

Mifepristone: Take-home points

1. Medical abortion with mifepristone/misoprostol is a safe and effective method of pregnancy termination up to 70 days after the LMP. It is approved by Health Canada for up to 63 days GA.
2. Good candidates for medical abortion have no ambivalence about their decision. They also lack medical issues such as adrenal insufficiency, uncontrolled asthma, ectopic pregnancy, porphyria, or known hypersensitivity to ingredients.
3. Determination of gestational age is important for determining candidacy for mife/miso. Ideally this is determined with transvaginal ultrasound but if this is not readily available, reliable LMP plus bimanual exam performed by experienced practitioner is appropriate.
4. In cases of pregnancy of unknown location, it is paramount to rule out ectopic pregnancy. If the uterus is empty on ultrasound and the serum beta hCG is > 2000, we should assume ectopic and refer accordingly. Other concerning symptoms would include vaginal bleeding, unilateral pelvic pain, shoulder tip pain, syncope. Interestingly, rates of ectopic pregnancy in women seeking MA are lower than in the general population (0.14% - 0.6% vs 2 - 2.4%).
5. Ovulation can occur as soon as 8 days post MA, so it is crucial to ensure that contraception conversations and planning occur either at the initial consultation or at follow up so as to prevent future unplanned/unwanted pregnancies.
6. Rh status should always be checked with initial bloodwork. While there is limited evidence for use of Rh immune globulin before 49 days after LMP (as fetal red blood cells express Rh antigens starting at 52 days after LMP), Rh immune globulin is safe and implications for subsequent pregnancies are significant so recommendation is to test and treat.

Resources:

Costescu D, Guilbert E, Bernardin J, et al. Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Canada. Medical abortion. J Obstet Gynaecol Can 2016;38:36689.

Accredited medical abortion training program. Ottawa: Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada. Available: <https://sogc.org/online-courses/courses.html/eventinfo/details/id/229>.

Canadian Abortion Providers Support: https://www.caps-cpca.ubc.ca/index.php/Main_Page