

# ABORTION PILLS 101

## WHAT IS MIFEPRISTONE?

Mifepristone (formerly known as RU-486) is a medication used for safe and effective early abortion. It has been approved by the FDA since 2000 and is commonly used with another medication, misoprostol, to end a pregnancy in the first trimester.

Mifepristone has been in use for over 25 years and is included on the World Health Organization's Model List of Essential Medicines, reflecting its importance to public health systems worldwide.

## HOW DOES MIFEPRISTONE WORK?

Mifepristone blocks progesterone, a hormone necessary to maintain a pregnancy. When progesterone is blocked, the uterine lining can no longer support the pregnancy. Misoprostol, taken after mifepristone, causes the uterus to contract and expel the pregnancy tissue.

## IS MIFEPRISTONE SAFE?

YES!! Mifepristone has nearly 40 years of research confirming its safety. Taken with misoprostol, it is 95% effective, or higher, at completing medication abortion. Serious complications occur in 0.3%, with only 3–5% needing further care. As of 2023, medication abortion accounts for 63% of U.S. abortions and is authorized for use in over 100 countries.



## WHAT ELSE IS MIFEPRISTONE USED FOR?

In addition to abortion care, mifepristone is used in the clinical management of miscarriages, helping the body complete a pregnancy loss safely and effectively.

It has been FDA-approved since 2012 to treat Cushing's syndrome and has also been used in China and India for the management of uterine fibroids. Research has examined its potential in treating certain breast, ovarian, and brain tumors, psychotic depression, and in managing symptoms of Gulf War Illness and Alzheimer's disease.

## ABORTION PILLS ARE ESSENTIAL HEALTH CARE!

Abortion is a fundamental component of reproductive health care. For students, access to abortion pills can be especially critical due to unique barriers such as limited transportation, lack of paid time off, academic pressures, financial constraints, privacy concerns, and living in states hostile to abortion access.

# HOW TO ACCESS MIFEPRISTONE AS A COLLEGE STUDENT

Access to mifepristone varies widely depending on where you live, your campus policies, and state laws. California, Massachusetts, and Illinois require public universities to provide students with abortion pills! While the FDA allows mifepristone to be prescribed via telehealth and mailed to patients, many states impose restrictions that limit or block access. Because college students often rely on campus health services for care, lack of access at student health centers disproportionately harms low-income students, undocumented students, student parents, and those without transportation or flexible schedules. **Students in all 50 states can access abortion pills from telehealth providers located in shield states!**

## STEP 1: CHECK YOUR STATE'S RULES

Before seeking care, it's helpful to understand the legal landscape in your state. Even in restrictive states, telehealth abortion may still be an option through providers operating under shield laws in other states.

The best resources for the most up to date information are PlanCPills.org and INeedAnA.org. Avoid relying on Google search results alone, as crisis pregnancy centers often appear in searches and provide misleading information.

## STEP 2: CHECK YOUR STUDENT HEALTH CENTER

Your campus health center may be able to provide abortion pills, referrals, or telehealth services. Start by visiting your student health center's website.

You can ask:

- "Do you provide medication abortion or mifepristone?"
- "Do you offer abortion care through telehealth?"
- "If not, do you provide referrals to trusted abortion providers?"

If staff are unsure or evasive, ask to speak with a clinician or medical director. Student health centers should provide accurate, nonjudgmental information, even if they do not offer abortion pills directly.

## STEP 3: USE TELEHEALTH ABORTION OR A LOCAL CLINIC

Telehealth abortion has become one of the most accessible options for students. Telehealth providers prescribe abortion pills after an online consultation, mail medication in discreet packaging, and offer follow-up support via text, phone, or online portals.

If telehealth is not the best option for you, local clinics may provide abortion pills in person. To find a clinic, you can use Planned Parenthood's provider finder, contact independent abortion clinics, or ask abortion funds for referrals. If you need to travel, abortion funds can help with costs, and practical support groups can assist with rides, lodging, and childcare.

Once you receive the abortion pills, find a safe and private location to take the pill. Everyone's experience is different, but abortion pills often feel similar to a heavy period or miscarriage.

## PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY

Privacy concerns are common for students, especially those on family insurance.

Here's what to know:

- Telehealth packages are discreet.
- You do not need parental permission if you are an adult. If you are under 18, you can obtain abortion pills from a provider in a state without parental involvement laws.
- Medical providers cannot tell if abortion pills were used - it is the same treatment for a miscarriage.

# ABORTION PILL MYTHS

## ➤ MIFEPRISTONE IS DANGEROUS

Anti-abortion arguments frequently count expected effects, such as cramping or bleeding, as “complications,” even though these are medically normal outcomes. In evidence-based medicine, danger is measured by serious adverse events, which remain exceedingly rare for mifepristone. Major medical organizations and decades of global research agree that the medication’s risk profile is low and even safer than many widely used over the counter drugs, like Tylenol.

## ➤ MIFEPRISTONE HARMS MENTAL HEALTH

This rhetoric frames abortion as traumatic while ignoring the consequences of being denied care. High-quality, long-term research shows no causal link between medication abortion and depression, anxiety, or infertility. Major organizations, including the American Psychological Association and the National Academies of Sciences, have concluded that abortion does not increase the risk of mental health disorders.

Emotional responses after any pregnancy outcome vary, but pre-existing stress, stigma, or lack of support, not abortion itself, are the main source of negative mental health outcomes.

## ➤ TELEHEALTH ABORTION IS UNSAFE AND ENCOURAGES MISUSE

Telehealth medication abortion follows the same informed-consent standards used across healthcare. The FDA explicitly allows mail delivery, and studies show outcomes are just as safe as in-clinic care. Claims of “misuse” assume people cannot safely manage their own healthcare without oversight, revealing a deeper discomfort with abortion care that is private, autonomous, and outside institutional control. Extensive research has disproven these claims.

## ➤ BANNING MIFEPRISTONE ONLY AFFECTS ABORTION

There are broader implications of restricting an FDA-approved medication. Mifepristone is also used to treat Cushing’s syndrome and has been studied for multiple other serious health conditions. Legal attacks on mifepristone challenge the authority of scientific and regulatory institutions, setting a precedent that courts, not medical experts, can determine which medications are acceptable.

**MIFEPRISTONE IS SAFE AND EFFECTIVE!**

## MIFEPROSTONE UNDER ATTACK

Even with decades of evidence supporting its safety, mifepristone continues to face political attacks. In January 2026, the U.S. Senate HELP Committee held hearings framing the medication as a “safety concern,” despite strong testimony from medical experts affirming its extensive safety record and its use in abortion and miscarriage care. These hearings reflect a broader strategy to challenge FDA authority and restrict access through courts and legislation, fueled by misinformation rather than medical science.