

Supplementary Document 1

Supplemental Document 1: Statements regarding transparency with medical providers post-abortion at the hospital / emergency room. These images were obtained via abortion provider or organization websites. Statements include guidance regarding the reporting of abortion-related complications when seeking care post-abortion, the ability (or lack thereof) to detect whether an abortion was performed, concerns of legal repercussions, and related issues. Statements have been manually transcribed based on text appearing in the images.

National Abortion Federation (NAF)

– What happens if I need to go to an emergency room or a doctor?

First, check with your provider if you need to seek emergency care. They can help you understand if things are normal or not. If you feel like you need to go to the emergency room and can't share that you used medication abortion, you can say "I had a positive pregnancy test and I'm now having a lot of bleeding. I want to check that I'm OK." There is no test that can detect the medications in your system. You only need to tell someone that you used medication if you feel comfortable.

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Accessed at: <https://prochoice.org/patients/using-abortion-pills-on-your-own-what-to-expect/> on 1/22/2026.

Plan C (2020)

These examples can help you understand the ways in which people have gotten in legal trouble in the past:

"I went to urgent care because I was scared about the bleeding, and my doctor reported me to the police."

Everyone should be able to access urgent care when they are concerned about their health. But, in a few cases urgent care staff have called the police on people who have taken abortion pills that they purchased online. This is not ethical and should not happen. People who self-manage their abortions should know that if they seek help at an urgent care clinic, they do not need to report that they have used abortion pills that they purchased online. **No one can tell that you have used the medications**, even if a blood test is taken. People who visit urgent care often say they are having a miscarriage (without mentioning that they have taken pills). The urgent care providers can give safe and effective treatment without knowing the cause of the miscarriage.

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Accessed at: <https://web.archive.org/web/20201120133839/https://www.plancpills.org/guide-how-to-get-abortion-pills#faq> on 1/22/2026.

Plan C

How do people get into trouble?

Research by the legal organization If/When/How suggests these are the most common ways people have gotten into trouble:

- they told someone about their abortion and that person reported them.
- they got follow-up medical care and the provider reported them (many people say they are having a miscarriage to avoid this risk, which is medically what is happening in the body).
- they were later in pregnancy than they thought and didn't know what to do with the fetal tissue (this calculator can help people understand how pregnant they are).

In the end, it is up to every individual to decide what level of legal risk they are willing to take. Read more about legal risk and find examples here.

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Why have some people gotten in legal trouble?

Taking abortion pills is not a criminal act in most states. But, some people who have used abortion pills on their own have gotten in legal trouble in the United States. [Read more from legal organization If/When/How.](#)

The most common ways people get in trouble are:

They seek help from a medical provider and the provider reports them to the police. This shouldn't happen, but it does.

Everyone should be able to access medical care when they are concerned about their health. But in a few cases, medical staff have called the police on people who have taken abortion pills. This is not ethical and should not happen.

Patients are not required to report to clinicians that they have used abortion pills. The symptoms after taking abortion pills are the same as a miscarriage. [Blood tests do not reveal any differences between a miscarriage and a medication abortion.](#)

[The treatment for incomplete abortion and miscarriage is the same](#), so medical providers can safely and effectively care for patients who have used abortion pills without needing to know that they took abortion pills. People can often avoid the need for urgent care by consulting with a knowledgeable clinician by phone. The [Miscarriage and Abortion Hotline](#) offers free text and phone assistance to anyone who has medical questions.

Federal law ([EMTALA](#)) also says that clinicians must provide abortion care to address a medical emergency for all patients who present at a hospital emergency department.

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Accessed at: <https://www.plancpills.org/abortion-pills/legal-risk-can-people-get-in-trouble-for-ordering-abortion-pills-online-and-using-them-at-home> on 1/22/2026.

Planned Parenthood

Someone asked us: *I had an abortion with pills and I'm worried that my doctor will find out. Can you tell if someone had an abortion?*

Generally speaking, no one – including nurses or doctors – can tell if you've taken abortion pills. If you put your abortion pills in your vagina, it's possible for some leftover pieces to remain there for several hours or days. A doctor or nurse could see these pieces if you have a vaginal exam during this time period. However, there's no test to look for [abortion pills](#) in your body, and any abortion pill symptoms you're having look the same as the symptoms of a [miscarriage](#). An incomplete abortion is generally treated the same way as an incomplete miscarriage, even if you live in a state with abortion bans. So it's up to you to decide whether you want to tell your nurse or doctor about your abortion.

There's a small chance that your medication abortion won't work and you'll still be pregnant. In that case, you may need another dose of [misoprostol](#) pills, or you may need to have an [in-clinic procedure](#) to complete the abortion.

If you have questions or concerns about a miscarriage or abortion, the [Miscarriage + Abortion Hotline](#) is a private and secure phone and text hotline, staffed by medical professionals. They're not affiliated with Planned Parenthood, but they may be able to provide helpful information.

If you want more information about legal concerns and what you can safely say to a doctor or nurse about your pregnancy, miscarriage, or abortion, you can contact the [Repro Legal Helpline](#). The Repro Legal Helpline is not affiliated with Planned Parenthood, but they may be able to provide helpful information.

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Accessed at: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/blog/i-took-abortion-pills-will-a-doctor-be-able-to-tell-that-i-had-an-abortion> on 1/22/2026.

Innovating Education in Reproductive Health



Text of Image: “What if I don’t want to tell my health care provider that I had an abortion? Abortion is a pregnancy loss. Miscarriage is also pregnancy loss. You can use words with your health care provider that feel right for you. The pills used for abortions are the same ones that health care providers give patients to help pass a miscarriage. There is no evidence-based blood test for these pills. Health care providers can’t tell you took these pills to end a pregnancy if you put the pills between your gums and cheek or under your tongue.”

Accessed at: <https://www.innovating-education.org/talking-to-health-care-providers-after-a-first-trimester-miscarriage-or-abortion/> on 1/22/2026.

Safe2Choose

Will Medical Staff Be Able to Notice That I Am Having an Abortion? ^

If you **use abortion pills under the tongue (sublingually) or in the cheek (buccally)**, medical staff cannot tell whether you have had a miscarriage or an abortion as the symptoms are the same. There are no medical tests that can detect mifepristone or misoprostol in your body. The abortion pills do not show up in blood or urine tests, so even if doctors run tests, they cannot detect these medications in your system. If a health-care provider claims they can prove you used the pills, they are saying it to scare you.

However, if you **used misoprostol vaginally**, the remnants of the pills can sometimes be seen for up to five days. If you need medical care and used the pills this way, you can try to carefully remove any remaining pieces before going to a health center, but it might not be sufficient. This is why using the pills under the tongue or in the cheek is recommended, especially in places where abortion is restricted.

Even though medical staff cannot confirm you have used abortion pills, they will know that you were pregnant and will likely **assume you are having a miscarriage (spontaneous abortion)**. This is because the symptoms and complications of a miscarriage and an abortion with pills are exactly the same.

You **do not have to disclose that you used abortion pills** if you do not want to. If you need medical help, you can simply say that you started bleeding and don't feel well. Medical staff will provide treatment based on your symptoms, just as they would for someone experiencing a miscarriage.

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Accessed at: <https://safe2choose.org/faq/medical-abortion-faq> on 1/22/2026.

Aid Access

If you think you might have a complication you should go to a doctor immediately. You do not have to tell the medical staff that you tried to induce an abortion; you can tell them that you had a miscarriage. Doctors have the obligation to help in all cases and know how to handle a miscarriage.

Miscarriage vs abortion symptoms

The symptoms of a miscarriage and an abortion with pills are exactly the same and the doctor will not be able to see or test for any evidence of an abortion, as long as the pills have completely dissolved. If you used the Misoprostol under the tongue as our protocol recommends, the pills should have dissolved within 30 minutes. If you took the pills vaginally, you must check with your finger to make sure that they are dissolved. Traces of the pills may be found in the vagina up to four days after inserting them.

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Accessed at: <https://aidaccess.org/en/page/459/how-do-you-know-if-you-have-abortion-complications> on 1/22/2026.

Prepare for taking abortion pills:

It is better not to take abortion pills alone. In case complications occur (even though this is rare), a partner or friend can help bring you to a medical facility. If you do not want to tell anybody about having an abortion, you can instead tell somebody you trust that you do not feel very well and ask them to check on you every 2 hours.

Just as when you give birth, you need to be within 60 minutes of a hospital or other place that can give basic medical care in the rare case you would have a complication. If there is a problem, you should always go to a hospital or place with basic medical care. If you are worried about getting in trouble for taking abortion pills, you can just tell the medical staff that you are having a miscarriage. Abortion and miscarriage look exactly the same medically, and there is no way for medical staff to tell that you have taken abortion pills.

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Accessed at: <https://aidaccess.org/en/i-need-an-abortion> on 4/8/2026.

Women on Web (WoW)

If you think you might have a complication you should seek medical attention immediately. If you live in a place where abortion is illegal and you don't have a doctor who you trust, you can still access medical care. You do not have to tell the medical staff that you tried to induce an abortion; you can tell them that you had a spontaneous miscarriage. Doctors have the obligation to help in all cases and know how to handle a miscarriage.

The symptoms of a miscarriage and an abortion with pills are exactly the same and the medical practitioner will not be able to see or test for any evidence of an abortion, as long as the pills have completely dissolved. If you took the Misoprostol under the tongue, as our protocol recommends, the pills should be spit out after 30 minutes, if not dissolved completely. If you took the pills vaginally, you must check with your finger to make sure that they are dissolved. Traces of the pills may be found in the vagina up to four days after inserting them.

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Accessed at: <https://www.womenonweb.org/en/mifeprisone-misoprostol-abortion-pills/faqs/complications-of-medical-abortion/how-do-you-know-if-you-have-complications-and-what-should-you-do/> on 2/05/2026.

Abortion with Mifepristone and Misoprostol

A medical abortion using Mifepristone and Misoprostol abortion pills is the most common and effective method. The Mifepristone is taken first and blocks the hormones needed to sustain the pregnancy. After 24 hours, the Misoprostol is taken, which relaxes and opens the cervix and causes contractions in the uterus, helping to expel the pregnancy from the body. Medical abortion is a process that can take up to 2 weeks or even until your next menstruation to be completed, but most women return to their daily routines after 1-2 days.

We strongly advise you to hold the Misoprostol under your tongue to ensure no remains can be found in your system.

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