572-4514  
[Georgianbaywomensclinic.com](http://Georgianbaywomensclinic.com)  
**Medical:** up to 10 wks  
**No admin fees**

**Canadian Women’s Clinic**  
book online: [womensclinic.ca](http://womensclinic.ca)  
or 1-888-987-0987  
**Medical:** up to 9 wks GA  
**Admin fees: \$70**

**Circle of Care Health Connections**  
289-335-4357  
[circleofcarehealthconnections.com](http://circleofcarehealthconnections.com)  
**Medical:** up to 9 wks  
**No admin fees**

| Abortion costs                              |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
|   | medical abortion with mifepristone and misoprostol (Mifegymiso)  | surgical abortion in hospital in Toronto   | surgical abortion in freestanding clinic in Toronto   |
| without insurance (or before reimbursement) | \$340-\$400 for the abortion pills, plus any visit or administrative fees (about \$800-\$1000 total).  | Call BCBC (416-351-3700) for more info; assistance may be available; may pay \$700 after assistance. | \$400-\$2300 depending on gestational age (GA), clinic, and type. Earlier procedures typically cost around \$400-\$600. |
| Ontario health card (OHIP)                  | Fully covered; some clinics have administrative fees.  |  |   |
| UHIP IFH DND**                              | Fully covered, but you may have to pay up front and get reimbursed (ask the clinic you book at); some clinics have administrative fees.  |  |   |
| private insurance                           | Check with your insurance provider if they cover abortion procedures/medications. If they do, you may have to pay up front and get reimbursed (ask the clinic you book at).  |  |   |
| health card from another Canadian province  | Call the province’s health insurance plan office to find out if they bill or reimburse for out-of-province abortions. Ask the clinic/hospital for the documents you need to submit. You may have to pay up front and get reimbursed. |  |   |

\*\*UHIP = University Health Insurance Plan; IFH = Interim Federal Health (refugee health coverage); DND = Canadian Military Insurance

- **If you don’t have health coverage you can use, some clinics have funds to help pay for abortions**—call the clinic you’re going to, PPT, Action Canada or the National Abortion Federation (NAF) for more info.
- **If you need to travel to get an abortion**, Action Canada or NAF can sometimes help with costs.

**Action Canada:** [www.actioncanadashr.org](http://www.actioncanadashr.org), 1-888-642-2725

**National Abortion Federation:** [www.prochoice.org](http://www.prochoice.org), 1-877-257-0012

- Fees may change from this list. You can call the individual clinics to confirm their fees and policies before booking with them.