

Instructions and expectations after your abortion procedure

While pregnancy termination is one of the safest surgical procedures in medicine, unavoidable complications do occur. It is very important that you understand what is normal and what is not, and how to respond to your symptoms.

Follow-up: it is the patient's responsibility to call us for any concerning symptoms after a procedural abortion. You do not need a routine follow up visit if you feel well but if you have continued symptoms of pregnancy, pain that is not controlled with medication, severe bleeding, signs of an infection please call us to get back in immediately. All follow up visits, including ultrasounds and repeat procedures are included in what you originally paid and you will not be charged as long as it is related to the same pregnancy episode, not a new pregnancy and you follow up within 6 weeks. Outside lab tests may have a charge. **This is a primary care office and we can see you for routine health care such as birth control, STD testing, common illnesses and prescription refills for your concerns.**

Fever: Take your temperature each afternoon and each evening for the first 5 days after your procedure. Take it also if you suddenly feel especially weak or hot. Low-grade fevers (< 100.4) are to be expected and do not suggest infection; temperatures higher than that are also *probably* not infection, but warrant a call to us. If we gave you antibiotics for home (not everyone needs more than a single dose in the office), be sure to take them as prescribed, finishing them entirely. Call us if you also have severe abdominal pain, fever, foul odor discharge, sweatiness, or recurrent vomiting.

Cramping: Nearly all women experience cramping after their abortion – it is the sensation of the uterus squeezing down to its normal prepregnancy size. Cramping can range from mild to significant and can come and go over the first week. Take ibuprofen 800mg tablet prescription or 4 tablets over the counter tablets every 8 hours scheduled for the first few days after an abortion to minimize cramping and use a heating pad. If you were given stronger pain medications such as vicodin (hydrocodone) use that as needed for breakthrough pains. You may take that at the same time as the ibuprofen. You can also take tylenol (acetaminophen) 1000mg every 8 hours for pain with the ibuprofen. Since vicodin has tylenol 325mg in each pill please be sure to avoid taking more than a total of 4000mg of tylenol in 24 hours.

To minimize the cramping, massage your uterus (deep pressure, in circles, right over the pubic bone, with abdominal muscles relaxed) every 1-2 hours for the first 24 hours, and minimize exertional activity for 2-3 days. Only lift what you feel comfortable with. You can work and do normal daily activities. If blood clots have accumulated in the uterus, it will squeeze all the harder to push them out causing more cramping and you may be expelled in a rather large clot. Most women feel much better after that passes. It can be normal to pass intermittent blood clots with cramping. If pain is uncontrolled with medications please call the clinic or doctor on call.

Bleeding: Most women have daily bleeding after an abortion, but it is variable – they may bleed anywhere from 1 day to 6 weeks after the abortion, and some women do not bleed at all. The bleeding may start and stop. You may use tampons 1 day after a first trimester abortion but wait 1 week to use tampons after a second trimester abortion procedure. Your first real period may occur 3 to 6 weeks after the abortion. The period may be unusually heavy or unusually light for about the first three periods before your normal pattern is re-established. If you do not get your period after 8 weeks you **MUST** call us.

Please call us if you are soaking a large maxi pad front to back and side to side, 2 per hour for 2 hours in a row (changing a pad every 30 minutes for 2 hours) or passing clots larger than the size of a lemon. Also, please call us if you have heavy bleeding or bruising from the vagina as above or at the IV site, or any bleeding at all from a place that we did not touch such as gums or nose, or if you have unexplained bruising on arms or legs.

Breast tenderness: this is normal and will subside within several days. Try wearing a tight bra, or using ice packs and pain medications as above. Discharge is common, but do not stimulate the breasts, as this will result in more discharge.

Rh testing: We follow WHO and NAF guidelines and only test women for blood Rh type (positive or negative) if they are 12 weeks or further along in pregnancy. You should receive a Rhogam injection prior to leaving the clinic if you are over 12 weeks and Rh negative. If you refuse Rhogam when it is indicated there is a risk of fetal health problems in future pregnancies. There is not a risk in future pregnancies if you are Rh negative and have an abortion less than 12 weeks in pregnancy.

Ongoing pregnancy: It is imperative that you confirm that you are no longer pregnant. **All patients must do a pregnancy test at home 5 weeks after the abortion and call us immediately if it is still positive.** Persisting pregnancy is possible, particularly after an attempt to end a pregnancy at 7 weeks or less. Pregnancy symptoms should begin to diminish within days; for them to not diminish at all within 2-3 weeks is NOT normal and please call us. **It may take up to 6 weeks for the urine test to turn negative in 10% of patients.**

Routine Medications after your Procedural Abortion:

Pain control:

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprofen are generally the most helpful for uterine cramping. You may get a prescription strength ibuprofen from our clinic or buy the lower dose over the counter at any grocery store or pharmacy. Please take ibuprofen scheduled every 8 hours for the first few days after your abortion.

Medication and Dosage	How to take it	Additional instructions
Advil/Motrin (ibuprofen) 200 mg over the counter or prescription of 800mg tablets	4 tablets (800mg) every 8 hours. OR if prescription 1 tablet of 800mg every 8 hours	You can take this even if you are taking other prescription pain medication. You can alternate them or take them together
Aleve (naproxen sodium) 220mg	2 tablets (440mg) every 8-12 hours	You can take this even if you are taking other prescription pain medication. <u>Do not combine with ibuprofen.</u>
Tylenol (acetaminophen) 500mg	2 extra strength (1000mg) or 3 regular strength (975mg) every 6 hours	<u>Do not take this along with prescription pain medication with acetaminophen.</u> Do not exceed 4000mg tylenol in 24 hours. Okay to take at same time as ibuprofen

The provider may prescribe an opioid class of medication for pain but this medication is not always necessary:

Prescription opioid pain medication:

- Vicodin (hydrocodone 5mg/acetaminophen 325mg) – take 1 to 2 tablets every 4-6 hours
- Percocet (oxycodone 5mg/acetaminophen 325mg) – 1 to 2 tablets every 6 hours

Take opioid pain medications with food since these medications can upset your stomach and cause nausea and constipation. Do not drive or drink alcohol while taking opioid pain medications. These medications are not intended for long term use. Store these medications carefully out of the reach of children. Some of these medications contain acetaminophen so should not be taken along with over-the-counter Tylenol. It is OK to take these with ibuprofen or Aleve. **Do not drive for at least 8 hours after taking prescription pain medication**

Nausea Medication:

- **Ondansetron (Zofran)** 4mg pill 1-2 every 6-8 hours as needed for **nausea**. These tablets dissolve under your tongue. The medication may cause a headache.

Iron: If you have concerns about anemia or feel more fatigue you can take iron to restore lost red blood cells. Most patients do not require extra iron. Iron comes in 2 forms: take either ferrous sulfate 324mg daily OR elemental iron 65 mg: 1 daily for 1 month (you can also take it every other day if desired). They may cause stomach upset. Likely to cause stool to appear black and can cause constipation. This medicine is over-the-counter and does not require a prescription.

Do you need antibiotics?

Everyone who has a surgical procedure for their abortion is given an antibiotic prior to the procedure. This usually consists of Azithromycin 500mg (2 tablets of 250mg) that you swallow prior to the procedure.

If you have a multiple day procedure done and laminaria are placed you will be given the antibiotic in the clinic the first day and then take 1 tablet daily for 4 days. **The antibiotic is the one medicine that you absolutely must take to prevent infection.** Please call us if you have problems taking the medication so we can find an alternative for you.

Contraception (Birth Control): You can get pregnant again 1-2 weeks after abortion. We recommend waiting at least 1 week prior to sexual intercourse after an abortion. We offer all forms of contraception.

- o Most birth control should start within a week of the abortion. **You can start birth control pills, patches or vaginal rings TODAY.** Don't wait for your next period because you ovulate around 14 days after your abortion so you can get pregnant BEFORE your first period. The pill doesn't protect you from pregnancy for the first week. We can send a prescription to your pharmacy.
- o Depo Provera injections that can be done on the same day as your abortion if self pay or you may return any day after your first visit to use your insurance for Depo.
- o Nexplanon subdermal contraceptive can be inserted at your appointment as self pay or at a follow up visit with us any day after your abortion and we can bill insurance. If you go to another provider you will need a negative pregnancy test.
- o If you want an IUD (Mirena or Paragard) and were not able to get one during your procedure we recommend coming back to see us 2 weeks after your abortion. If you go to a provider outside of our clinic you usually will need to wait until a negative pregnancy test.

Emergency Contacts after your Procedural Abortion

If you have any urgent questions or concerns outside of office hours please call Dr. ***** cell phone ***** . If you do not get a response, call the on call person via the front desk at **303-991-7700**. If the office is open please call the office first. Please *call* us rather than text. If calling a doctor's cell phone between the hours of 11pm and 7am if there is no answer please hang up and call back within 3 minutes to ring through the iphone privacy setting.

If you have a true emergency then call 911, however, most patients have *concerns*, not an emergency, so we prefer that you call us. We know your medical situation and we have much more experience than almost anyone else you are likely to get on the phone if you call elsewhere. You may be asked to come to our office for evaluation, even if it is in the middle of the night.

Emergency room visits are rarely necessary and almost always very expensive. Our office cannot be responsible, medically or financially, for the care you receive from any source other than our office and our on-call providers. If you do seek follow up care outside of our office please have them contact us immediately for details of your care..

You need to call us if:

- You are soaking a maxi pad front to back and side to side, 2 per hour for 2 hours in a row (or a pad every 30 minutes for 2 hours)
- You are passing blood clots larger than the size of a lemon.
- You have a fever of over 100.4 degrees or more for 4 hours after misoprostol or fevers that start more than 24 hours after misoprostol.
- If you have signs of an allergic reaction to the medications
- You have severe cramping that is not relieved by medications or pain persisting for longer than the first few weeks.
- Foul odor discharge with pelvic pains can be signs of an infection.
- You feel short of breath, chest pain, or cough that was not present prior to the abortion.
- You have heavy bleeding or bruising from the vagina as above or at the IV site, or any bleeding at all from a place that we did not touch such as gums or nose, or if you have unexplained bruising on arms or legs.

In cases of a true emergency call 911

In cases of emergency you should go to the closest hospital. If you have time to choose a hospital then consider which hospital is in network for your insurance. If you live near our clinic we recommend going to Swedish Hospital. Consider avoiding going to a catholic hospital if you have a choice in hospitals. Please notify us if you are going to an emergency room if you have time to call us. The provider can call the physician in the emergency room to give a report or we can fax over records if appropriate. This is usually very helpful for you to get appropriate care in the emergency room. If you live outside of Colorado in a state that abortion is not legal go to the closest hospital. Even if you had an abortion in a state that it is not legal there are no cases of people prosecuting the patient who had the abortion at this time and the physicians should care for you appropriately and you should not delay your care. It is your decision if you want to tell them that you had an abortion or not.

Ongoing pregnancy symptoms:

It is imperative that we know that you are no longer pregnant. **All patients must do a pregnancy test at home 5 weeks after the abortion and call us right away if it is positive.** Persisting pregnancy is rare but possible. Pregnancy symptoms should begin to diminish within days; for them to not diminish at all within 2-3 weeks is NOT normal and please call us. About **10% of patients take up to 6 weeks for the urine test to turn negative** after an abortion so when you call we will review your symptoms and if appropriate either see you in clinic or have you wait a week and repeat a urine pregnancy test. Your period returns in 3 to 6 weeks and will look slightly abnormal and often be irregular for the first 3 months.