

MANAGING EXPECTED EFFECTS, SIDE EFFECTS AND COMPLICATIONS

EXPECTED TREATMENT EFFECTS OF MISOPROSTOL (women will experience these as a result of the products of conception being expelled)		MANAGEMENT
Pain / cramping	Cramping typically starts within the first few hours and can begin as early as 30 minutes following misoprostol administration. Pain may be stronger than that typically experienced during a menstrual period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sitting or lying comfortably • Hot water bottle or heating pad • Give analgesics (ibuprofen or paracetamol/acetaminophen) when the woman is at the clinic so the woman can take them shortly after taking the misoprostol.
Route	Generally, vaginal bleeding will begin within an hour of misoprostol administration. Bleeding typically lasts an average of 5-8 days but may continue for up to two weeks. Spotting can persist until the next menstrual period.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the woman that every woman will experience bleeding and cramping differently – describe the normal range of bleeding. • Make sure the woman knows what the warning signs are, and the amount of bleeding that is outside the normal range for which she should seek immediate care.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS (a minority of women will experience these side effects)		MANAGEMENT
Chills / fever	Chills are transient; fever is less common and does not necessarily indicate infection. Temperature elevation generally does not last more than a few hours. Though infection is rare, fever or chills that persist for longer than 24 hours are not normal and may indicate infection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure the woman that chills and fever are common side effects on the day that misoprostol is taken. • Antipyretics if needed (NSAIDs such as ibuprofen are both analgesics and antipyretics) • Woman should be instructed to contact a clinician if fever lasts more than a day or starts any day after the day misoprostol is taken.
Nausea / vomiting	Nausea and vomiting may occur and typically resolve within 2 to 6 hours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure the woman that nausea and vomiting are possible side effects. • An antiemetic may be provided.
Diarrhea	If diarrhea occurs after misoprostol is taken, it usually resolves within a day. Remind women to drink plenty of fluids.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassure the woman that diarrhea is sometimes associated with misoprostol use and passes quickly.

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	WARNING SIGNS (women experiencing these complications should immediately seek help from a health-care clinician)	MANAGEMENT
Heavy bleeding	<p>Heavy and/or prolonged bleeding that causes a significant change in hemoglobin is uncommon. Signs that the woman has heavy bleeding and needs to seek help from a clinician include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soaking two large pads for two hours in a row. • Constant heavy bleeding that makes the woman feel sick or weak. • Sudden, heavy bleeding after bleeding has slowed or stopped for several days. • Weakness, dizziness related to bleeding that starts and stops intermittently for days. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MVA if bleeding is profuse or prolonged • Oral iron supplements or iron-rich diet recommended (but are not a treatment in themselves for heavy bleeding) • Fluid resuscitation (oral hydration, intravenous fluids or, rarely, transfusion) if experiencing hemodynamic compromise
Infection	<p>Documented endometrial and/or pelvic infection is rare. Signs of infection include some or all of the following: fever any day after the day misoprostol is taken, persistent abdominal pain, foul-smelling or purulent cervical/vaginal discharge, flu-like symptoms, feeling generally ill, sometimes accompanied by nausea and vomiting.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If infection is suspected the woman should be evaluated. If there are signs of sepsis or severe infection women should be given immediate surgical evacuation and antibiotic coverage. • If the woman is not severely ill, infection is typically treated with oral antibiotics. • Severe infections could require hospitalization and IV antibiotics.
Constant pain / cramping	<p>Constant severe pain, even on the day misoprostol is taken or pain that persists in days following misoprostol use, despite using medication, rest, a hot water bottle or a heating pad.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reassess the woman for treatment failure, unrecognized ectopic pregnancy or any other complications. A thorough assessment is necessary to determine the etiology of the pain. Treat accordingly.

This tool was adapted from: Gynuity Health Projects. 2009. *Misoprostol for treatment of incomplete abortion: An Introductory Guidebook*. Available online at: <http://gynuity.org/resources/info/guidebook-on-misoprostol-for-treatment-of-incomplete-abortion/>