



*Second Edition*

# Woman-Centered, Comprehensive Abortion Care Reference Manual

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Ipas is a nonprofit organization that works around the world to increase women's ability to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights, especially the right to safe abortion. We seek to eliminate unsafe abortion and the resulting deaths and injuries and to expand women's access to comprehensive abortion care, including contraception and related reproductive health information and care. We strive to foster a legal, policy and social environment supportive of women's rights to make their own sexual and reproductive health decisions freely and safely.

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# Acknowledgments - Second edition

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# Acknowledgments - First edition

The first edition of this manual, *Woman-Centered Abortion Care: Reference Manual*, was written by Alyson G. Hyman and Laura Castleman, based in large part on the 2004 Ipas curriculum *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual* by Jeannine Herrick, Katherine Turner, Teresa McInerney and Laura Castleman.

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## About Ipas

Ipas is dedicated to the belief that all women, including young women, have a basic right to reproductive and sexual health care and to make their own reproductive and sexual choices. We work globally to increase access to high-quality reproductive health care and to improve women's ability to exercise their reproductive rights, especially their right to safe, legal abortion. We concentrate on preventing unsafe abortion, improving treatment of its complications and reducing its consequences. We strive for women's empowerment by increasing access to services that enhance their reproductive and sexual health.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and its five-year review (ICPD+5) provided a clear mandate to all signatory governments: make abortion care safe and accessible to women, including young women, in their communities. Ipas is dedicated to scaling up safe abortion services globally and to the full extent of local laws through training, service-delivery improvement, advocacy, linkages between communities and health systems, research and provision of reproductive health technologies.

**Scaling up** is defined as achieving universal access to high-quality, sustainable abortion-care services.

- Achieving universal access ensures that wherever a woman seeks help when she has unprotected sex, unwanted sex or an unwanted pregnancy, she will find the accessible care that she needs, whether it be information, referral, or clinical or related services. Universal access to abortion requires that every public and private facility in a country's health system is trained and equipped and has other measures in place to ensure that abortion-related care is accessible to women, including young women.
- Achieving sustainability in abortion-care services requires political leadership, policy development, financial resources and an adequate health-system infrastructure with trained health-care providers.

## About this manual

This reference manual is part of the Woman-Centered, Comprehensive Abortion Care curriculum which includes a trainer's manual and two reference manuals. There are two reference manuals for different legal, policy and service delivery settings. Woman-Centered, Comprehensive Abortion Care: Reference Manual reflects Ipas's comprehensive abortion care service delivery model, which encompasses induced abortion as well as treatment for incomplete abortion and complications of unsafely-induced abortion and postabortion contraception. Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual focuses

on postabortion care (PAC) only for countries where there are restrictions on addressing induced abortion or where there is a need to strengthen a particular component of PAC, such as postabortion contraception. There are legal indications for abortion in almost all countries in the world. Even in PAC programs, training and interventions should include abortion for legal indications. Those planning to conduct courses should obtain the Woman-Centered, Comprehensive Abortion Care: Trainer's Manual, which includes trainer instructions, activity materials and competency-based evaluation and other training tools and is written to address the needs of all adult-learning styles. This curriculum is useful for a broad audience, including sexual and reproductive health clinicians, trainers, program managers, health educators, social workers, outreach workers and other health-care workers. The curriculum brings a women's rights perspective to abortion-care training and service delivery.

This manual provides guidance to health-care personnel on improving the quality of care available to women seeking uterine evacuation services. It introduces the Ipas MVA Plus® aspirator and Ipas EasyGrip® cannulae and explains the manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) uterine evacuation procedure in detail. It also explains uterine evacuation methods that use the pills misoprostol and mifepristone (often called medical abortion). All the methods described here offer women safe, effective options for first-trimester uterine evacuation. All the clinical information in this manual was up to date at the time of submission for publication. For updated clinical guidance, please see the Clinical Updates for Reproductive Health series at Ipas's website, [www.ipas.org](http://www.ipas.org). The scope of this curriculum is first-trimester uterine evacuation. Although modified vacuum aspiration and medical methods can be used after the first trimester, second-trimester uterine evacuation is not covered in this curriculum. For this information, please search for "second-trimester" on Ipas's website at: [www.ipas.org](http://www.ipas.org).

This manual is not intended to serve as a self-guided learning tool. It is designed to be used as a participant's manual during trainer-facilitated courses that include simulated practice and clinical practice with clients under the supervision of an experienced clinical trainer; as a learner's resource to help refresh and strengthen participants' skills after completion of a course; and as a reference document for those seeking up-to-date information on comprehensive abortion care.

This manual provides in-depth clinical information on uterine evacuation with both MVA and pills. Whenever possible, a choice in uterine-evacuation methods should be made available to women. Information in this manual can be included in clinical protocols for abortion-related services at health-care centers and systems. In addition to clinical information, the modules address broader service delivery and access issues such as women's sexual and reproductive rights, including the rights of young women, client-provider communication, provider and community

partnerships, quality of care, and monitoring to improve services.

Ipas's woman-centered training strategy addresses the clinical and non-clinical aspects of care to ensure overall quality of abortion services. This approach requires learners to follow evidence-based clinical recommendations and also to reflect on values, attitudes and myths associated with abortion to ensure that services meet each woman's needs and circumstances, including those of young women. To ensure the training delivery is effective, Ipas recommends *Effective Training in Reproductive Health: Course Design and Delivery, Reference Manual and Trainer's Manual*, a curriculum designed to develop core training skills for professionals in various areas of reproductive health, including administration, policy and advocacy.

#### Ipas online clinical and service delivery updates and courses

*Clinical Updates for Reproductive Health* provide up-to-date, evidence-based recommendations and clinical protocols. Available at Ipas's website, [www.ipas.org](http://www.ipas.org)

*Ipas University (IpasU)* offers free, online, on-demand courses for reproductive health professionals on safe abortion care and postabortion care. These courses can be used for self-guided learning or as the online component of a blended learning model. Trainers may also want to use videos or other embedded materials during their training courses. For the IpasUniversity course catalog, see [www.ipas.org](http://www.ipas.org); to register and take courses, please go to [www.IpasU.org](http://www.IpasU.org).

*Medical Abortion Matters* is a biannual newsletter, created to share global perspectives on medical abortion access, news and research. Subscribe online at: [www.ipas.org/en/Pages/Newsletters.aspx](http://www.ipas.org/en/Pages/Newsletters.aspx)

*Service Delivery Matters* is a biannual newsletter sharing technical news and updates – including training and service delivery strategies and tools, clinical recommendations, programmatic interventions and research results. It is for health-care providers, trainers, administrators, technical specialists and others who can positively influence how comprehensive abortion care is delivered. Subscribe online at: [www.ipas.org/en/Pages/Newsletters.aspx](http://www.ipas.org/en/Pages/Newsletters.aspx)

## Second edition

This second edition of Ipas's *Woman-Centered, Comprehensive Abortion Care: Reference Manual and Trainer's Manual* is consistent with the World Health Organization's *Safe Abortion: Technical And Policy Guidance For Health Systems*, Second Edition (2012) and other important evidence-based resource documents and articles that have been published since the first edition of the curriculum. WHO develops recommendations based on evidence and expert opinion to reduce barriers to services, maximize access to care and optimize the quality of care that applies across health systems. Ipas similarly strives to accomplish these goals in all of

our guidance, training and learning materials.

Highlights of changes in the 2012 WHO guidance on safe abortion that are incorporated in this second edition of the woman-centered abortion care curriculum include:

- New data on the magnitude of unsafe abortion by region and the impact of legal restrictions on unsafe abortion, especially on young women and adolescents
- Evidence-based clinical guidelines, including pain management, new medical abortion regimens, guidance on second-trimester abortion and postabortion contraception
- Updated service delivery guidance, including safe abortion indicators, issues to consider for periodic evaluation, potential barriers to care and guidance for scaling up abortion services
- Application of a human rights framework for policymaking and legislation related to abortion

While WHO does not recommend requiring elements of care that may serve as barriers to service delivery or women's access, Ipas provides information and training on comprehensive abortion care so the full range of a woman's needs can be addressed within the context, standards and resources available in any given health system. For example, while WHO does not recommend a routine follow-up visit following uncomplicated surgical abortion or medical abortion using mifepristone followed by misoprostol, women should be advised that follow-up care is available to them if needed or desired. In this way, this curriculum is designed to assist providers in meeting the full range of women's needs when they are seen for abortion care, while still following the WHO and other guidelines based on evidence and expert opinion. Where local guidelines and WHO vary, providers should be aware of any differences.

This curriculum focuses on provision of abortion by trained health-care providers working in facilities in the formal health care system. There is increasing attention on making abortion information and drugs more widely available to women in real and virtual communities outside the formal health system, particularly in settings where women face serious risks due to lack of access to safe services. Ipas has policies, materials and programs to support these efforts. In this second edition, we have included some recommendations on how to increase access and improve linkages between communities and health facilities. (Please see Additional Resources, Community Linkages for more information.)

In this second edition, we address young women's unique needs in an effort to increase abortion service delivery and access. Each year, nearly 22 million women worldwide have an unsafe abortion, almost all of which occur in developing countries. The number of



adolescent women globally is approaching 300 million. Adolescents suffer disproportionately from the negative consequences of unsafe abortion. Forty-one per cent of unsafe abortions in developing regions are among young women aged 15–24 years, 15 percent among those aged 15–19 years and 26 percent among those aged 20–24 years. Women under the age of 20 make up 70 percent of all hospitalizations from unsafe abortion complications in sub-Saharan Africa. We note where there is evidence for any clinical or other differences for young versus adult women. Where it is relevant, we also note where there is a lack of evidence. Throughout this manual, we generally refer to young women (ages 10–24). Where the evidence specifically applies to adolescents (ages 10–19, per WHO), we use that term. (Please see Ipas’s *Abortion Care For Young Women: A Training Toolkit*, which is included on the *Woman-Centered, Comprehensive Abortion Care Trainer’s Manual CD-ROM* for more information on abortion care for young women.)

## Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) training

Health-care providers and trainers may hold beliefs and attitudes about abortion in general and preferred abortion methods and care options for women, including young women, specifically. Providers may have a preference for one method over another that may not be directly related to women’s clinical or life circumstances. They may direct women toward a particular method or regimen that doesn’t respect women’s needs and informed choice. Many providers are also accustomed to directly performing the abortion procedure. Unlike vacuum aspiration and depending on the protocol, MA can put abortion more in the control of the woman rather than the clinician. In many approved protocols, she can initiate and manage the abortion process at home or another place outside a health-care facility where it is most convenient and comfortable for her. Providers may question women’s ability to monitor the abortion process correctly. Providers’ discomfort, whether conscious or unconscious, with women managing the abortion themselves, particularly young women, can have an impact on whether and how abortion services are provided.

A woman-centered, comprehensive approach to care means that providers should:

- Identify their personal beliefs and values about abortion
- Separate their beliefs and values from those of their clients and focus on their clients’ needs
- Show respect to all women, regardless of their age, marital status, sexual and reproductive behaviors and decisions
- Treat women with empathy—understanding their feelings and perspectives and communicating this understanding

Values clarification can improve knowledge and attitudes towards abortion and help providers identify their beliefs and values, explore the consequences of their actions, learn how to separate their values from those of their clients and offer care in a way that shows respect for a woman's rights and decisions and upholds their professional responsibilities. Clinic managers and clinical mentors can help establish and maintain an environment of sensitivity and respect for women's needs through a variety of methods, including values clarification and other training, clinical coaching, supportive supervision, feedback from coworkers, anonymous evaluations and client surveys. (Please see Additional resources, Informed Consent, Information and Counseling.)

Activities from Ipas's VCAT toolkit and activities adapted for young women can be implemented to address beliefs, attitudes and practices related to abortion. Additional activities have also been adapted for second-trimester abortion and misoprostol for postabortion care. For more information, training activities and tools on abortion VCAT, please see:

- *Ipas's Abortion Attitude Transformation: A Values Clarification Toolkit For Global Audiences* at [www.ipas.org/en/Resources/Ipas%20Publications/Abortion-attitude-transformation--A-values-clarification-toolkit-for-global-audiences.aspx](http://www.ipas.org/en/Resources/Ipas%20Publications/Abortion-attitude-transformation--A-values-clarification-toolkit-for-global-audiences.aspx); and
- *Ipas's Abortion Attitude Transformation: Values Clarification Activities Adapted For Young Women* at [www.ipas.org/en/Resources/Ipas%20Publications/Abortion-attitude-transformation--Values-clarification-activities-adapted-for-young-women.aspx](http://www.ipas.org/en/Resources/Ipas%20Publications/Abortion-attitude-transformation--Values-clarification-activities-adapted-for-young-women.aspx)

## References

Descriptions of individual studies, direct quotes, and resources and tools adapted from a particular document are cited in the text. All other references for the module are listed after the main text of each module. Additional resources for each module are listed at the back of the manual. All websites were last accessed September 2012.

Shah, I. H., & Åhman, E. (2012). Unsafe abortion differentials in 2008 by age and developing country region: high burden among young women. *Reproductive Health Matters*, 20(39), 169-173.

Turner, K. L., Andersen, K. L., Pearson, E., & George, A. (2013). *Values Clarification to Improve Abortion Knowledge, Attitudes and Intentions: Global Evaluation Results*. Manuscript submitted for publication. Ipas.

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World Health Organization (2012). *Safe abortion: Technical and policy guidance for health systems*, (Second Edition ed.). Geneva: World Health Organization.

For information on and to order MVA instruments, medical abortion medications, and other reproductive health technologies, please contact WomanCare Global by email at [customerservice@womancareglobal.org](mailto:customerservice@womancareglobal.org) or by phone at +44.20.3056.7758

To order copies of this manual or other Ipas resources, contact Ipas at:

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Or visit [www.ipas.org](http://www.ipas.org)

# Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	i
About Ipas.....	iii
About this manual .....	iii
Second edition .....	v
Values Clarification Attitude Transformation (VCAT) training .....	vii
References.....	viii
<b>Overview and Guiding Principles .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	1
2.0 Key elements of woman-centered, comprehensive abortion care .....	3
3.0 Upholding women’s rights in an abortion care setting .....	6
4.0 Summary .....	9
<b>Reproductive Rights.....</b>	<b>11</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	11
2.0 Reproductive rights .....	12
3.0 Barriers to delivery and access to legal abortion .....	17
4.0 Providers as advocates .....	21
5.0 Considerations for postabortion care.....	22
6.0 Summary .....	22
Appendix A: Treaty monitoring committees.....	27
<b>Community Linkages .....</b>	<b>29</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	29
2.0 Community assessment .....	31
3.0 Community-based interventions.....	32
4.0 Considerations for postabortion care.....	35
5.0 Summary .....	36
Appendix A: Potential audiences and topics for information, education and communication on abortion .....	38
<b>Uterine Evacuation Methods .....</b>	<b>41</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	41
2.0 Vacuum aspiration.....	43

3.0 Medical methods .....	45
4.0 Other methods: sharp curettage .....	48
5.0 Considerations for postabortion care .....	48
6.0 Summary .....	49
Appendix A: Vacuum aspiration and medical abortion for first trimester induced abortion.....	57
Appendix B: PAC treatment options .....	59
<b>Monitoring to Improve Services .....</b>	<b>61</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	61
2.0 What is monitoring and why is it important? .....	62
3.0 Keys to effective monitoring systems .....	63
4.0 Adverse event monitoring .....	64
5.0 Four steps of effective monitoring .....	65
6.0 Considerations for postabortion care .....	68
7.0 Summary .....	69
Appendix A: Written consent form – interview .....	71
Appendix B: Written consent form – observation .....	72
Appendix C: Client record-review checklist for comprehensive abortion care .....	73
<b>Informed Consent, Information and Counseling .....</b>	<b>75</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	75
2.0 Pregnancy options .....	76
3.0 Voluntary informed consent.....	76
4.0 Procedure options .....	77
5.0 Counseling in the abortion setting .....	79
6.0 Privacy and confidentiality .....	80
7.0 Values and empathy.....	81
8.0 Effective communication .....	82
9.0 Referrals .....	84
10.0 Closing a counseling session .....	85
11.0 Special considerations .....	85
12.0 Considerations for postabortion care.....	86
13.0 Summary .....	87
Appendix A: Special considerations .....	90
<b>Contraceptive Services .....</b>	<b>93</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	93
2.0 Contraceptive counseling and method provision after an abortion .....	95

3.0 Models of service delivery .....	95
4.0 Women’s contraceptive needs following an abortion .....	96
5.0 Rights to privacy, confidentiality and informed choice.....	97
6.0 Involvement of partners.....	98
7.0 Essential steps for contraceptive counseling.....	98
8.0 Medical eligibility for contraceptive use after a uterine evacuation .....	100
9.0 Emergency contraception.....	102
10.0 Special contraceptive counseling considerations.....	103
11.0 Considerations for postabortion care.....	104
12.0 Summary .....	104
Appendix A: Individual factors and counseling recommendations and rationales.....	108
Appendix B: Guidelines for selection of contraception by method .....	109
Appendix C: Special contraceptive counseling considerations.....	113
<b>Infection Prevention.....</b>	<b>119</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	119
2.0 Infection transmission. ....	120
3.0 Elements of infection prevention.....	121
4.0 Management of occupational exposure.....	127
5.0 Considerations for postabortion care.....	127
6.0 Summary .....	127
Appendix A: Sharps container .....	129
Appendix B: Mixing instructions to produce 0.5% chlorine solution.....	130
<b>Clinical Assessment.....</b>	<b>131</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	131
2.0 Client history.....	132
3.0 Physical examination.....	134
4.0 Laboratory tests .....	137
5.0 Ultrasound exam and ectopic pregnancy .....	138
6.0 Reproductive-tract infections .....	139
7.0 Special considerations during clinical assessment.....	139
8.0 Considerations for postabortion care.....	140
9.0 Summary .....	141
Appendix A: Provision of antibiotics.....	144
Appendix B: Sample client intake form .....	145
Appendix C: Diagnosis and treatment of types of abortion.....	146

<b>Ipas MVA Instruments.....</b>	<b>147</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	147
2.0 Instrument features and use .....	147
3.0 Processing and care of Ipas instruments .....	152
4.0 Summary .....	161
Appendix A: Comparison of Ipas instruments .....	163
Appendix B: Methods for processing Ipas MVA Plus® aspirators and adaptors and IpasEasyGrip® cannulae .....	164
<b>Uterine Evacuation Procedure with Ipas MVA Plus .....</b>	<b>169</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	169
2.0 Preparation .....	170
3.0 Pain management.....	171
4.0 Uterine evacuation procedure .....	174
5.0 Post-procedure care .....	180
6.0 Follow-up care .....	184
7.0 Special considerations: Young women .....	185
8.0 Considerations for postabortion care.....	185
9.0 Summary .....	185
Appendix A: Pharmacologic approaches to pain management during MVA.....	191
Appendix B: Equipment and supplies for uterine evacuation procedure with Ipas MVA Plus.....	196
Appendix C: Cervical preparation before first-trimester vacuum aspiration.....	197
Appendix D: Sample clinical referral form .....	198
Appendix E: Discharge information sheet .....	199
Appendix F: Sample follow-up visit medical form .....	200
Appendix G: Tips for using the Ipas MVA Plus.....	202
<b>Uterine Evacuation With Medical Methods.....</b>	<b>205</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	205
2.0 Preparation .....	206
3.0 Recommended mifepristone plus misoprostol regimens.....	210
4.0 Recommended misoprostol-only regimens.....	214
5.0 Expected effects .....	215
6.0 Potential side effects .....	217
7.0 Complications .....	218
8.0 Instructions prior to leaving the clinic.....	219
9.0 Follow-up care .....	220
10.0 Special considerations: Young women .....	222

11.0 Considerations for postabortion care.....	222
12.0 Summary .....	223
Appendix A: Illustration of 8-9 week embryo to scale.....	230
<b>Complications .....</b>	<b>231</b>
1.0 Introduction .....	231
2.0 Presenting complications.....	232
3.0 Procedural complications .....	232
4.0 Pregnancy-related complications .....	232
5.0 Complications of vacuum aspiration or medical abortion.....	232
6.0 Complications of vacuum aspiration.....	236
7.0 Complications of medical abortion .....	238
8.0 Complications in women who present for postabortion care .....	239
9.0 Emergency response .....	240
10.0 Post-procedure care .....	242
11.0 Serious adverse event monitoring .....	242
12.0 Considerations for postabortion care.....	245
13.0 Summary .....	245
<b>Additional Resources .....</b>	<b>249</b>
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>257</b>

## Ipas abortion-related training and service delivery curricula and other resources CD-Rom – Relevant materials for this curriculum:

### *Ipas Woman-Centered, Comprehensive Abortion Care*

*Woman-Centered, Comprehensive Abortion Care: Reference Manual, Second Edition (pdf file)*

*Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual, Second Edition (pdf file)*

*Woman-Centered, Comprehensive Abortion Care: Trainer’s Manual, Second Edition (pdf file)*

Additional module activities

Woman-Centered, Comprehensive Abortion Care PowerPoint presentation (ppt file)

Woman-Centered Postabortion Care PowerPoint presentation (ppt file)

Training materials: certificate of competence, certificate of completion, daily evaluation, end-of-course evaluation and training schedule (doc files)

Processing Ipas MVA Plus aspirators and Easy Grip cannulae wallchart

Steps for performing MVA wallchart

### *Ipas Medical Abortion Training Package*

*Medical Abortion Study Guide, Second Edition (pdf file)*



*Medical Abortion Training Guide, Second Edition* (pdf file)

Medical Abortion Powerpoint presentation (ppt file)

Quiz show PowerPoint and flash plug-in (ppt and swf file)

#### *Supply Guidance and Tools*

MA supply guidance tool (zip file)

*MVA Sustainable Supply Workbook* (pdf file)

*Planning for Sustainable Supply of MVA Instruments: A Guide for Program Managers, Second Edition* (pdf)

*Stocking Facilities with MVA Equipment According to Caseload* (pdf file)

#### *Other Training Curricula and Resources*

*Abortion Care for Young Women: A Training Toolkit* (pdf and ppt files)

*Effective Training in Reproductive Health: Course Design and Delivery. Reference Manual* (pdf file)

*Effective Training in Reproductive Health: Course Design and Delivery. Trainer's Manual* (pdf file)

*Effective Training in Reproductive Health: Course Design and Delivery.*  
PowerPoint presentation (ppt file)

*Abortion Attitude Transformation: A Global Values Clarification Toolkit* (pdf and ppt files)

*Providers as Advocates for Safe Abortion Care: A Trainer's Manual* (pdf and ppt)

*WHO Safe Abortion Care: Technical and Policy Guidance for Health Systems, Second Edition*



# Overview and Guiding Principles

---

## 1.0 Introduction

Woman-centered, comprehensive abortion care (CAC) is an approach to abortion services that takes into account a woman's individual physical and emotional health needs and circumstances and ability to access care. It includes induced abortion; treatment of incomplete, missed or unsafe abortion; compassionate counseling; contraceptive services; related sexual and reproductive health services provided on site or via referrals to accessible facilities and community-service provider partnerships.

Based on a human rights framework, a woman has an individual right to abortion and to life-saving care for treatment of abortion complications. When referring to women's right to abortion, Ipas includes women of all ages, including young women and unmarried women. The conditions that enable or hinder her access to safe abortion determine her ability to exercise that right. These conditions include:

- A supportive legal system
- The government and public's commitment to women's health
- The freedom of women to exercise their sexual and reproductive rights
- Adequate infrastructure and economic resources for the health system to serve all women in need
- Social and cultural support of women's rights

A woman's right to high-quality abortion-related care is fulfilled only when:

- She is provided as many choices as possible.
- She can access services.
- She is offered respectful, non-stigmatizing, confidential care.

In legally-restricted settings, induced abortion should be offered for all legal indications to the fullest extent of the law.

- *"The number of declarations and resolutions signed by countries over the past two decades indicates a growing consensus that unsafe abortion is an important cause of maternal death that can, and should, be prevented through the promotion of sexuality education, family planning, safe abortion services to the full extent of the law, and post-abortion care in all cases. The consensus also exists that post-abortion care should always be provided, and that expanding access to modern contraception is critical to the prevention of unplanned pregnancy and unsafe abortion. Thus, the public health rationale for preventing unsafe abortion is clear and unambiguous."* (WHO, 2012)
- *"When performed by skilled providers using correct medical techniques and drugs, and under hygienic conditions, induced abortion is a very safe medical procedure."*
- *"In countries where abortion is legally highly restricted, unequal access to safe abortion may result. In such contexts, abortions that meet safety requirements can become the privilege of the rich, while poor women have little choice but to resort to unsafe providers, which may cause disability and death."* (WHO, 2012)

This module provides the foundation for the curriculum. It is recommended as a prerequisite for health-care providers offering first-trimester abortion-related services and provides an introduction to the following concepts:

- Comprehensive abortion care
- Client rights

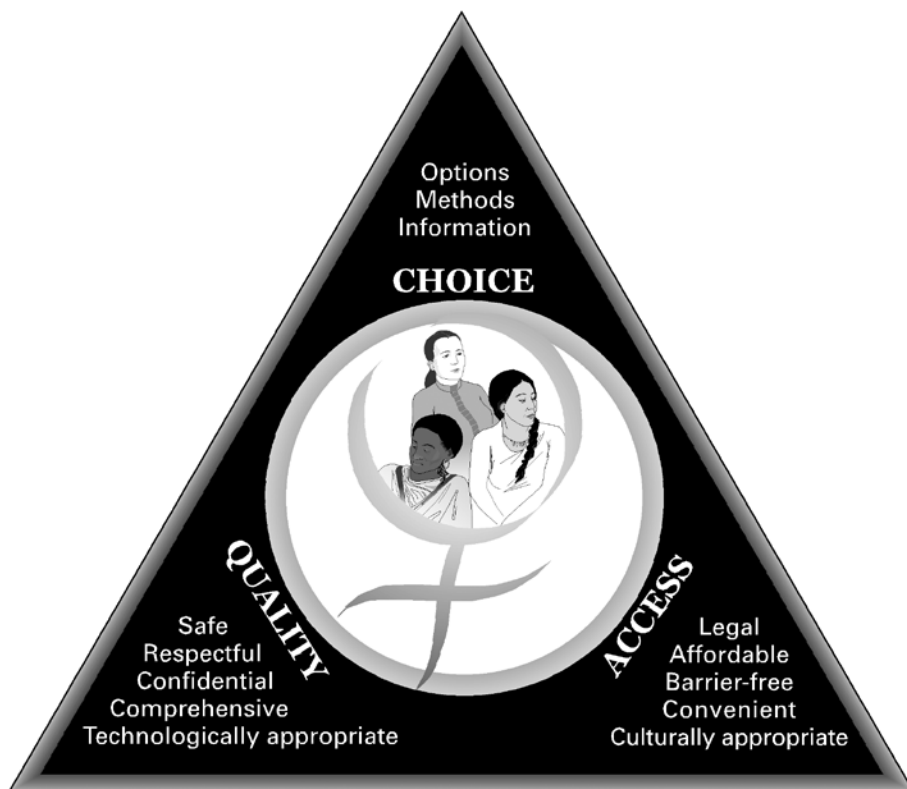
- Provider ethics

More information on delivering care based on these concepts is provided in subsequent modules. Health-care workers in environments where abortion is prohibited or highly restrictive should refer to the companion Ipas curriculum, *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual*, Second Edition, which provides information on caring for women experiencing complications resulting from unsafe abortion.

## 2.0 Key elements of woman-centered, comprehensive abortion care

Woman-centered, comprehensive abortion care includes a range of medical and related health services and is comprised of three key elements:

1. Choice
2. Access
3. Quality



Framework for woman-centered care

## 2.1 Choice

With regard to sexual and reproductive rights, choice means that others should not interfere with a woman's decisions about her body and health.

Choice means that it is a woman's right to determine:

- If and when to become pregnant
- Whether to continue or terminate a pregnancy
- Which available abortion procedures, contraceptives, providers and facilities to use

Women's choices must be informed by complete and accurate information. They must also have the opportunity to ask questions and express concerns to providers. To be woman-centered in their care, health workers must recognize and respond to a woman's right to choices, regardless of her age or marital status.

Many women needing abortion-related care are in vulnerable situations. They may be at the mercy of family members who coerce them into having an abortion or continuing a pregnancy. In some settings, health providers may agree to provide an abortion or postabortion care only in exchange for high fees or insist that the woman use a particular contraceptive method. Such constrained or restricted choices compromise the concept of choice and violate a woman's human rights, placing her health and well-being at risk.

## 2.2 Access

A woman's access to services is determined in part by the availability of trained, technically competent providers who:

- Use appropriate clinical technologies
- Are easily reached in local communities
- Have many service-delivery points

Access is hampered if the time and distance required to reach a health facility are excessive. Health systems can focus resources on training public and private sector providers at the local level. Community groups can demand that the health system offer the type of care community members want and need. Links between the public and private sectors can also offer a supportive referral network for providers in areas where abortion laws are restrictive.

A woman has better access to comprehensive abortion care when:

- Services are affordable and delivered in a timely manner without undue logistical and administrative obstacles
- Emergency services are available regardless of the woman's

ability to pay

- She is not denied services based on her economic or marital status, age, educational or social background, religious or political views, race or ethnic group or sexual preference
- Providers display respectful, caring, empathetic attitudes

Access is also determined by cultural factors. In many societies, women have less access to education and to health and social services than men. Women are often dependent on others for financial support. For example, a woman who has little control over family resources may experience difficulty finding transportation to a health-care facility and paying for her visit.

More subtle factors that can limit women's access to services include:

- Prioritizing male children's health and needs
- Excessive influence of in-laws
- Societal expectations for women to produce children, sometimes starting from an early age
- Stigmatization of women's sexuality, abortion and reproductive health-seeking behaviors
- Cultural norms that cause women, particularly young women, to feel embarrassed to seek reproductive health care, especially from a male provider
- Forms or processes that unintentionally exclude some women, such as young women or women who partner with women

Long-term sustainability of services is critical for high-quality care. To sustain abortion services, health systems must have:

- Provider training programs which educate about local referral services
- Obtainable, reliable and adequate supplies of equipment and medications
- Effective management, monitoring and evaluation of services
- Community and service-provider linkages

## 2.3 Quality

Some fundamental aspects of high-quality care are:

- Care that is tailored to social circumstances and individual needs
- Information and counseling that supports fully informed

choices, including for young women who may need more information or time to make an informed choice

- Internationally recommended medical technologies, particularly manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) and medical methods
- Appropriate clinical standards and protocols for infection prevention, pain management, and managing complications
- Contraceptive services and a range of contraceptive method choices at the time of abortion-related services to help women prevent unwanted pregnancies and ensure healthy spacing of children
- Reproductive and other health services at the time of abortion-related services, such as screening, diagnosis and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV, and screening and counseling for sexual violence
- Providers ensure that the unique needs of young women are addressed
- Confidentiality, privacy, respect and positive interactions between women and staff of the health facility, regardless of age or marital status
- Systems are in place for monitoring adverse events
- Systems are in place for quality improvement including involvement from community members

### 3.0 Upholding women's rights in an abortion-care setting

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) has produced a formal statement declaring sexual and reproductive rights to be essential components of human rights. The 12 principles are as follows:

1. *The Right to Life.* No woman's life should be put at risk by reason of pregnancy.
2. *The Right to Liberty and Security of the Person.* No woman should be forced into pregnancy, sterilization or abortion.
3. *The Right to Equality and to Be Free from All Forms of Discrimination.* This extends to women's sexual and reproductive lives.
4. *The Right to Privacy.* All sexual and reproductive health-care services should be confidential. All women have the right to make independent reproductive choices.
5. *The Right to Freedom of Thought.* This includes freedom



from the restrictive interpretation of religious beliefs and customs as tools to curtail freedom of thought on sexual- and reproductive-health care.

6. *The Right to Information and Education.* This includes information and education about sexual and reproductive health, access to full information, and free and informed consent.
7. *The Right to Choose Whether or Not to Marry and to Found and Plan a Family.*
8. *The Right to Decide Whether or When to Have Children.*
9. *The Right to Health Care and Health Protection.* This includes the right to the highest possible quality of care and freedom from traditional practices that are harmful to health.
10. *The Right to the Benefits of Scientific Progress.* This includes the right to new reproductive-health technologies that are safe, effective and acceptable.
11. *The Right to Freedom of Assembly and Political Participation.* This includes the right of all persons to seek to influence communities and governments to prioritize sexual and reproductive health and rights.
12. *The Right to Be Free From Torture and Ill-Treatment.* This includes the right to protection from violence, sexual exploitation and abuse.

(Adapted from International Planned Parenthood Federation, 1996)

### 3.1 Values, attitudes, empathy and respect

Health-care workers must separate their personal beliefs from their professional practices and treat all women equally, regardless of age or marital status. Health-care workers need to treat their clients with *empathy*, the ability to understand another person's feelings and point of view and to communicate this understanding.

Health-care workers' attitudes toward women have a strong influence. Positive encounters with empathetic, respectful health-care workers heighten women's satisfaction with their care, increase their adherence to medical-care instructions and make them more likely to trust health-care workers and seek appropriate medical care in the future. Positive encounters also are a foundation for good relationships between providers and the community they serve, which can create a supportive environment for their work.

Comprehensive abortion-care service providers should strive to:

- Identify their values and attitudes regarding sexuality and reproductive-health, and be aware that their values about young women's sexuality may require special attention

- Separate their values from those of their clients
- Recognize how their attitudes can negatively or positively affect client interactions and quality of care
- Ensure that they are able to provide compassionate and empathetic care

Clinic managers can help establish and maintain an environment of sensitivity and respect for women's needs through training, supportive supervision, feedback from coworkers and anonymous evaluations.

## 3.2 Interaction and communication

Positive interactions and communications between health-care workers and clients are essential to high-quality medical care. It is important not to make assumptions about women seeking these services. Health-care workers need to think, speak and act as neutrally as possible, adapting their behavior and language according to cues given by each woman. This is particularly true for young women. Because abortion is a highly stigmatized area of health-care, providers need to take extra measures to ensure they are not contributing to further stigmatization through their actions and words.

To initiate positive interactions, providers can:

- Speak respectfully
- Listen attentively
- Ask thoughtful questions
- Give accurate information and answers using simple language the woman understands
- Show empathy and kindness to each woman in their care

Simple considerations—such as apologizing for a long wait or allowing the woman to remain clothed until the physical assessment is about to begin—can improve the overall quality of a woman's visit.

## 3.3 Privacy and confidentiality

It is essential that abortion-related counseling and care are private and confidential.

- Managers should post confidentiality policies in client-care areas.
- Staff should explain the privacy policies to each woman.
- Administrators should establish and enforce strict confidentiality policies and procedures that apply to all

health-care workers.

- Access to client information should be secured.
- Audio and visual privacy should be established before talking to or examining the woman.

### 3.4 Voluntary, informed consent

Health-care workers should explain the woman's condition and options to her in non-technical language and obtain her voluntary, informed consent prior to initiating care. Health-care workers should not proceed with medical services until the woman has given her informed consent and signed a written consent form. Young women are capable of making the decision to terminate a pregnancy. In some settings, it is appropriate and common to provide witnessed verbal consent in lieu of written consent. Obtaining informed consent should not delay emergency procedures needed to save a woman's life.

## 4.0 Summary

- This module serves as the recommended prerequisite for this curriculum.
- All women, including young women, have the right to high-quality, comprehensive abortion care.
- Woman-centered, comprehensive abortion care includes: induced abortion to the full extent of the law; treatment of incomplete, missed or unsafe abortion; compassionate counseling; contraceptive services; related sexual and reproductive health services provided on site or via referrals to accessible facilities and community-service provider partnerships.
- Choice, access and quality are three key elements of woman-centered, comprehensive abortion care.
- Women's choices must be informed by complete and accurate information.
- Health-care workers must understand the concept of women's rights in order to conduct professional interactions and to provide compassionate, high-quality care.
- Health-care workers should exhibit empathy and respect for women and ensure privacy and confidentiality.
- Health-care workers should explain the woman's condition and options to her in non-technical language and obtain her voluntary, informed consent prior to initiating care.
- Health-care workers must be trained, technically competent,

and use appropriate clinical technologies in order to provide high-quality care.

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# Reproductive Rights

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## Key topics in this module:

- International human-rights framework for abortion and postabortion care
- Barriers to safe, legal abortion services

## 1.0 Introduction

Several international human-rights documents have addressed sexual and reproductive health. The first section of this module presents information on these documents. The second part of this module addresses obstacles that prevent women from accessing safe, legal abortion, and presents approaches health-care providers can take to overcome those obstacles. (Please see Additional resources, Reproductive Rights.)

## 2.0 Reproductive rights

*“Reproductive health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in all matters relating to the reproductive system and to its functions and processes. ... Reproductive rights embrace certain human rights that are already recognized in national laws, international human-rights documents and other consensus documents. These rights rest on the recognition of the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely and responsibly the number, spacing and timing of their children and to have the information and means to do so, and the right to attain the highest standard of sexual and reproductive health. It also includes their right to make decisions concerning reproduction free of discrimination, coercion and violence, as expressed in human-rights documents.”*

This comprehensive definition of reproductive health and rights was agreed upon at the 1994 UN International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). It provides a framework for legitimizing and protecting women’s reproductive rights.

Specific rights that support abortion-related care include:

- The right to decide whether and when to have children. Women should have access to the contraceptive methods they want and to decide when to terminate a pregnancy.
- The right to life. Women should not die due to unsafe abortion.
- The right to health. Women should not suffer short- and long-term injuries due to unsafe abortion.
- The right to dignity and bodily integrity. Young women should be able to consent to their own uterine evacuation procedure.
- The right to freedom from discrimination. For example, uterine evacuation is a procedure only women and not men need, so it should not be unduly restricted.
- The right to freedom from inhumane and degrading treatment. For example, this is violated when abortion or postabortion care is denied or provided in a judgmental and punitive manner.
- The right to the benefits of scientific progress. For example, this right is upheld when providers are able to use WHO-recommended uterine evacuation methods.
- The right to freedom of opinion and expression. For example, this right is upheld when people are able to voice their support for safe abortion care.

## 2.1 Treaties and agreements

The principles of universal human rights are set out in international conventions, also called treaties, covenants and pacts. Governments - referred to as States in the human rights systems - sign and ratify international conventions, which legally bind them to enforce the convention's purposes and objectives. Various conventions oblige governments to respect, protect, and fulfill adult and young women's sexual and reproductive rights. The following, widely-ratified conventions provide the basis for women's, including young women's, sexual and reproductive rights within a human-rights framework:

- The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (CCPR)
- The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
- The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) and Its Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa
- The American Convention on Human Rights
- The Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment and Eradication of Violence Against Women (Belém do Pará)

Advocates can use these conventions to recommend health care policies that protect women's reproductive and sexual health.

Treaty Monitoring Committees oversee State compliance with international conventions. They issue General Recommendations and General Comments to assist States in fulfilling their obligations under a convention.

(Please see Appendix A: Treaty monitoring committees.)

## 2.2 Global commitments

Consensus statements and declarations from international conferences convened by the UN and affiliated agencies are valuable resources for furthering women's, including young women's, sexual and reproductive health and rights. Some Treaty Monitoring Committees use them as part of a framework for evaluating State compliance with human-rights agreements.

Several landmark international conferences in the 1990s addressed women's reproductive health and safe abortion care.

- *ICPD, Cairo, 1994*: For the first time, policymakers jointly addressed unsafe abortion as a public-health concern and called for safe abortion in instances in which abortion is permitted by law. They outlined steps to improve the safety of and access to abortion services.
- *UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 1995*: Policymakers called on governments to "consider reviewing laws containing punitive measures against women who have undergone illegal abortions"
- *ICPD five-year review (ICPD +5), 1999*: Governments agreed that adequate access to services must accompany laws and policies that permit safe, legal abortion, stating that "In circumstances where abortion is not against the law, health systems should train and equip health-service providers and should take other measures to ensure that such abortion is safe and accessible. Additional measures should be taken to safeguard women's health."

States also adopt resolutions at the Human Rights Council, which is responsible for strengthening the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. Such resolutions contain recommendations for State actions and are often relevant to work on reproductive choice.

## 2.3 Statements from policymaking bodies

Major policymaking bodies can set standards that help advance women's reproductive rights. Although such statements are not legally binding, they convey the authority and consensus of respected health-care experts.

### *UN agencies*

- *Report of the Independent Expert Review Group on Information and Accountability for Women's and Children's Health, September 2012*: Notes that safe abortion services is one of several neglected areas that are critical to reaching the Millennium Development Goals for child survival and maternal and reproductive health, and states that "the evidence is overwhelming" that the goals will not be reached "unless the huge burden of unsafe abortion is confronted by public health strategies of harm reduction – namely, the provision of family planning and safe abortion services."
- *UN Commission On Population And Development, Report On The Forty-Fifth Session, Resolution 27, April 2012*: "Urges Governments and development partners, including through international cooperation, in order to improve maternal



health, reduce maternal and child morbidity and mortality, and prevent and respond to HIV and AIDS, to strengthen health systems and ensure that they prioritize universal access to sexual and reproductive information and health-care services, including...in circumstances where abortion is not against the law, training and equipping health-service providers and other measures to ensure that such abortion is safe and accessible...."

- *WHO Safe Abortion Guidance*, Second Edition, 2012 (updated from 2003 edition): States that almost every death and disability resulting from an unsafe abortion could be prevented through sexuality education, contraceptive counseling and services, legal induced abortion and care for complications of abortion. It provides an overview of preferred abortion methods, addresses health-system issues, and reviews policy, legal and human rights considerations related to safe abortion.
- *In Pursuit Of Justice*, UN Women, 2012: Addresses sex-selective abortion, stating: "Women often resort to sex selection under immense social and family pressure to produce sons. Discriminatory social norms, patrilineal inheritance and the reliance on sons for economic support in old age lead families to place higher value on having boys. Governments have an obligation to address this systemic discrimination, without exposing women to the risk of serious injury or death by denying them access to safe abortion." The agency further reviews legislation in various countries that has increased women's access to safe legal abortions.
- *The UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health*, UN, 2011: Advises that "Women are entitled to equal health protection afforded by the State as part of the right to health. Regardless of the legal status of abortion, women are entitled to receive access to goods, services and information related to sexual and reproductive health. In particular, they are entitled to have access to quality health services for the management of complications, including those arising from unsafe abortions and miscarriages. Such care must be unconditional even where the threat of criminal punishment is present, and it should not be contingent on a woman's cooperation in any subsequent criminal prosecution, or used as evidence in any proceeding against her or the abortion providers. Laws must not require health-care personnel to report women for abortion-related care to law enforcement or judicial authorities."
- *Essential Interventions, Commodities and Guidelines for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health*, jointly published by PMNCH, WHO and Aga Khan University, 2011: Identifies availability and provision of safe abortion

care when indicated and provision of postabortion care as evidence-based interventions for reducing maternal deaths.

- *Community Innovation*, UNAIDS, 2011: Reports on community innovation in achieving sexual and reproductive health and rights for women and girls through the HIV response, highlights work done in Malawi, Namibia and South Africa to address abortion with community members.
- *UN Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health*, 2010: States that guaranteed benefits should include "safe abortion services (when abortion is not prohibited by law)" as well as other reproductive health services.
- *Consensus for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health*, 2009: States that action to improve maternal, newborn and child health can be accomplished via health systems and includessafe abortion services, when abortion is legal.
- *Joint and Co-Sponsored UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights Guidelines on HIV*, 2006: Acknowledges that women with HIV/AIDS are entitled to exercise their right to access abortion services.
- *The Committee on the Rights of the Child*, UN, 2003: Specifies that governments should "provide access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, contraception and safe abortion services where abortion is not against the law [to girls and young women]"
- *Making Pregnancy Safer Initiative*, 2000: One of the selected strategies is to "establish (or update) national policy and standards for family planning, induced abortion (where not against the law), maternal and newborn care (including post-abortion care), and develop a combination of regulatory measures to support these policies and standards."
- *Millennium Development Goals, 2000*: The first target of Millennium Development Goal 5 is to reduce by three-quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio; the second is to achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health.

### Professional associations

- *Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP)*, 2012: Abortion care is a critical component of comprehensive reproductive health care, and ARHP supports a woman's right to choose to have an abortion. ARHP also opposes any judicial, legislative, or administrative attempt at the local, state, or federal levels to ban any abortion procedure or medical procedure to terminate a pregnancy.
- *International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics*

*(FIGO) Consensus Statement on Uterine Evacuation, 2011:*

“Vacuum aspiration and medications for uterine evacuation should be introduced instead of sharp curettage to improve the safety and quality of abortion services for women,” an important recommendation to ensure that women have the right to the benefits of scientific progress.

- *Council of the International Confederation of Midwives, 2008:* Strengthened previous 1996 and 2002 position statements to ensure that a woman who seeks or requires abortion-related services is entitled to be provided with such services by midwives, including safe abortion according to the laws and policies of her country.
- *International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), Code of Ethics: FIGO Professional and Ethical Responsibilities Concerning Sexual and Reproductive Rights, paragraph A-5, 2003:* “Conscientious objection to procedures does not absolve physicians from taking immediate steps in an emergency to ensure that the necessary treatment is given without delay.”
- Also from the *FIGO Code of Ethics, paragraph B-4:* Assure that adolescent women are treated without age discrimination, according to their evolving capacities – rather than merely their chronological age – in facilitating them to make free and informed decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive health.”
- *Latin American Federation of Obstetric and Gynecological Societies (FLASOG), 2002:* The Federation adopted recommendations calling on regional obstetrics and gynecology societies to broaden the indications under which abortion is legally permitted to include fetal malformation and life-threatening conditions.
- *International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), Ethical Guidelines Regarding Induced Abortion for Non-Medical Reasons, 1999:* “...[A]fter appropriate counseling, a woman [has] the right to have access to medical or surgical induced abortion, and that the health-care services [have] an obligation to provide such services as safely as possible”

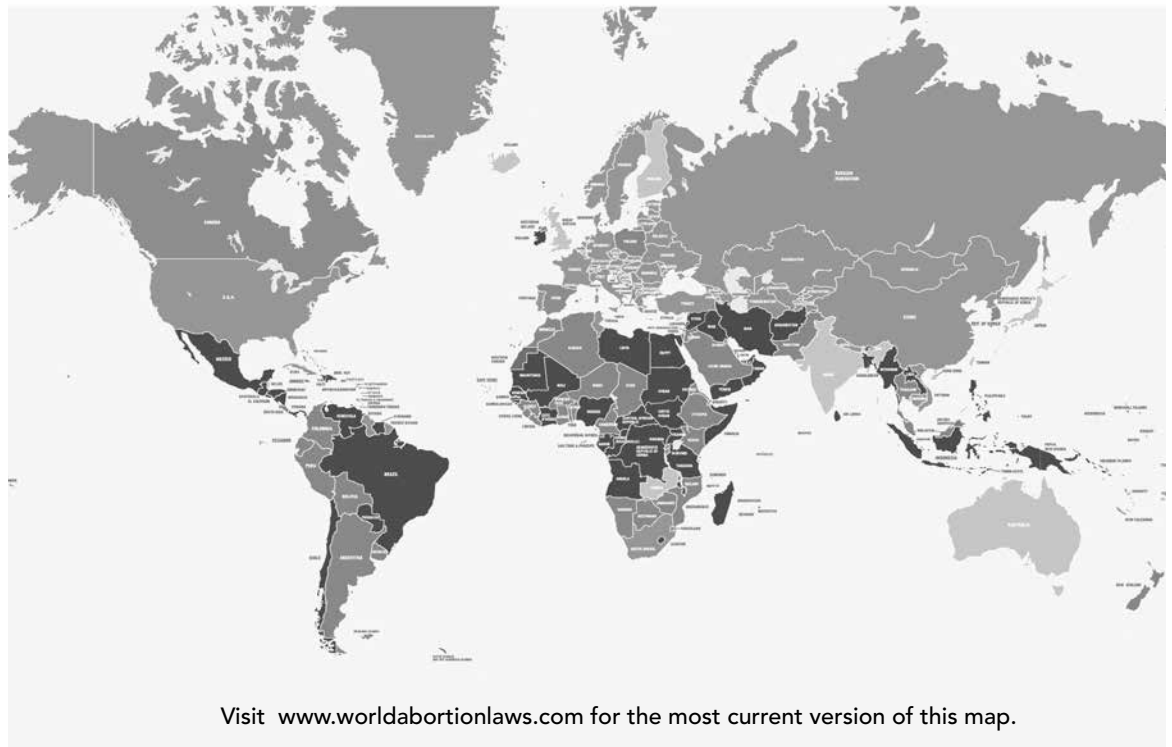
(Please see Additional resources, Reproductive Rights.)

### 3.0 Barriers to delivery and access to legal abortion

Almost all countries permit abortion in some circumstances, and most permit abortion to save a woman’s life and to preserve her health.

Even in contexts where it is legal, abortion is often subject to legal or regulatory restrictions that may limit access. Following are some of the barriers that women may face and possible actions that providers can take to reduce barriers to abortion care.

## World Abortion Laws



I	TO SAVE THE WOMAN'S LIFE OR PROHIBITED ALTOGETHER	III	SOCIOECONOMIC GROUNDS	UNAVAILABLE
II	TO PRESERVE HEALTH	IV	WITHOUT RESTRICTION AS TO REASON	

Center for Reproductive Rights, 2011.

### 3.1 Narrow interpretations of the law

The Vietnam law on protection of people's health, adopted in 1989, states:

*"All people are free to select and use their contraceptive measures, all acts of obstruction or compulsion in the implementation of family planning shall be prohibited; women have the right, out of their own free will, to have abortion(s) and to receive gynecological diagnosis and treatment and physical examinations during pregnancy and medical service when they are delivered at health facilities."*

- Vietnam Ministry of Health, 2002

Access to legal abortion depends largely on the ways in which laws are interpreted. Health systems often interpret laws very narrowly. In addition, providers or health systems may place tighter restrictions on abortion than are legally required or medically necessary. For example, although spousal consent for an abortion may not be included in the law, it may be added as part of official policy. Examples of laws that clearly state women's rights also exist, as is the case in Vietnam (see box).

Without clear guidance from policy and regulatory agencies such as a Ministry of Health, key stakeholders including providers may have difficulty interpreting the law. For example, laws that allow abortion to preserve a woman's health may be narrowly interpreted by providers to allow abortion only when the pregnancy would result in harm to a woman's physical health. However, almost every country in the world accepts the WHO definition of health, "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being..." and should take into account a woman's social and mental well-being when assessing risk to health.

Ministries of Health should work with medical professionals to

develop and disseminate national clinical standards and guidelines that help ensure service delivery to the full extent of the law. If no national guidelines exist, health-care facilities should ensure that they have their own clear guidelines and protocols.

### 3.2 Restrictions that affect access

In addition to narrow interpretation of the law, there are several restrictions that may affect a woman's access to abortion. These restrictions can be found in laws, regulations, policies and practices. A few of these restrictions are:

- Lack of access to information on safe abortion
- Third party consent requirements (e.g., parental, guardian, spousal or judicial consent)
- Mandatory waiting periods
- Regulatory barriers to access to medicines
- Requirements that a woman report a rape to police or obtain a prosecution in order to access legal abortion
- Providers' conscientious refusal to provide abortion care ("conscientious objection")
- Only permitting physicians and not midlevel providers to perform abortion
- Requiring two or more physicians to certify the indication for abortion

Even when laws or regulations do not carry restrictions, some providers will impose such restrictions in an overly cautious effort to protect themselves.

Health-care providers can work with professional associations and government or health-facility authorities to eliminate these types of restrictions. If no national policy exists regarding parental consent, health-care providers should follow the principle of the evolving capacity of the child, which states that there is no single, defined age at which a minor has the maturity and comprehension necessary to make her own decisions. Through this approach, endorsed in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, health professionals can use their own judgment to expand safe abortion services to young women who otherwise might resort to an unsafe abortion. (For more information on abortion care for young women, and the related principle of capability, please see Additional resources, Reproductive Rights.)

### 3.3 Provider shortages

Many countries either legally or in practice restrict the provision of abortion to medical doctors, in particular obstetrician-gynecologists. This can limit women's access to the service. Abortion procedures can be accomplished competently by midlevel health professionals. Task-sharing and task-shifting efforts can include training and authorizing midwives, nurses, physician

### The case of South Africa

*South Africa's post-apartheid abortion laws authorize midwives and nurses to perform abortions. The 1997 Choice on Termination of Pregnancy Act and subsequent amendments allow trained, professional midwives and nurses to perform abortions through the first trimester. Mid-level providers are able to provide high-quality abortion services in the absence of physicians. This has helped expand the provision of abortion services to rural health clinics and district hospitals.*

assistants and other midlevel health workers to offer all elements of comprehensive abortion care, which increases access to services. This can also reduce the cost and make it easier for women to obtain care closer to their homes. Medical methods of uterine evacuation have the potential to be used safely outside of health facilities, further increasing abortion access.

## 3.4 Technological limitations

Another common barrier to safe abortion and postabortion services is the use of outdated technology, specifically sharp curettage. This is problematic for two reasons:

- It denies women the benefits of safer and less painful methods.
- It increases the cost and complexity of services.

WHO recommends that health systems shift from using sharp curettage to vacuum aspiration or medical methods for postabortion care and induced abortion services. In 2005, WHO added mifepristone with misoprostol and misoprostol only to its Model List of Essential Medicines. In 2011 both mifepristone and misoprostol were included as essential commodities in Essential Interventions, Commodities and Guidelines for Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health. Mifepristone with misoprostol was also included in the Interagency List of Essential Medicines for Reproductive Health, compiled by several of the UN agencies and other international NGOs, specifically for medical abortion within 9 weeks gestation. (Please see Additional resources, Reproductive Rights.)

To ensure availability and use of recommended technologies, health-care providers can:

- Request that vacuum-aspiration equipment and medications for uterine evacuation are added to their country's and facility's standard equipment lists and that procurement of supplies is handled in a timely manner
- Commit to frequently updating their skills and encourage their colleagues to do the same
- Train others to use newer technologies

## 3.5 Conscientious refusal of care

Providers are obligated to provide life-saving postabortion care, and therefore cannot conscientiously refuse to offer these services. Most countries permit abortion to save a woman's life, and women are legally entitled to care under those circumstances. Some health-care professionals refuse to provide induced abortion based on personal objections. This is a barrier to access. Only health-care providers authorized to perform abortion have the right to decline to provide the procedure based on moral or religious reasons (as long as a woman's life is not in danger);

however, they are ethically bound and should be legally required to ensure that women can access safe services at a nearby facility within a reasonable time period. Health care workers who are indirectly involved cannot refuse to perform their tasks by claiming conscientious objection. Furthermore, administrators of public-health facilities cannot invoke conscientious objection.

To ensure that refusal to provide services based on religious and moral reasons does not restrict women's access to care, health-care managers and providers can:

- Ensure that their facilities are offering abortion services based on standards and guidelines
- Affirm conscience-based provision of safe abortion care in their facilities
- Require that providers who refuse to provide service refer the client to another willing provider according to their facility's abortion protocols
- Create a list of providers who do or do not perform abortion
- Furnish a list of referral providers and facilities to providers who refuse to offer abortion care
- Create a protocol that stipulates sanctions to be taken against providers who refuse to provide referrals or to treat women whose lives are in danger

*"The exercise of conscience in health care is generally considered synonymous with refusal to participate in contested medical services, especially abortion. This depiction neglects the fact that the provision of abortion care is also conscience-based. The persistent failure to recognize abortion provision as 'conscientious' has resulted in laws that do not protect caregivers who are compelled by conscience to provide abortion services, contributes to the ongoing stigmatization of abortion providers, and leaves ...blind spots ...with respect to positive claims of conscience — that is, conscience-based claims for offering care, rather than for refusing to provide it."*

- Lisa Harris, 2012

### 3.6 Provider attitudes

Health-care providers' attitudes and beliefs affect their interactions and counseling with women and carry considerable influence. Providers may unconsciously hold beliefs about who should control the abortion experience or about a woman's ability to determine what is happening with her body. Values clarification can help providers identify their beliefs and values, explore the consequences of their actions, learn how to separate their values from those of their clients and offer care in a way that shows respect for a woman's rights and decisions. (Please see Additional resources, Reproductive Rights.)

## 4.0 Providers as advocates

Some health-care providers may want to participate in broader advocacy efforts to change laws and policies that restrict women's, including young women's, reproductive rights. Some ways to do this are:

- Request that their professional associations organize seminars that review abortion laws and discuss how they are interpreted and implemented
- Partner with other advocates such as lawyers' associations and women's rights organizations to plan advocacy strategies

- Write, publish, and encourage colleague organizations to publish statements recognizing reproductive rights as human rights or stating their support for safe, legal abortion
- Work with policymakers to take an active role in defining current laws and policies
- Educate policymakers and others by disseminating statistics on abortion-related maternal mortality and morbidity
- Connect with community-based advocacy efforts that demand safe abortion services, improved access to contraception, and/or sexual and reproductive health education for women, particularly young women

(For more information about providers as advocates and actions to ensure women's access to safe, legal abortion, please see Additional resources, Reproductive Rights.)

## 5.0 Considerations for postabortion care

- Reproductive rights and policy issues are largely the same as those for induced abortion care. In settings with restrictive laws that continue to expose women to risks to life and health, there is a need to address this public health issue through broader legal and policy reform.

## 6.0 Summary

- International treaties, conventions, consensus statements and declarations can help protect reproductive rights.
- Treaty Monitoring Committees exist to monitor State compliance with international conventions.
- Consensus statements, declarations and commitments provide important basis for upholding women's and young women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.
- Statements by UN agencies and associations of health-care providers and policymakers can help set standards that can advance women's and young women's reproductive rights.
- Only health-care providers authorized to perform abortion have the right to decline to provide the procedure based on moral or religious reasons (as long as a woman's life is not in danger); however, they are ethically bound and should be legally required to ensure that women can access safe services at a nearby facility within a reasonable time period.
- Providers who wish to engage in advocacy efforts to expand women's reproductive rights should know what current laws permit, how they are being carried out, and whether there are obstacles that regularly inhibit women from exercising their legal rights.



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## Appendix A: Treaty monitoring committees

Treaty Monitoring Committees have been established to oversee State compliance with international conventions. They issue General Recommendations and General Comments to assist States in fulfilling their obligations under a convention. For example, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has urged States: “(a) to develop and implement programmes that provide access to sexual and reproductive health services, including family planning, contraception and safe abortion services where abortion is not against the law.”

During the monitoring process:

- States submit regular reports, summarizing the actions they have taken toward compliance and identifying measures that are still needed
- Individuals and organizations submit “shadow reports or letters,” providing the Committees with their own findings on State compliance
- Committees make recommendations on how a State can improve compliance

States are not legally obliged to carry out these recommendations but are expected to do so. Advocates can use those recommendations to hold governments accountable for making changes in laws and practices that uphold women’s sexual and reproductive rights. Some conventions also have Optional Protocols which enable individuals and organizations to present complaints about human rights violations. For example, the CEDAW Committee has received complaints related to abortion and asked States to make legal abortion accessible to all women without delay.

Seven international human-rights conventions have Treaty Monitoring Committees that monitor implementation of the conventions by the States that have ratified them. They are:

1. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) – Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws40.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws40.htm)
2. Committee on the Rights of the Child – Convention on the Rights of the Child, [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/)
3. Committee Against Torture – Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/)
4. Human Rights Committee – International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/index.htm](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/index.htm)
5. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination – International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cerd/)

6. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) – International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cescr/)
7. Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families – International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, [www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cmwr/](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cmwr/)

Ipas has compiled the specific text from these and other conventions relevant to maternal mortality, unwanted pregnancy and abortion into three documents:

- Maternal Mortality, Unwanted Pregnancy And Abortion As Addressed By International Human Rights Bodies: Part One, [www.ipas.org/~media/Files/Ipas%20Publications/IHRCOMPAE12.ashx](http://www.ipas.org/~media/Files/Ipas%20Publications/IHRCOMPAE12.ashx)
- Part Two, [www.ipas.org/~media/Files/Ipas%20Publications/IHRCOMPBE12.ashx](http://www.ipas.org/~media/Files/Ipas%20Publications/IHRCOMPBE12.ashx)
- Part Three, [www.ipas.org/~media/Files/Ipas%20Publications/IHRCOMPCE12.ashx](http://www.ipas.org/~media/Files/Ipas%20Publications/IHRCOMPCE12.ashx)

# Community Linkages

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## Key topics in this module:

- Partnerships with the community
- Community assessments
- Community-based interventions

## 1.0 Introduction

As with other essential health services, it is the obligation of health systems to make comprehensive abortion care available in communities where women live and work. Communities can play a key role in reducing maternal mortality and morbidity by partnering with facilities that offer sexual and reproductive-health services to ensure that women have the information, support and means to access the care they need. In turn, health-care workers can reach out to community members to establish

such partnerships. By working closely with the communities they serve, service providers can better understand women's life circumstances, the barriers to care they face, and what women consider high-quality care. Mutual trust can be built through close, meaningful interactions between community members and health-facility personnel, leading to better care for women, including young women.

The term *community* is commonly used to designate people residing in a common geographic location, such as a village or town. However, many diverse communities exist that are based on specific, shared interests or among people with a common history, culture or shared social, political or economic interest.

Such definitions stress the similarities and shared interests of community members. In reality, however, differences of opinion and conflicts also exist. These differences can have a significant impact on the health and well-being of community members, especially women. The issue of abortion can be very sensitive and a source of conflict within a community. Overt or even subtle harassment of health workers who provide abortion-related care by community members can have a negative impact on provision of or access to care. Providers may want to identify allies who can help educate the community about the need for safe abortion care and promote women's access to high-quality abortion-related care.

Abortion-care providers and other facility staff need to take an active role in building partnerships with community members. To establish strong relationships with community members, health workers can:

- Provide high-quality, respectful care to all women who seek services and protect women's confidentiality;
- Inform and consult with community leaders and representatives of different segments of the community, such as different ethnicities and young women;
- Establish ongoing mechanisms for community involvement in assessments of service delivery, adverse events, recommendations for quality improvements and positive community-provider partnerships, such as community advisory committees (see box) that include diverse representatives, and when adverse events occur, facilitate discussions to prevent misunderstandings and even potential threats to providers;
- Set up community-based health worker outreach programs to provide locally appropriate information, support and care to community members.

Community members can also proactively define perspectives and problems and propose appropriate solutions. Together, providers and community members can improve access to services and the quality of care.



## 2.0 Community assessment

Community residents have a vested interest in their own health, safety and well-being. Rather than making assumptions, it is very important to gather information directly from community members and representative leaders and really listen to what women, including young women, say about health-related concerns and resources. Health-care providers can begin to create links in the community by identifying and talking with the following representational leaders:

- Local government officials
- Traditional leaders
- Health-committee members
- Leaders of women's, men's and youth groups
- Religious leaders
- Law-enforcement officials
- Traditional birth attendants and medicine healers
- Community-based health workers
- Student leaders

A special effort should be made to include young women in conversations with the community. They, and other groups in the community, may be hesitant to speak openly about their concerns, so one-on-one or small conversations may be productive.

Health-facility personnel and/or members of the community can conduct a community or situational assessment to better understand community members' health-related perceptions, challenges and resources that might affect abortion-related service delivery and access. Community assessment surveys can determine which reproductive-health services women have access to, what women's prior experiences with the health system have been, what existing health structures and mechanisms are in place, what is important to women and their families, and what is relevant to their real-life circumstances. Community members, and possibly health-facility personnel as well, may require some guidance on how to do an assessment. This is an opportunity to create those skills in the community which may also be useful in improving other health services. These findings will be critical to building partnerships and delivering care that meets community members' needs.

General elements of a community assessment might include:

- Where and how people prefer to receive sexual and reproductive health-related information;

### Community advisory committees

*A Community Advisory Committee is made up of community leaders, and serves as a steering committee for a project or service. It usually includes 12-20 interested individuals from the community, including young people and influential members from different sectors. The purpose of the group is to tailor the services or project to the needs of the community, to enlist the support of the whole community, and to provide general guidance.*

*Committee members should understand the reproductive health issues affecting the community, and often have direct access to the members of the community who can most benefit from information about these health services. Members can broaden the impact of health promotion efforts, improve health services and reinforce relationships between the health services and the community at large. Avoid tokenism – all members of the Community Advisory Committee should be active and have responsibilities. All of their ideas and opinions should be valued.*

*The responsibilities of advisory committee members typically include:*

- advocacy
- information and outreach in the community
- informed guidance of project or services

- What sexual and reproductive health resources are available and whether women know about them;
- Where women in the community might be accessing abortion outside of the formal health system, for example, from chemical sellers, traditional birth attendants (TBAs), lay health workers and healers;.
- How community members define high-quality care and competent health-care providers;
- Public-health issues of greatest concern and other issues that impact health, such as poverty, high unemployment and substandard housing;
- Community perspectives on abortion;
- The level of concern about maternal mortality and morbidity and whether unsafe abortion is understood to be a contributing factor;
- Women's prior experiences with local health care facilities;
- What health services and community support mechanisms are in place to specifically address women's needs;
- What is important to women and their families;
- What is important to young women, specifically.

For more information on conducting situational assessments on abortion for young women, see Additional resources, Community Linkages.

### 3.0 Community-based interventions

Health-care providers can use information gathered in the community assessment to design interventions that link abortion-related services and community members. Providers should be open to implementing community-generated solutions to problems. Interventions are most effective when they are community driven and championed by local, recognized leaders who can provide credibility and sustainability.

Women, their partners and families need information about:

- Pregnancy signs and symptoms
- Pregnancy options
- Availability of contraceptive services, including emergency contraception
- Legal indications for induced abortion
- Where they can obtain safe abortion services or treatment for abortion complications
- Dangers of unsafe abortion
- Importance of seeking abortion-related care from trained and authorized providers

Women need to be able to exercise their right to abortion to the fullest extent of the law, and providers should do what they can to facilitate that. They can do so in the following ways:

*Educate women and their partners about human reproduction, contraception and pregnancy options.*

For example, health-care personnel can organize community meetings and conduct educational sessions or train community-based health workers to do so.

*Educate community leaders about the need for comprehensive sexual and reproductive health education for young women.*

Ensure they understand that information does not lead to heightened sexual activity but rather leads to better decision making, more protected sex and fewer unplanned pregnancies and unsafe abortions.

*Create a partnership with young women.*

Young women can help define and design more accessible and appropriate abortion care for their peers, and can help evaluate quality of services, and influence quality improvement efforts.

*Train and equip community-health workers to provide contraceptive counseling and method provision so women can get their contraceptive needs met closer to home.*

Health-facility staff can identify resources and develop a referral system to accommodate women who need specialized services.

*Alert the community to negative public-health trends.*

For example, if many women are coming in to health facilities with complications from unsafe abortion, providers could meet with community leaders to encourage local education on safe services and assistance for women who need care. Similarly, if many young women who are engaging in sex with much older or married male partners are contracting sexually transmitted infections (STIs), providers can alert community and youth leaders about those concerns. Providers must always take care to maintain women's confidentiality.

*Increase awareness and support for abortion and care providers.*

Providers can conduct values clarification workshops in the community to increase knowledge and support and reduce stigma for women who have abortions and providers who offer care. Health managers can make announcements, postings and media messages to ensure that the public is aware of their facility's services and commitment to uphold their confidentiality policies. Public campaigns can encourage women who want to terminate their pregnancy to seek safe services.

*Educate pharmacists and other drug sellers and women about medical abortion with mifepristone and/or misoprostol.*

Providers can offer information to those who use or dispense medications about safe doses of mifepristone and misoprostol and

#### Ways to increase public awareness of abortion-related services:

- Consistently deliver respectful, high quality care
- Advertise services
- Post signs, mural or billboards in health facilities and communities
- Develop and disseminate community-specific flyers and mass-media messages
- Use local media outlets such as newspaper and radio
- Attend community activities
- Facilitate community discussions
- Encourage satisfied clients to talk to others

#### Key messages to share:

- Preventing unwanted pregnancy is crucial to reducing abortion.
- It is important to know the legal indications for abortion in the country or region.
- Women must avoid untrained providers and unsafe conditions .
- Earlier abortions are safer than later ones.
- If a woman has any problems after having an abortion she should return to the health facility as soon as possible.

establish a referral network for pharmacists dispensing the drugs.

#### *Identify community, regional or national resources.*

Find the available resources that can meet specific client needs and develop a referral system to accommodate women who need specialized services.

(Please see Appendix A: Potential audiences and topics for information, education and communication on abortion for more information.)

### 3.1 Ensure immediate treatment of complications

Rates of abortion-related morbidity and mortality can be reduced by providing three key services:

- Early counseling
- Referrals for safe abortion services or treatment of complications
- Adequate follow-up care

Providers can work with community leaders to educate women about the signs and symptoms of abortion complications that require prompt medical attention, and can make sure women know where emergency care is available. Communities can pool resources to set up an emergency transportation system to prevent delays in getting women prompt treatment for obstetrical emergencies. Health-facility staff can train community health workers or local volunteers to refer women in emergency situations to health-care services, to follow up with women after treatment and to link women to contraceptive services.

### 3.2 Monitor service delivery

Health facilities can form community advisory or quality-of-care committees to assist in assessing services, making recommendations for improvements, and participating in the implementation of recommendations as appropriate. Health-facility managers and providers can also train community members to conduct client-satisfaction surveys within the clinic or in the community, taking into account the need for client privacy and confidentiality. An important aspect of working with communities is to help people understand and use the collected information. (Please see the Monitoring to Improve Services module for more information.) Health providers should also consider attending appropriate local meetings to share their monitoring results and steps taken to enhance services. These exchanges can be useful in motivating community members to provide input for service-delivery improvements.

### 3.3 Share information about preventing infection

People who live near health-care facilities may be concerned

about infectious waste, including products of conception. Health managers should share the protocols for infectious-waste disposal with community leaders, and work with them to ensure that the public's health is protected. Health-care workers can also educate women and community members about actions they can take to prevent infections.

The improper processing and disposal of abortion-related instruments is a public-health risk, particularly in settings where there are untrained providers and unhygienic conditions. The risk of infection can be reduced when:

- Used medical instruments and other medical waste are disposed of appropriately, not in open dumps or other places the public can access;
- Health-care workers follow proper instrument-processing techniques and do not carry pathogens from the facility into the community.

(Please see the Infection Prevention module for more information.)

### 3.4 Advocate for improved policies

Health-care workers and community members can organize grassroots campaigns that encourage local representatives to prioritize sexual and reproductive health and rights. They can advocate that local health-care facilities offer abortion services to the fullest extent of the law and that legal indications be expanded. They can advocate for improved access for young women.

If providers see large numbers of women needing specialized services—such as screening, counseling, support or treatment for HIV—they can work with community leaders to advocate that health systems fill those service gaps. Community agencies and individuals may be interested in initiating services, such as support groups or peer education, on a volunteer basis.

For more information on providers as advocates and advocating for abortion service delivery and access, see Additional resources, Community Linkages.

## 4.0 Considerations for postabortion care

Partnerships between health-facility staff and communities may focus on:

- Preventing unwanted pregnancy through community health education and locally accessible contraceptive services;
- Ensuring community members know about the health and other consequences of unsafe abortion and where to obtain treatment for complications of an unsafe abortion and obtain

safe abortion services for legal indications;

- Assessing the situation of unsafe abortion in that community and developing recommendations for interventions;
- Setting up systems for identification of complications of an unsafe abortion and emergency transportation to a facility for immediate care, and other ways to mobilize resources to ensure timely care for abortion complications;
- Making sure that postabortion care services meet community expectations and needs.

For more information about community linkages for postabortion care, see Ipas's *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual*, Second Edition.

## 5.0 Summary

- Partnerships between health-facility staff and communities play a key role in reducing maternal mortality and morbidity.
- Providers should be aware of their role in the community as role models and leaders, while working in partnership with community members to advance women's health.
- Community Advisory Committees can be a good way to partner with the community to take action, make changes, or monitor success.
- It is important to include young women in community partnerships.
- Community-assessments can inform providers and other stakeholders about general health conditions and about abortion-related issues.
- Providers and staff members at health facilities, in coordination with or through community leaders, can raise public awareness about reproductive rights and provide information on sexuality, reproductive health and abortion care.
- Early referral for abortion complications and follow-up care are critical steps in reducing maternal morbidity and mortality. Communities can take steps to help prevent delays in getting women with obstetrical emergencies to lifesaving health services.
- Health facilities that involve the community in monitoring service delivery can better ensure that community needs are met and that woman-centered, comprehensive abortion-care services are accessible.
- Communities surrounding health-care facilities may be at risk for exposure to infectious waste, and health managers

have a responsibility to ensure that proper protocols for infection prevention are followed.

- Communities and health staff can work together to advocate that authorities prioritize sexual and reproductive health and rights, provide necessary services and adopt policies that serve women's needs.

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## Appendix A: Potential audiences and topics for information, education and communication on abortion

Audience	Content	Communication Venues and Media
<p>Young and adult women; their partners, family members or guardians.</p> <p>Teachers, women's groups, men's groups, adolescent groups, student &amp; community groups,</p> <p>Unions and apprentice groups including clubs based on sports, social exchange, theater/arts, etc.</p> <p>Taxi drivers, pharmacists and other local informants such as traditional midwives or birth attendants</p>	<p><b>Unwanted pregnancy:</b> Signs and symptoms of pregnancy and where to go for assistance; importance of seeking care early; pregnancy complications and where to go for assistance, dangers of unsafe abortion.</p> <p><b>Abortion:</b> Abortion laws and service policies; where, how and at what cost abortion care can be obtained; different abortion techniques and their relative merits; how to recognize abortion complications and where and when to seek help; quick return to fertility after abortion; community role in emergency care in recognition and transport</p> <p><b>Contraception:</b> Information about modern methods of contraception (including emergency contraception), including safety and effectiveness; where and how methods can be obtained</p>	<p><b>Venues:</b></p> <p>Health service facilities</p> <p>Schools and universities</p> <p>Workplace</p> <p>Youth centers</p> <p>Women's centers</p> <p>Group meetings Markets</p> <p><b>Media:</b> Newspapers, magazines, posters, flyers, radio, TV, talks, dramas</p>
<p>Health system officials, legislators and other policymakers.</p> <p>Professional associations (medical, legal, etc.)</p> <p>Members of media</p> <p>Non-traditional leaders such as film and sports stars</p>	<p>Prevalence, health and resource impact of unsafe abortion and unwanted pregnancies on women and families</p> <p>Women's rights regarding abortion</p> <p>Relevant access issues and the impact on health and resources</p> <p>Relative costs of providing emergency treatment for unsafe abortion compared with those of elective abortion and contraception</p> <p>Relative safety of early abortion and the new/different techniques</p> <p>Need to legislate for funding of high-quality RH health services for women</p>	<p><b>Venues:</b></p> <p>Conferences</p> <p>Governmental hearings</p> <p><b>Media:</b> Conversation, research reports for meetings and legislative hearings, communications to the staff of these officials, workshops, letter-writing campaigns, all other print and electronic media</p>
<p>Traditional and religious leaders</p>	<p>Importance of educating constituents to prevent and seek help with unwanted pregnancies</p> <p>Where and how contraception and other RH services can be obtained</p> <p>Relative costs to families and the community of maternal morbidity and mortality due to unwanted pregnancy and unsafe abortion</p> <p>Relative safety of early safe abortion</p> <p>Current abortion law and service policies</p> <p>How to counsel about pregnancy care and availability of family planning</p>	<p><b>Venues:</b> Formal and informal community and religious meetings Workshops by health professionals</p> <p><b>Media:</b> Conversation, dramas, talks, print and electronic media</p>



## Appendix A: Potential audiences and topics for information, education and communication on abortion *(continued)*

Audience	Content	Communication Venues and Media
<p>Health care personnel</p> <p>Traditional healers or practitioners</p>	<p>Current abortion law and service delivery policies</p> <p>Legal and ethical obligations regarding provision of abortion care</p> <p>How to obtain and convey required information to groups listed above</p> <p>Where to refer clients with unwanted pregnancies or complications from abortion; dangers of unsafe abortion</p> <p>Importance of confidentiality and early care</p> <p>How to get trained to provide abortion care</p>	<p><b>Venues:</b></p> <p>Professional meetings, conferences and workshops</p> <p>Professional publications</p> <p><b>Media:</b> Journals, posters, flyers, talks, workshops, presentations</p>

*Adapted from McInerney et al, 2001*



# Uterine Evacuation Methods

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## Key topics in this module:

- Recommended methods for induced abortion in the first trimester are vacuum aspiration and medical abortion
- Possible risks and side effects, cost and benefits of these methods
- Recommended methods for postabortion care

## 1.0 Introduction

Uterine evacuation is the removal of the contents of the uterus. There are two recommended methods for induced abortion in the first trimester:

- Vacuum aspiration (electric or manual)
- Medical methods (mifepristone combined with misoprostol or misoprostol only)

Vacuum aspiration evacuates the contents of the uterus using suction provided by a handheld, portable aspirator (manual vacuum aspiration), or by an electric pump (electric vacuum aspiration). Vacuum aspiration is an important alternative to, and occasional back-up for, medical abortion.

Medical abortion (MA) uses medications to empty the uterus. The World Health Organization (WHO) states that “medical methods of abortion have been proved to be safe and effective.” When used for induced abortion, misoprostol only has a lower efficacy than the combined regimen. The medications mifepristone and misoprostol are increasingly used worldwide for medical abortion. Other medications, namely methotrexate, and other prostaglandins, such as gemeprost, are sometimes used. This manual focuses on regimens using mifepristone combined with misoprostol or misoprostol only for induced abortion.

Recommended methods for first trimester incomplete abortion are:

- Vacuum aspiration (electric or manual)
- Misoprostol
- Expectant management

In the case of incomplete abortion, vacuum aspiration is used to suction retained pregnancy tissue from the uterus. Misoprostol evacuates retained pregnancy tissue by contracting the uterus and expelling its contents. Expectant management for incomplete abortion allows uterine contractions to naturally expel the contents of the uterus, while monitoring to ensure that all contents are fully expelled. For more information, see Ipas’s *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual*, Second Edition.

Uterine evacuation with vacuum aspiration or with misoprostol to remove retained pregnancy tissue is often a life-saving component of postabortion care. Health-care workers who will be treating women with abortion-related complications, as well as those who will be providing safe abortion services, should be clinically competent in performing or facilitating uterine evacuation

The preferred methods for second-trimester uterine evacuation are:

- Vacuum aspiration up to 15 weeks LMP, with appropriate provider training, experience and equipment
- Dilatation and evacuation (D&E), which uses a combination of vacuum aspiration and forceps
- Mifepristone followed by repeated doses of misoprostol for induced abortion
- Misoprostol only, which can be used safely for induced and postabortion care

(For more information on second-trimester abortion, please see Additional resources, Uterine Evacuation Methods.)

Young women may use the same methods of uterine evacuation as adult women. Adolescent women seeking medical abortion have similar or lower rates of adverse outcomes to adult women.

Many different types of health-care professionals can safely perform or assist with uterine evacuation. Pre- or in-service training provides an opportunity for health-care workers to achieve clinical competence in this skill.

This module focuses on uterine evacuation in the first trimester and provides:

- A brief overview of recommended first-trimester uterine-evacuation methods
- Information on clinical safety and effectiveness, cost, acceptability to women
- Specific risks and side effects associated with each method

(Please see Appendix A: Vacuum aspiration and medical abortion for first trimester induced abortion and Appendix B: PAC treatment options.)

Sharp curettage is not recommended by WHO. A description of the technique is included because it is still used in many settings. Information on how to support providers and facilities to transition from sharp curettage to vacuum aspiration and medical abortion methods is included in the Trainer's Manual.

**Potential side effects of all uterine evacuation procedures are:**

- *Abdominal cramping*
- *Nausea*
- *Vomiting*
- *Pain*
- *Bleeding*

## 2.0 Vacuum aspiration

Vacuum aspiration is considered an essential service by many national and international authorities such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO).

### *Description*

Vacuum aspiration is a method by which the contents of the uterus are evacuated through a plastic or metal cannula that is attached to a vacuum source.

- Manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) uses a hand-held, portable aspirator
- Electric vacuum aspiration (EVA) employs an electric pump

The level of vacuum provided by the MVA aspirator decreases as the cylinder fills with blood and tissue, but an electric pump provides a constant level of suction.

The procedure involves dilating the woman's cervix, inserting a

cannula through the cervix into the uterine cavity, and attaching the cannula to the vacuum source. The uterine contents are then suctioned out. Depending on the uterine size and amount of tissue, the procedure takes from three to 10 minutes to complete.

### *Clinical safety and effectiveness*

Vacuum aspiration is extremely effective and safe, and is successful in 98% to 100% of cases, for both abortion and treatment of incomplete abortion. The method results in few complications, especially when performed up to 13 weeks. Safety and programmatic benefits of vacuum aspiration, compared to sharp curettage, include:

- Reduced blood loss
- Reduced procedure time
- Reduced risk of major and minor complications
- Reduced pain
- Reduced cost

Because many providers perform sharp curettage in an operating theater with heavy sedation or general anesthesia, anesthetic risks are decreased with vacuum aspiration.

### *Cost*

Vacuum aspiration can be very cost-effective when performed on an outpatient basis. Vacuum aspiration can result in savings to the facility that can then be passed on to the woman.

### *Acceptability to women*

Vacuum aspiration is well-accepted by women, including young women. Because vacuum aspiration is less painful than sharp curettage, in most cases it requires lower levels of pain management. Typically a combination of local anesthesia (paracervical block), oral analgesics and verbal reassurance allows women to be awake and aware of what is happening during the procedure but still have adequate pain control. Light sedation may also be added if it is available and desired by the woman. With lower levels of pain medication, abortion or postabortion care can be provided in an outpatient setting, which is generally more acceptable to women than a hospital stay.

## **2.1 Manual vacuum aspiration (MVA)**

In an MVA procedure, a hand-held plastic 60cc aspirator providing a vacuum source is attached to a cannula and hand-activated to suction out the uterine contents. To perform the MVA procedure, a cannula of the appropriate size is inserted through the dilated cervix into the uterus. The cannula is attached to a vacuum-

When vacuum aspiration is performed by well-trained providers, complications are rare. However, possible complications include:

- *Incomplete evacuation*
- *Cervical or uterine injury, such as perforation or tearing*
- *Anesthesia complications*
- *Infection*
- *Hemorrhage*
- *Hematometra*
- *Failed abortion*

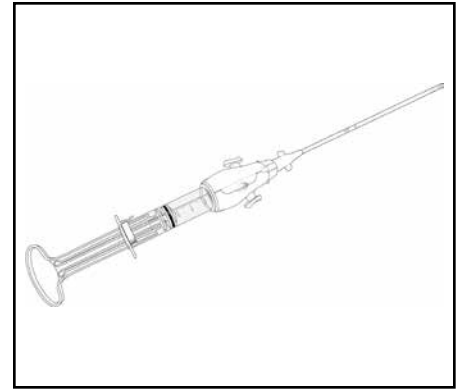
*In rare cases, these conditions can result in secondary infertility, other serious injury or death. WHO, in conjunction with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the World Bank and with endorsement by FIGO and the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), endorses MVA as an essential technology for uterine evacuation.*

charged aspirator, and the vacuum is released by depressing the buttons on the aspirator. The cannula is gently and slowly rotated while it is moved back and forth within the uterus. The aspirator serves as the source of vacuum to pull the products of conception through the cannula into the cylinder.

MVA is safe and effective:

- It can be performed by trained midlevel providers with no difference in complications rates compared to doctors.
- It does not require electricity and can be used in decentralized, rural settings with intermittent electrical supplies.
- It can be provided in a clinic setting on an outpatient basis, requiring fewer facility resources and reducing cost of care.
- Where instruments can be reused, the cost per procedure can be relatively low.
- Reduced waiting times and increased local availability of care make this an acceptable method for many women, including young women.
- MVA creates little noise during the procedure, which some women find preferable.

(Please see the Uterine Evacuation Procedure with Ipas MVA Plus® module for more information.)

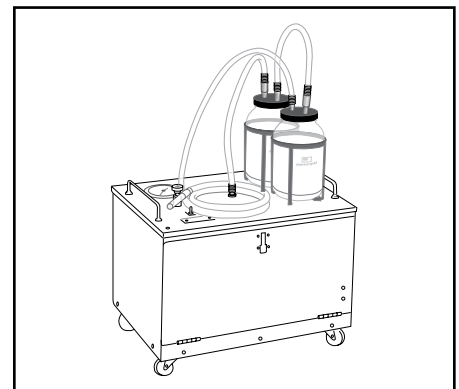


Ipas MVA Plus with EasyGrip cannula

## 2.2 Electric vacuum aspiration (EVA)

EVA uses an electric pump or suction machine attached to a cannula to evacuate the uterine contents. The cannula is inserted into the uterus and then attached to the suction-machine tubing. The thumb valve on the hose is then opened and the machine turned on. The cannula is rotated gently back and forth until the pregnancy is evacuated through the hose and into a glass container at the end of the hose.

- Because the initial cost of an EVA machine is high, it is typically used in centralized settings with high caseloads.
- EVA is less appropriate for settings with intermittent electrical supply.
- EVA has been found acceptable to women, including young women.



EVA

## 3.0 Medical methods

Medical abortion uses mifepristone combined with misoprostol or misoprostol only to expel the contents of the uterus.

- Mifepristone blocks progesterone activity in the uterus, leading to detachment of the pregnancy. It also causes the cervix to soften and the uterus to contract. Mifepristone used alone does not cause an abortion but works in combination with another prostaglandin like misoprostol.
- Misoprostol was developed for gastrointestinal indications but also has the effect of softening the cervix and stimulating uterine contractions. It is an effective abortifacient either alone or in combination with mifepristone. It is used for many obstetric and gynecologic indications including labor induction, medical abortion, treatment of incomplete or missed abortion, prevention and treatment of postpartum hemorrhage and cervical preparation.

These medications stimulate uterine contractions and cause expulsion of the pregnancy. Other medications have been used for abortion, but clinical evidence supports the combined use of mifepristone plus misoprostol as the most effective and safe method. Misoprostol only for induced abortion is an option in settings where mifepristone is not available and is also used for treatment of incomplete abortion. (Please see Appendix C: Abortion induction with misoprostol in pregnancies up to thirteen weeks since the LMP in the Uterine Evacuation with Medical Methods module.)

Mifepristone and misoprostol for uterine evacuation are on WHO's Model List of Essential Medicines, as well as the Interagency List of Essential Medicines for Reproductive Health, compiled by several of the UN agencies and other international NGOs. (Please see Additional resources, Uterine Evacuation Methods.)

### *Clinical safety and effectiveness*

- Combined regimens using mifepristone and misoprostol through 13 weeks LMP have been widely studied and safely used by millions of women in many countries. Studies indicate that the combination of mifepristone plus misoprostol is more effective in stimulating complete induced abortion than either drug used alone. Research protocols for pregnancies up to and including 13 weeks report success rates of over 95 percent.
- Misoprostol only for induced abortion, using the recommended regimen, is successful in approximately 85 percent of cases.
- Misoprostol for treatment of incomplete abortion, also known as misoprostol for postabortion care (MPAC), has average efficacy rates reported in the literature of 91-99 percent, depending on the regimen used and the study. Misoprostol has been used safely for incomplete abortion in many different countries and has not been associated with any long-term effects on women's health.



Most women undergoing uterine evacuation with medical methods experience some amount of abdominal cramping and bleeding. Other possible side effects, depending on dosage and route of administration, include vomiting, nausea, diarrhea, chills and fever.

Some studies suggest that misoprostol can cause birth defects in a small number of cases, so a woman's decisions on treatment of continuing pregnancies after taking misoprostol should include this information. If a woman decides to continue a pregnancy after unsuccessful medical abortion, her health-care provider should respect her decision.

## Cost

The cost of a medical abortion depends on the clinical regimen, the technology and the cost of providing backup in case re-evacuation is needed. Uterine evacuation with medical methods is considered a low-cost treatment.

## Acceptability to women

MA is highly acceptable to women in a variety of settings, including where resources are limited. Studies consistently show that 85 to 95 percent of women are satisfied or highly satisfied with the method, and would be willing to use it again or recommend it to a friend if needed. Women should be given a choice of method whenever possible and be provided sufficient information to make an informed decision.

Young women show similar preferences around medical abortion and participation in the decision making-process. Studies from Cuba, South Africa, Australia and the United States show that most young women who chose medical abortion reported high or very high levels of satisfaction with the method and 92 percent of the young women in the Cuba studies would recommend the method to a friend.

- Women often mention the non-surgical aspect of MA, compared to a vacuum aspiration procedure, as a significant benefit.
- Some women, including young women, perceive MA as a more private and natural method. Women may take the medications at home, which gives them more control over the conditions under which they have the abortion.

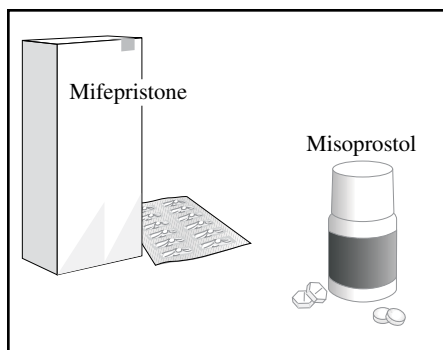
(Please see the Uterine Evacuation with Medical Methods module for more information.)

In studies reviewing the acceptability of misoprostol for postabortion care, more than 90 percent of women reported being satisfied or very satisfied with misoprostol for their treatment. A feasibility study in northern Nigeria showed high acceptability

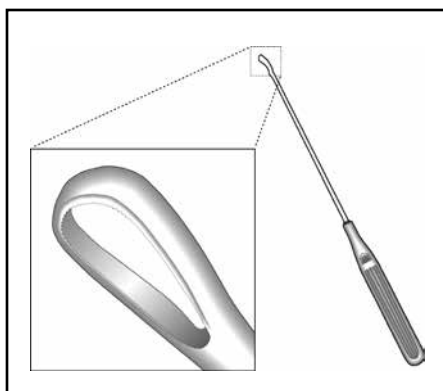
### Possible complications

Complications of medical methods are rare. However, possible complications include:

- *Incomplete evacuation*
- *Infection*
- *Hemorrhage*
- *Allergic reaction*
- *Failed abortion*



Mifepristone and misoprostol pills



Metal curette

among women in a largely Muslim population. The same study also showed that participating clinicians, including doctors, midwives and nurses, reported a high degree of satisfaction for this method.

## 4.0 Other methods: sharp curettage

### *Description*

Sharp curettage, also known as dilatation and curettage (D&C), involves dilating the cervix and using a sharp metal curette to scrape the uterine walls. During the procedure, the woman usually receives general anesthesia or heavy to light sedation.

According to the WHO, “Dilatation and curettage (D&C) is an obsolete method of surgical abortion and should be replaced by vacuum aspiration and/or medical methods.” The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) also supports the use of vacuum aspiration or medications over sharp curettage for uterine evacuation. Sharp curettage is still common in many countries; therefore health system officials and administrators should make all possible efforts and be supported to replace sharp curettage with vacuum aspiration or MA.

### *Clinical safety and effectiveness*

Sharp curettage is associated with increased blood loss, pain and procedure time when compared to vacuum aspiration for uterine evacuation.

### *Cost*

Sharp curettage is typically performed in an operating theater, under general anesthesia, and involves a hospital stay. All these factors increase the cost of care.

### *Acceptability to women*

The higher doses of pain medication typically used with sharp curettage, including general anesthesia, often necessitate longer and costlier hospital or clinic stays that may be less acceptable to women. Because of higher risks associated with this method it should only be used when vacuum aspiration or medical methods are not available.

## 5.0 Considerations for postabortion care

- According to WHO recommendations, if uterine size at the time of treatment is equivalent to a pregnancy of gestational age 13 weeks or less, either vacuum aspiration or treatment with misoprostol is recommended for women with incomplete abortion.

- Expectant management is also a uterine evacuation method for postabortion care.
- Uterine size may be smaller than the woman's report of her last menstrual period because some of the uterine contents have already been expelled. A woman's eligibility for uterine evacuation method for postabortion care should be guided by uterine size rather than LMP.
- Wherever possible, women should be given a choice of uterine evacuation methods based on her eligibility.
- Both vacuum aspiration and misoprostol are clinically- and cost-effective and highly acceptable to women and providers.

For more information about uterine evacuation methods for postabortion care, see Ipas's *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual*, Second Edition.

## 6.0 Summary

- The two recommended methods of first trimester uterine evacuation are vacuum aspiration and medical methods.
- Mifepristone followed by misoprostol is the most effective method of medical abortion.
- The two main methods of second-trimester evacuation are dilatation and evacuation (D&E) and medical abortion.
- Vacuum aspiration for first-trimester abortion and postabortion care is safe and acceptable, including for young women, and is successful in 98 to 100 percent of cases.
- Medical abortion for first-trimester abortion is safe and acceptable, including for young women, and is successful in at least 95 percent of cases using mifepristone plus misoprostol, and 85 percent of cases using misoprostol-only.
- Misoprostol for incomplete abortion is safe and acceptable, including for young women, and is successful in 91-99 percent of cases.
- Providers need to take the following factors into consideration when determining which uterine-evacuation method to use: the woman's personal preferences, clinical condition, gestational age, availability of equipment, supplies and skilled staff; and currently available scientific and medical evidence.
- Sharp curettage is not recommended because it is less safe than other methods. If uterine evacuation is not currently being provided, vacuum aspiration and medical abortion should be introduced first.

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## Appendix A: Vacuum aspiration and medical abortion for first trimester induced abortion

	Vacuum Aspiration	Mifepristone and Misoprostol MA	Misoprostol-Only MA
What is it?	A procedure that uses electric or manual suction instruments to evacuate the uterus to remove the pregnancy by suction	Medications taken together that cause the uterus to expel the pregnancy	A medication that causes the uterus to expel the pregnancy
How does it work?	The pregnancy is removed from the uterus through a cannula attached to an electric pump or handheld aspirator.	Mifepristone makes the pregnancy detach from the side of the uterus. Misoprostol causes contractions that expel the pregnancy.	Misoprostol causes contractions that expel the pregnancy.
When can it be used?	From detection of pregnancy to 13 weeks (throughout first trimester).	From detection of pregnancy to 13 weeks (throughout first trimester).	From detection of pregnancy to 13 weeks (throughout first trimester)
Where can it be used?	In a health care facility	Mifepristone (first pill) is usually given at the clinic. Misoprostol (second set of pills), may be taken at clinic or home for women with pregnancies under 10 weeks. For pregnancies from 10-13 weeks, women should take misoprostol in the facility.	Misoprostol may be taken at clinic or home for women with pregnancies under 9 weeks. For pregnancies from 9-13 weeks, women should take misoprostol in the facility.
How effective is it?	97% to 99.5% effective	95% to 98% effective	83%-87% effective
Safe and effective?	Yes	Yes	Yes
For young women as for adults?	Yes	Yes	Yes
What are the side effects?	Bleeding and cramping.	Bleeding and cramping are expected. Possible side effects are: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever/chills or dizziness.	Bleeding and cramping are expected. Possible side effects are: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever/chills or dizziness.
What are possible complications?	Rare complications include injury to the uterus or cervix, excessive bleeding, infection, blood collecting in the uterus, or incomplete abortion. Failed MVA occurs in less than 1% of women, especially when performed by a skilled provider.	Rare complications include excessive bleeding, and infection.  Failed MA occurs in 5% and ongoing pregnancy occurs in less than 1% of women	Rare complications include excessive bleeding, and infection.  Failed MA occurs in 15% and ongoing pregnancy occurs in 4-6% of women

## Appendix A: Vacuum aspiration and medical abortion for first trimester induced abortion (continued)

	Vacuum Aspiration	Mifepristone and Misoprostol MA	Misoprostol-Only MA
How is it typically used?	<p>The pregnancy is removed with suction through a tube inserted into an electric pump or handheld aspirator. Procedure time is 2 to 10 minutes.</p> <p>Completion of the procedure is immediately confirmed, requiring only one facility visit.</p>	<p>Mifepristone is taken by mouth (swallowed).</p> <p>One or two days later, misoprostol is put either under the tongue, inside the cheek or in the vagina and then the abortion usually occurs within 4-6 hours, but can take up to several days.</p>	<p>Misoprostol is put either under the tongue or in the vagina and then the abortion usually occurs within 24 hours, but can take up to several days.</p>
What if the abortion fails?	<p>The procedure is repeated.</p>	<p>The pregnancy is removed through vacuum aspiration. If aspiration services are not available, a second dose of misoprostol can be offered with close follow-up.</p>	<p>The pregnancy is removed through vacuum aspiration.</p>

## Appendix B: PAC treatment options

Methods	Expectant Management	Electric Vacuum Aspiration	Manual Vacuum Aspiration	Misoprostol
How It Works	<p>Allows the uterus to evacuate the products of conception by spontaneous uterine contractions over time without provider intervention</p> <p>Natural process</p> <p>Throughout the first trimester</p>	<p>A procedure that uses electric suction instruments inserted into the uterus to remove the products of conception</p> <p>Uterine size less than or up to 13 weeks from LMP</p>	<p>A procedure that uses manual suction instruments inserted into the uterus to remove the products of conception</p> <p>Uterine size less than or up to 13 weeks from LMP</p>	<p>Causes contractions that expel remaining products of conception</p> <p>Uterine size less than or up to 13 weeks from LMP</p>
Safety	<p>Emergency access to emergency care is important in case any products of conception are retained and cause complications (i.e. infection)</p>	<p>Low risk of infection or injury</p> <p>Little or no cervical dilation</p> <p>Low blood loss</p> <p>Short outpatient stay</p>	<p>Low risk of infection or injury</p> <p>Little or no cervical dilation</p> <p>Low blood loss</p> <p>Short stay</p>	<p>Referral relationship to a facility with vacuum aspiration must be established</p>
Effectiveness	<p>Effectiveness varies and vacuum aspiration may still be necessary</p> <p>Up to 84%</p>	<p>98-100%</p>	<p>98-100%</p>	<p>91-99%</p> <p>*average is 95%</p>
Cost Considerations	<p>No cost</p>	<p>Cost effective if done on an outpatient basis under local anesthesia</p> <p>EVA machine is expensive – requires constant supply of electricity</p>	<p>Cost effective if done on an outpatient basis under local anesthesia</p> <p>MVA instrument is inexpensive</p>	<p>Inexpensive</p>
Accessibility	<p>Women can use this method at home</p> <p>Needs to happen under the supervision of a trained provider (including mid-level)</p>	<p>Can be used in mid-level as well as high level health facilities in clean conditions with proper provider training</p>	<p>Can be used in low-level health care facility, in clean conditions with proper provider training</p> <p>Readily available in most settings</p>	<p>Can be provided in any health facility or family planning clinic</p> <p>Women can use this method at home</p>
Acceptability to Women	<p>Women can remain awake</p> <p>Private</p> <p>More natural/like miscarriage</p> <p>Need time and patience</p> <p>Side effects: bleeding and cramping</p>	<p>Women can remain awake</p> <p>Side effects: bleeding and cramping</p>	<p>Women can remain awake</p> <p>Procedure is quiet</p> <p>Side effects: bleeding, cramping</p>	<p>Women can remain awake</p> <p>Private</p> <p>More natural/like miscarriage</p> <p>Side effects: nausea, vomiting, fever, chills</p>



# Monitoring to Improve Services

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## Key topics in this module:

- Definition of monitoring
- Key steps of monitoring
- What to monitor

## 1.0 Introduction

Every health service can benefit from routine monitoring. Monitoring helps ensure that services achieve and maintain a level of quality that is satisfactory to both clients and providers. This module includes:

- Key characteristics of effective monitoring systems
- Steps involved in monitoring

One of the more formal monitoring approaches is COPE® for Comprehensive Abortion Care (CAC), which is an ongoing quality improvement process and set of tools used by health care staff to proactively and continuously assess and improve the quality of CAC they provide. Ten self-assessment guides, covering components of CAC, are organized around client rights and staff needs. (Please see Additional resources, Monitoring to Improve Services.)

- Aspects of abortion service delivery that should be routinely assessed
- Importance of adverse event monitoring and reporting

## 2.0 What is monitoring and why is it important?

*Monitoring* is a way of using information to identify strengths and weaknesses, provide feedback and make adjustments to improve quality of care. Monitoring examines all aspects of care, including client satisfaction that may not be addressed through other means. Regular monitoring and adjustment help ensure that clients receive high-quality services and health-care workers have the resources and support they need for service delivery. Monitoring is an ongoing process that should be continued whenever and wherever services are provided.

Monitoring can range from inexpensive and simple to more complete, formalized approaches. A simple approach may be to only monitor a few indicators while more formalized approaches usually encourage assessment and monitoring across a wide range of service delivery components.

Information for monitoring can be gathered using existing or slightly modified routine information-collection systems, such as service delivery logbooks, service statistics and client records. Monitoring tools measure the same services at several points over time. The resulting “time series” information provides a long-range overview of how services change over time. Monitoring information enables providers and managers to recognize trends and identify problem areas, make necessary adjustments to services and check that these adjustments have had the desired effect.

Monitoring should be conducted at both public-sector and private-sector health facilities. The number and complexity of activities will vary according to the availability of staff and resources. In larger health facilities, administrators and managers usually conduct monitoring activities. In smaller facilities, providers may need to do the monitoring themselves.

The following table provides brief examples of facility-level monitoring that can be accomplished without complex information-gathering or analysis tools. These examples illustrate that monitoring works best when it is carried out over a period of time, with ongoing evaluations and updated improvement plans. Note that actual improvement plans would be more specific, including details on when, where, how and by whom the recommended steps would be carried out.



Table 5-1: Examples of facility-level monitoring

Objective	Current Monitoring Plan	Previously Collected Data	Improvement Plan
100% of clients receive individualized counseling with a counselor.	65% of clients receive individualized counseling with a counselor.	Compared with data one year prior, individualized counseling has increased 40%.	Private counseling spaces will be expanded and additional counselors trained to increase individualized counseling.
Essential supplies to high-level disinfect MVA instruments are available 100% of the time.	Instrument-processing chemicals are available 70% of the time. Deliveries of these chemicals are often one to three weeks late.	Compared with data six months prior, availability of instrument-processing chemicals increased 10%.	While an increase in availability is positive, the goal is 100% availability. An administrative change will be made to order instrument-processing chemicals well in advance to ensure adequate supplies despite late deliveries.

### 3.0 Keys to effective monitoring systems

Monitoring is most effective when it:

*...is integrated into routine work*

When monitoring adds too many extra steps, the process becomes time-consuming and burdensome for health-care workers.

Information gathered for monitoring purposes can be gathered from existing sources such as logbooks and service statistics.

*...uses simple indicators*

A small number of simple, thoughtfully chosen indicators can provide invaluable information about service provision.

*...is participatory and open*

When the monitoring process is genuinely inclusive of all health-care staff members, they are more likely to feel a sense of ownership of the results. Staff should be trained to use monitoring tools so they can incorporate monitoring into their responsibilities.

*...is conducted in an ethical manner*

Women's privacy and confidentiality must be respected at all times. Informed consent must be obtained before women are interviewed or any provider-client interactions are observed. (Please see Appendix A: Written consent form – interview and Appendix B: Written consent form – observation for examples.)

## Using indicators

Indicators are measurements that help quantify activities and results. It is important to pick indicators that are actually under staff control; otherwise the process can be very demotivating. The sample indicators below can help describe the overall quality of abortion care:

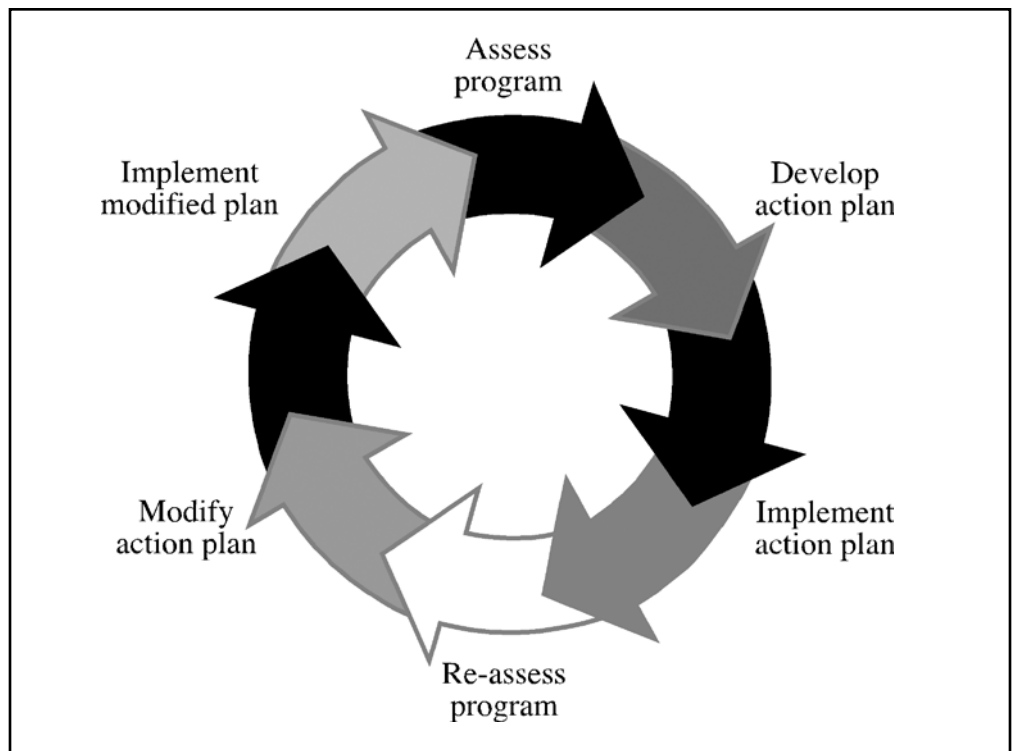
- Number and type of procedures performed by age of the client
- Number and type of procedures using appropriate uterine evacuation methods
- Number and percentage of women who receive pain medication
- Number and type of complications
- Number and percentage of women desiring contraception who receive a contraceptive method, by age
- Number of referrals made
- Number and percentage of women screened for sexually transmitted infections, including HIV
- Number and percentage of women screened for exposure to violence
- Number and percentage of women satisfied with services, by age
- Number and percentage receiving safe induced abortion services out of all women presenting for abortion-related care (PAC and induced)

*...is not punitive*

Monitoring is most effective when staff monitor themselves and the information gathered is used as a basis for reward and recognition.

*...includes recipients of the services, including young women in the design and implementation of the monitoring process*

Conducting exit interviews, focus groups, or client satisfaction checklists is a good way to get information directly from the users of services to make improvements in quality of care.



Monitoring is a continuous process

## 4.0 Adverse event monitoring

Adverse events are complications that a woman suffers during care that are not a result of a disease. Although adverse events are rare in routine abortion care, it is important to monitor for adverse events because each event offers the opportunity to learn about how to provide better, safer care. (Please see the Complications module.)

## 5.0 Four steps of effective monitoring

Monitoring involves four basic steps:

### 1. *Planning*

Develop a monitoring plan that specifies how information will be collected, shared and analyzed. Involve a range of stakeholders in the planning process. The plan should include:

- a. Members of the monitoring team, comprising a range of staff and recipients of services, including young women , and how team members will be trained
- b. Aspects of services to be monitored
- c. Quality standards and indicators to measure them
- d. Sources of information, such as logbooks with service statistics and client records
- e. Methods for gathering information, such as interviews, focus groups, observation and records review
- f. Checklists and other tools to guide observations, interviews and records review. Checklists should include the essential features of delivery of high-quality care, such as the availability of supplies, use of preferred medical techniques and quality of counseling (Please see Appendix C: Client record-review checklist for comprehensive abortion care.)
- g. A plan for sharing results with staff and the community, and improving services, if needed
- h. A timeline for the monitoring process, with information about activities and persons responsible for their completion

The following table illustrates aspects of abortion services that could be monitored and provides some sample questions.

Table 5-2: Examples of abortion services monitoring

Types of Services	Indicators	Information Sources	Checklists, Questionnaires and Exit Interviews
Which services should be monitored?	What will we use to measure our activities?	Where can we get this information?	What type of questions should we ask?
Infection prevention	Percentage of cases in which infection-prevention practices were fully adhered to	Observe services using performance checklists	Was no-touch technique performed?  Were MVA instruments properly processed?
Management and organization of services	Average amount of time clients spend in the facility  Average amount of time from arrival to procedure  Hours during which services are available	Review records of clinic finances, personnel and inventory  Observe and evaluate clinic flow  Review client records and conduct interviews with staff	During what times of the day does client waiting time increase?
Counseling	Number and percentage of women receiving high-quality counseling services	Observe contraceptive counseling services using performance checklists  Review recent cases in logbooks	Were women with special needs given appropriate referrals when necessary?
Contraceptive counseling and services	Number and types of contraceptives dispensed on site  Number and percentage of women who received contraceptive counseling  Number and percentage of women desiring contraception who received a method	Observe counseling services using checklists  Conduct exit interviews with women  Review recent cases in logbooks	How well was the woman counseled about which contraceptive methods are available?  Did the woman leave with the desired method or information?  Did the woman have to go to another facility to receive a contraceptive method?
Client satisfaction	Percentage of women who indicate that they received respectful care  Percentage of women who agree that clinic costs are reasonable	Conduct exit interviews with women  Review financial records	Did you feel that you were treated respectfully?  Do you think the amount you had to pay for services was reasonable?

## 2. Information gathering

Once the monitoring team has developed checklists and other tools, they can begin collecting information. There are several ways to gather data:

- a. Use information that is routinely collected by the health facility in logbooks, clinical records and supply ledgers. Local analysis of these data also prevents redundant monitoring and promotes collaboration between the administration and providers.
- b. To measure a change in a specific area of service delivery, use the same indicator over time.
- c. Conduct periodic observation and client interviews to examine aspects of service delivery such as quality of client-provider interaction and client satisfaction. The monitoring team should make sure to seek young women's perspectives.

The monitoring team should identify themselves, explain to the woman why she is being observed or interviewed and ask her permission to continue. The interview or observation must not proceed if the woman does not give her consent. Monitors must also ensure that privacy and confidentiality is respected. Clients' names and unique identifying information should not be included on monitoring forms.

(Please see Appendix A: Written consent form – interview and Appendix B: Written consent form – observation for examples.)

## 3. Analysis

The information that is collected during monitoring should be compiled for review by the monitoring team. The review of monitoring data presents an opportunity for health-care staff to openly discuss the facility's strengths and weaknesses. Compile the findings, and review the data to:

- a. Reveal problem areas
- b. Develop improvement plans
- c. Assess progress in improving care

Quantitative data reveals numbers and straightforward facts. For example, clinic visits have dramatically decreased in the past two months.

Qualitative data, such as interviews, can be used to complement quantitative information. For example, exit interviews in one facility revealed that women were dissatisfied with the quality of counseling.

Once the staff has a better understanding of the issues, they can look deeper into the underlying causes of the identified problems. Health-

*Ipas' Safe Abortion Care (SAC) approach is designed to help health managers and providers plan and monitor the delivery of services most critical for reducing deaths and injuries from unsafe abortion. Based on the model developed for monitoring the availability and use of Emergency Obstetric (EmOC) services, seven SAC indicators are used to monitor the availability, quality and use of safe abortion care services. Improvements in services and indicators over time can be assumed to be contributing to reductions in abortion-related maternal mortality. (Please see Additional resources, Monitoring to Improve Services.) The SAC Toolkit contains the hands-on materials to implement the SAC approach, and is available at [www.ipas.org](http://www.ipas.org).*

### Low-literacy client satisfaction assessment

*One low-literacy approach to assess client satisfaction is for staff to give each client a small bean which they place in a box upon exiting the facility. The bean indicates how they feel about their care that day. The box is divided into 3 sections and each has a face on it expressing feelings - a happy face, a blank or flat expression face, and a sad face. The staff use this as a qualitative sample of what clients think about services as part of their performance quality monitoring.*

**Solutions to problems in abortion services might include...**

- *Providing on-the-job training*
- *Reorganizing clinic services*
- *Changing clinic hours of operation*
- *Revising systems for procuring and storing supplies*
- *Strengthening referral systems*

care staff must ask, “What factors contributed to these problems?” In the example above, poor-quality counseling services might stem from inadequate training of newly hired staff and a client-intake process that leaves insufficient time for counseling. The staff review may also identify causes that are more pervasive—for instance, an underlying belief that counseling is not an important part of services. Staff should also seek input from clients and community members to determine the root cause of a problem or issue.

## 4. Action planning

The team should first assess which problems can be addressed with relative ease, given the available resources. They can then formulate a plan of action. Include young people from the community in discussing how to address problems in services for young people. A range of approaches to each problem should be discussed before making a decision on the best possible solution. Alternate solutions should be listed as potential future options, in case the initial solution does not meet expectations.

To create an action plan:

- a. Draft a written plan that includes a timeline for implementation and assessment.
- b. Specify who will be responsible for implementing each step of the proposed solution.
- c. Discuss the plan with staff members who may help implement the steps.
- d. Present the findings and proposed solutions to the entire staff. This is an opportunity to obtain valuable staff feedback. Share positive findings with staff and community members, when appropriate, including areas of strength and competency and any improvements that have been made. Staff contributions that have led to improved services should be recognized so that staff members can celebrate their successes.

## 6.0 Considerations for postabortion care

- It may be useful to collect information on the method of unsafe abortion women present with (for example, if they seem to have already taken misoprostol as compared to having had an unsafe surgical procedure), and use this information to focus community education activities.
- A distinction should be made in the logbook between any complications the woman may present with and complications arising from postabortion care services.
- Monitoring the proportion of services for women with obstetric complications that are abortion-related helps

to assess the demand placed upon health care systems by abortion complications.

## 7.0 Summary

- Monitoring is essential to ensure that women receive high-quality abortion services and that health-care workers have the resources they need to provide high-quality care.
- Monitoring is an ongoing process that works best when it is consistent and continuous and when the same tools are used to periodically measure results.
- Monitoring should fit into the routine work of the facility, use simple indicators, be open and participatory, and be performed ethically.
- When possible, monitoring should include input and participation of community members or clients who have received services.
- Monitoring should not be an overly complex or punitive process.
- Adverse event monitoring and reporting are key components of quality services.
- The four stages of monitoring are planning, information gathering, analysis and action planning.

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## Appendix A: Written consent form – interview

*Statement requesting to interview woman after receipt of abortion services:*

**Interviewer:**

*Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am working with a team that is monitoring service quality. We would like to help improve the services provided by this facility and would like to find out your views about the services you received.*

*I would like to ask you a few questions about the discussions you had with the staff and the procedure you have just undergone. I will not write your name on the data-collection form. Everything you tell me will be kept strictly confidential and will be shared only with other team members. No one will be able to identify you from the information we collect. Your participation is voluntary, and you do not have to answer questions you do not want to answer.*

*Do I have your permission to continue?*

**Client:**

*Yes, you have my permission.*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Facility \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B: Written consent form – observation

*Statement requesting to observe woman during her abortion:*

**Interviewer:**

*Hello, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am working with a team that is monitoring service quality. We would like to help improve the services provided by this facility by observing the care you will receive.*

*I will not write your name on the data-collection form. Everything I observe will be kept strictly confidential and will be shared only with other team members. No one will be able to identify you from the information we collect. Your participation is voluntary, and you do not have to allow me to observe if you do not want to. If you do not wish to participate, this will not affect the care or services you receive today.*

*Do I have your permission to continue?*

**Client:**

*Yes, you have my permission.*

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Facility \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Client record-review checklist for comprehensive abortion care

Site:	Reviewer:										Date:	
(Select 10 records at random and place a check mark if each of the items in the checklist was recorded on the corresponding client record.)												
Checklist Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Remarks
1. Client registration no. and/or identification information												
2. Date of visit												
3. Woman's age or year of birth												
4. Woman's parity												
5. Health history												
6. Physical Exam												
7. Vital signs (temp., pulse, blood pressure)												
8. Uterine size (in weeks) and position												
9. Any presenting complications												
10. Diagnosis												
11. Medications and dosages used for pain management												
12. Signed informed consent form												
13. Uterine evacuation techniques												
14. Provision of comprehensive counseling												
15. Contraceptive method selected and received prior to discharge (if desired)												
16. Other sexual and reproductive health services provided on-site (if needed)												
17. Referrals to other sexual and reproductive health services (if needed)												
18. Follow-up plans												
19. Provider's name and signature												

(continued on next page)

# Appendix C: Client record-review checklist for comprehensive abortion care *(continued)*

Site: _____			Reviewer: _____			Date: _____						
For complications only (e.g., perforation, hemorrhage, etc. )												
Checklist Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Total	Remarks
20. Detailed description of complication												
21. Detailed description of complication management												
22. Medications and dosages given												
23. Discharge status												
24. Informed consent form signed and included in record												

# Informed Consent, Information and Counseling

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## Key topics in this module:

- Pregnancy options and informed consent
- Definition of woman-centered counseling
- Privacy and confidentiality
- Counselors' values and empathy
- Special considerations

## 1.0 Introduction

A woman's experience during an abortion is both physical and emotional. Health-care providers should be prepared to offer effective and compassionate interaction, communication, emotional support and, if desired, counseling that focuses on the woman's needs. Each woman has unique circumstances

surrounding her unwanted pregnancy, and she may be experiencing a range of emotions. The woman and provider may also have different values, social circumstances, cultures and speak different languages, which can create barriers to understanding. It is the provider's responsibility to recognize and positively address these barriers to be able to reach empathy and understanding.

This module covers essential information, voluntary informed consent and counseling in an abortion setting and how providers can interact and communicate with clients in a respectful, effective manner. It also includes instructions on making appropriate referrals and information on counseling women with special considerations.

## 2.0 Pregnancy options

A woman seeking an abortion has usually carefully considered her options and decision prior to seeking care; therefore, pregnancy options counseling should not be required or serve as a barrier to receiving abortion care. If she has questions about her pregnancy options, providers can discuss them with her. They include:

- Continue the pregnancy to term and parent or release the child for adoption
- Terminate the pregnancy

By providing any information needed and supporting a woman's decision, providers can help women feel confident and comfortable that they are making the decision about their pregnancy that is best for themselves and other important people in their lives.

## 3.0 Voluntary informed consent

Informed consent is a process in which a woman gathers the information she needs to make a voluntary choice to undergo an abortion procedure. To ensure that women are giving informed consent for the abortion, providers should discuss and confirm that women have understood:

- The benefits and risks of and alternatives to abortion
- Consequences of not receiving abortion care
- Details of the planned procedure, once the method has been determined

The benefits, risks and other information on recommended uterine evacuation methods can be found in the Uterine Evacuation Methods, Uterine Evacuation Procedure with Ipas MVA Plus® and Uterine Evacuation with Medical Methods modules. An appendix of the Uterine Evacuation Methods module—Appendix A: Vacuum aspiration and medical abortion for first trimester induced

abortion—may also be helpful to share and discuss with women.

Providers need to explain this information in simple language and ensure that women have understood it. Privacy and confidentiality are critical to the informed consent process. Also, providers should ensure that women have given consent voluntarily and are not being pressured or coerced by anyone else to consent to the abortion. Providers should remain mindful of any circumstances that may limit a woman's ability to make autonomous decisions, such as:

- Pressure from her partner or family members to have an abortion
- Difficulty communicating due to language barriers or because she is hard of hearing or deaf
- Cognitive disability or mental illness
- Mental immaturity
- A traumatic event (such as violence or an unsafe abortion)

Young women are capable of making the decision to terminate a pregnancy. Because they are often not given adequate information or are specifically targeted with misinformation about sexuality, pregnancy and abortion, they may need more information to aid their decision-making and informed consent process. Young women have varying levels of maturity that do not always correspond with chronological age. Providers should listen to and talk with young women to gauge the degree of support they require. With correct information and support, young people are capable and have the right to make health-care decisions and provide informed consent for themselves. (Please see Additional resources, Informed Consent, Information and Counseling.)

## 4.0 Procedure options

Once a woman has clearly made a decision to terminate her pregnancy, the provider will discuss the abortion procedure options that are available in that facility and appropriate for that woman's clinical condition. If both vacuum aspiration (VA) and medical abortion (MA) are available, the counselor should explain the differences between them and help the woman explore which option is best for her. They should discuss the possible benefits, risks and what to expect with each procedure. As long as the different methods are clinically appropriate, providers should refrain from inserting their own method preferences into the discussion and support a woman's decision. After all of the woman's questions about procedure options are answered and she has made her decision about which procedure to have, providers will obtain her consent for the procedure.

Once the woman makes a firm, voluntary decision to terminate the pregnancy, the provider should establish the length of pregnancy and:

- Ensure visual and auditory privacy. Ask in private if she wishes to include a support person and *only* invite that person to counseling if she desires their presence.
- Determine if the woman is capable of listening to and understanding the information.
- Assure the woman that any medical and personal information discussed during counseling is confidential, and ensure information is not released without the woman's voluntary authorization.
- Affirm the positive step the woman has taken by seeking care.
- Explain her medical eligibility, abortion methods and available pain medications in clear, non-technical language.
- Assess the nature and extent of any fetal anomalies or other medical indications that indicate pregnancy termination.
- Obtain permission to treat the woman in the unlikely event of a complication or emergency.
- Encourage her questions and ensure that she understands the information provided; if she does not, explain it again in a simpler, more understandable way.

Providers should ask the woman—or her representative if she is unable to comprehend medical explanations—to give consent for care. Providers should confirm consent before beginning the abortion.

Providers should make sure the woman knows that she could ovulate almost immediately after uterine evacuation, which could quickly lead to another pregnancy if she resumes sexual intercourse without using a modern contraceptive method. If a woman desires contraception to prevent future pregnancy, the provider can ensure that she receives or is referred for appropriate contraceptive services during her visit. Most facilities can at the very least ensure that women receive an interim contraceptive method and a referral for a long-term contraceptive method before leaving the facility.

(Please see the Contraceptive Services module for more information.)

Once the woman has chosen, the counselor should provide the following information:

- What will be done before during and after the procedure
- What she is likely to experience—for example, cramps or pain
- How long the procedure will take



- Which pain management options she can choose
- What side effects, risks and complications are associated with the method
- What kind of aftercare and follow-up is needed

(Please see Appendix A: Comparing vacuum aspiration and medical abortion in the First Trimester in the Uterine Evacuation Methods module for a summary of this information.)

## 5.0 Counseling in the abortion setting

Counseling is a structured interaction in which a person voluntarily receives emotional support and guidance from a trained person in an environment that is conducive to openly sharing thoughts, feelings and perceptions. Counseling offers an excellent opportunity for providers to determine and address each woman's unique physical and emotional needs.

Effective counseling, characterized by a respectful, empathetic exchange between women and health-care workers, can help the woman make pregnancy and abortion-related decisions, feel affirmed in her decision and prepare for the abortion process. Effective counseling may improve women's abortion experience and outcomes and make them more inclined to trust health-care workers and seek appropriate medical care in the future. Although elements of effective counseling should be present throughout the visit, providers should offer women a formal counseling session if she desires it.

Woman-centered counseling is structured completely around each woman's needs and concerns. There is not a pre-determined script or list of items to be covered and checked off. The counselor considers each woman's emotional and physical state, medical condition, cultural and religious background, ability to understand medical terms and general level of understanding. A provider can determine a woman's most pressing concerns by asking open-ended questions about what she needs and how she can help and using the woman's responses as the starting point for counseling.

Because many facilities do not have full-time counseling positions, existing staff members can be trained to provide basic abortion counseling. In cases where clinicians also function as counselors, they must remain mindful that client-counselor dynamics may differ from client-clinician relations. Whether or not they have formal counseling responsibilities, clinicians should possess counseling knowledge, an affirming, nonjudgmental attitude and caring and supportive behaviors.

An effective abortion care counselor will:

- Solicit and affirm the woman's feelings

- Elicit circumstances surrounding the pregnancy that have implications for her clinical care and referrals to other services she might need
- Help the woman clarify her thoughts and decisions about her pregnancy, choices and her future sexual and reproductive health
- Allow the woman to explore her feelings about abortion
- Ensure that the woman receives appropriate answers to her questions and concerns, in language that she understands
- Provide referrals to additional services if necessary
- Help the woman determine who she might go to for social support, if she is interested

An abortion care counselor should not:

- Provide information that is not relevant to the woman's particular situation
- Give advice or tell the woman what they think is best
- Try to influence attitudes, beliefs and behaviors by persuading or threatening

(Please see the Uterine Evacuation with Medical Methods module. Also see Appendix A: Special considerations and Additional resources, Informed Consent, Information and Counseling for more information on counseling younger clients.)

## 6.0 Privacy and confidentiality

Women have the right to privacy and confidentiality in abortion care. Ideally, all abortion-related counseling should take place in a setting where no one else can see or overhear. Communication between the woman and the counselor must not be shared with other clients, visitors or staff members not involved in her direct care. Another individual—for example, a partner or family member—may ask to be included in the counseling session. It is crucial for the counselor to first meet with the woman alone and, at that time, ask her permission to invite anyone else to join the counseling session. By asking for her permission privately, she is less likely to feel pressured to include others in the counseling session.

In a counseling setting, informed decision making refers to the process by which a woman makes decisions of her own free will after she understands complete and accurate information. The counselor should inform the woman that any medical and personal information discussed during counseling is confidential, and then ensure that this information is not released without the woman's voluntary authorization. Offering the woman respectful, confidential counseling in a private setting will contribute to her

sense of dignity and the overall quality of her care.

## 7.0 Values and empathy

Counselors should extend compassion and respect to every woman, regardless of her circumstances. Counselors should examine their attitudes and assess their potential biases against women who, for example:

- Do not want to be pregnant but do not use contraception
- Undergo multiple abortions
- Present later in pregnancy
- Have multiple children or no children
- Carry pregnancies to term even though the pregnancies were not intended or desired
- Terminate a pregnancy due to fetal malformation
- Have multiple sexual partners
- Have been sexually assaulted
- Are unmarried
- Are of a certain race, ethnicity, social class, religion, age, sexual or gender orientation, health or STI status or political affiliation
- Have become pregnant while living with HIV
- Have little or no formal education
- Are sexually active at a young age

Health-care providers' attitudes and beliefs affect their interactions and counseling with women and carry considerable influence. Providers may unconsciously hold beliefs about who should control the abortion experience or about a woman's right to determine what happens in her body, and these may be linked to beliefs about gender, age, sexuality and other factors. Unlike vacuum aspiration and depending on the protocol, medical methods can put the abortion more in the control of the woman rather than the clinician. In many approved protocols, she can initiate and manage the abortion at home or other place outside a health-care facility where it is most convenient and comfortable for her to manage the abortion process. Providers' discomfort with women managing the abortion themselves, whether conscious or unconscious, may negatively affect provision of medical abortion and even cause them to resist offering MA services.

A woman-centered approach to care means that providers should:

- Identify their personal beliefs and values about abortion and

related factors such as gender, age, sexuality and control of the procedure

- Separate their beliefs and values from those of their clients and focus on their client's needs
- Show respect to all women, regardless of their age, marital status, sexual and reproductive behaviors and decisions
- Treat women with empathy—understanding their feelings and perspectives and communicating this understanding

Values clarification can help providers identify their beliefs and values, explore the consequences of their actions, learn how to separate their values from those of their clients and offer care in a way that shows respect for a woman's rights and decisions. Clinic managers and clinical mentors can help establish and maintain an environment of sensitivity and respect for women's needs through a variety of methods, including values clarification and other training, clinical coaching, supportive supervision, feedback from coworkers, anonymous evaluations and client surveys. (Please see Additional resources, Informed Consent, Information and Counseling.)

## 8.0 Effective communication

Counselors should strive to create a safe environment in which women can explore and validate their feelings.

Effective counselors remain open and nonjudgmental even when their personal beliefs differ from those of their clients. Counselors should practice empathy, the ability to understand another person's feelings and point of view and to communicate this understanding. Counselors should never insist that a woman talk or reveal information that she is not comfortable sharing. Counseling always involves two-way communication between the health-care provider and the woman. Each person spends time talking, listening, and asking and answering questions.

Counselors who practice effective communication:

- Stay attentive and focused on the woman and her needs
- Use nonverbal cues to convey interest in and concern for the woman and observe her nonverbal cues
- Ask open-ended questions and use encouraging words to help the woman talk openly
- Let her talk before providing more information
- Follow up with appropriate questions and feedback
- Use words and language that are easily understandable, including for young women

- Are warm and without bias, anger or judgment, including body language

Counselors who do not practice effective communication:

- Make judgments about a woman's behaviors
- Make assumptions about the woman and her needs, or focus on their own priorities
- Indicate a lack of interest through nonverbal cues and do not pay attention to the woman's nonverbal cues
- Ask only closed-ended questions
- Do not listen carefully, or show distraction
- Interrupt or speak over the woman
- Use medical terms or language that is difficult for women to understand
- Do not check to make sure that the woman has understood their questions
- Allow interruptions such as telephone calls or people coming into the counseling space
- Feel they know what is best for the woman, better than the woman herself

## 8.1 Active listening

*Active listening* involves more than just hearing. A counselor who is practicing active listening uses multiple senses to gather relevant information, convey understanding and encourage the woman to talk about her feelings and circumstances. Some elements of active listening are:

- Showing attentiveness by interjecting phrases such as "I see" or "I understand"
- Making encouraging sounds, facial expressions and gestures

Counselors should resist the temptation to offer statements that seem reassuring but make women feel unsupported or offer false reassurance. For example, saying "don't worry," "you'll feel better soon," or "everything will be fine" can make her feel that her concerns have been dismissed.

## 8.2 Open-ended questions and reflecting feelings

Open-ended questions cannot be answered with just "yes" or "no." They begin with "how," "what," "when" and "tell me about."

Questions that require more complete answers elicit more information and require full engagement in the conversation.

- Avoid asking open-ended questions that begin with “why” as this may be perceived as judgmental. Instead, counselors should ask open questions without judgment or assumptions. For example, “How are you feeling now that the abortion is complete?”
- Follow up the woman’s response with a statement that reflects understanding of her feelings and concerns.
- If the counselor is unsure whether she has understood correctly, she can add a question at the end of the statement, such as, “Is that correct?” This gives the woman the opportunity to confirm or correct the counselor’s understanding.

## 8.3 Nonverbal communication

By paying attention to nonverbal cues, a counselor can more fully understand a woman’s feelings. Counselors should remain observant about differences between a client’s verbal and nonverbal cues. For example, if a woman says she feels fine but has a sad facial expression, the counselor may ask: “You say you feel fine, but you look sad—can you tell me more about that?”

A counselor can use nonverbal communication to show concern for a woman by:

- Facing her or sitting beside her and removing any physical barriers between them such as a desk or counter
- Leaning slightly forward and making appropriate eye contact for the context
- Nodding and using a reassuring tone of voice
- Avoid turning and looking away, repeatedly looking at a watch or clock or using a harsh tone of voice

Counselors should remember that nonverbal cues vary from culture to culture, as well as according to age and gender within a given culture.

## 9.0 Referrals

If a counselor is unable to adequately address the woman’s needs, it is best to refer her to other appropriate individuals or services. To facilitate this process:

- Identify typical concerns clients have and create and maintain a list of local, current resources.
- Referrals should include accurate, easy-to-follow written or

pictorial information. Ask each woman if it is safe for her to receive written referral information. For some women, it may be dangerous to receive information about abortion that may be found by someone else, but other women may find it helpful to have written information on where and when referral services are available.

- Recommend services and facilities that are accessible to the woman, both geographically and financially, and assure her that she can return to this facility if she has trouble accessing the referred resource or it does not meet her needs.
- Ensure the referral site serves young women and that young women feel comfortable there before young women are referred.
- Track referrals in the logbook where counselors can write client's names, the service to which she was referred and details about follow-up care.

Providers need to be aware of high-quality resources available in their area and know how to refer women to them. For young women, referrals should be made to providers and services that are known to offer appropriate care for young women. Referral protocols and resource lists that provide simple, accurate and up-to-date information are essential components of an effective referral system. (Please see Appendix D: Sample clinical referral form in the Uterine Evacuation Procedure with Ipas MVA Plus® module.)

Receiving facilities should have processes in place for accepting referred patients and for reintegrating them into health facilities in their community for follow-up care. They should also provide feedback to the referring institution. (Please see the Community Linkages module.)

## 10.0 Closing a counseling session

When closing a counseling session, the counselor should:

- Provide a short summary of the key concepts discussed
- Ask the woman if she has any additional questions
- Ensure that the woman understands any verbal instructions or suggestions
- Provide the woman written or pictorial instructions or referrals, if appropriate
- Explain what to expect during the remainder of the clinic visit

## 11.0 Special considerations

Some clients may have special needs that they are not comfortable

mentioning to a counselor. Therefore, it is important that counselors ask questions to elicit information about each woman's situation and decision. Counselors who are uncomfortable working with certain client populations may be able to obtain additional training to attain greater competency. Alternately, counselors can refer women to other counselors or agencies who are skilled in providing high-quality services that meet special needs, such as:

- Women with multiple abortions
- Women who have experienced violence
- Women living with HIV
- Young women
- Women who do sex work or exchange sex for goods or money
- Women with cognitive and developmental disabilities and mental illness
- Refugees and displaced persons
- Women who have experienced female genital cutting
- Women who partner with women
- Women who present later in pregnancy

(Please see Appendix A: Special considerations.)

## 12.0 Considerations for postabortion care

- In cases of shock or other life-threatening conditions, a complete clinical assessment and voluntary, informed consent may be deferred until after the woman is stabilized.
- If a woman is in extreme pain or emotional distress, counseling should be offered when she is stable and able to comprehend and communicate.
- Women have a right to privacy and confidentiality. In a legally restricted environment, women who have self-induced or obtained a clandestine abortion may be particularly fearful that information will be reported to authorities. Providers should inform the woman that medical and personal information will not be released without her voluntary authorization, except when it is legally required.
- Providers should be able to respond to questions about safe, legal abortion and where women can access such services.
- Providers should consider that this may have been a wanted pregnancy.

For more information about counseling for postabortion care, see



Ipas's *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual*,  
Second Edition.

## 13.0 Summary

- Pregnancy options counseling should not be required or serve as a barrier to receiving abortion care.
- To give voluntary informed consent, women must know all their options and their benefits and risks. They must also be able to choose without pressure or coercion.
- Young women are capable of making the decision to terminate a pregnancy, and may need more information to aid their decision-making and informed consent process
- If both vacuum aspiration and medical abortion are available, the counselor should explain the differences between them and help the woman explore which option is best for her.
- Health-care providers should be prepared to offer compassionate support and, if desired, counseling that focuses on the woman's needs.
- Woman-centered counseling is structured completely around each woman's needs and concerns, such as those of young women and other special considerations.
- Counseling should be conducted in an area where no one else can see or overhear.
- Information shared by the woman is confidential and should not be released without her voluntary authorization.
- Clients respond best to counselors who provide nonjudgmental support, convey empathy and create a safe environment in which the woman is comfortable exploring her feelings.
- Woman-centered counseling includes such techniques as active listening, open-ended questioning, reflecting feelings and attention to nonverbal communication.
- Counselors should examine their personal beliefs, values and potential biases so that they do not affect counseling.
- Referral protocols and resource lists that provide simple, accurate, up-to-date information are essential components of an effective referral service.
- Counseling should conclude with summarizing key concepts discussed, what to expect, and ensuring that the woman understood what was discussed and her needs were addressed.

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## Appendix A: Special considerations

This is a summary of the most important information that is relevant to comprehensive abortion care providers. (Please see Additional Resources, Informed Consent, Information and Counseling; and Appendix C: Special contraceptive counseling considerations in the Contraceptive Services module for more information on each topic.)

### *Young women (ages 10-24)*

Physically, young women's clinical needs are mostly similar to those of adult women; however, their life and social circumstances are often very different, requiring care tailored to their unique circumstances, especially concerning counseling and provider attitudes. Providers should make a conscious effort to keep personal beliefs from limiting their ability to give the best care possible to young women.

When a young woman requests an abortion, she is likely to have carefully considered her options and decisions prior to seeking care. However, young women may want more information on which to base their decision. For the purpose of informed consent, it is important that counselors review the woman's medical condition and the basic options available to her: to continue the pregnancy to term and then parent or release the child for adoption; or to terminate the pregnancy. Young women should be allowed to make a free, informed decision and that decision should be respected. Because of inadequate or inaccurate information on sexual and reproductive health, counseling may take longer for young women than adults. If the young woman must, by law, notify or get consent from a third party, and she is not eligible for any exemption or alternative, providers should explain this obligation and offer to help her talk to the third party.

Decision making on abortion often takes place mostly outside the clinic setting, and a young woman may be particularly susceptible to adults' influence, especially from a partner or someone who has power over her. These adults may have internalized negative stereotypes about teen pregnancy and young women's ability to be responsible, which may strongly influence the young woman's decision to terminate a pregnancy. Providers should ask questions to ensure that she has not been pressured or coerced by anyone, including a partner, family, community or friends, to make her decision.

Stigma around young women's sexuality, consent laws and policies, and cultural and social conditioning by parents create particular challenges in counseling. Providers who want to offer high-quality counseling should be aware of these particular needs, and also recognize their own underlying attitudes toward young women's sexuality which may negatively affect service provision. When possible, young women should be offered counseling from a youth peer counselor or from a support person of their choice.

### *Women with multiple abortions*

If a woman does not desire pregnancy yet has experienced multiple unwanted pregnancies, the counselor can talk with her about why this is occurring. If the reason is that she chooses not to use contraception, some women will not have an explanation as to why they choose this. In some cases, there may be an underlying issue that prevents the woman from adequately protecting herself from unwanted pregnancy, including myths about contraception, coercive sex, abusive sexual relationships or unresolved emotional conflicts. Women with severe emotional issues should be referred to longer-term, professional mental-health services, if available.

### *Women who have experienced violence*

It is likely that providers will encounter women who have experienced sexual violence. Women who have experienced such violence—which includes rape, sexual assault, coercive sex, incest and

involuntary sex work—will often experience related health conditions, such as physical injury, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), psychological distress or unplanned pregnancy. Physical or psychological violence during pregnancy may also contribute to miscarriage or the desire for an abortion.

Abortion care visits may be the only contact that women who have experienced violence have with the health-care system. Counselors should develop a standard method for asking all clients about violence in their lives and incorporate those questions into routine counseling. Health workers must be cognizant of their own limitations in assisting women experiencing violence and, whenever possible, refer women to others specialized in addressing these women's needs.

Special violence-related counseling considerations include:

- An unwanted pregnancy may be the result of rape or incest
- A spontaneous abortion could have been caused by physical abuse
- The pregnancy could have been wanted.
- A woman may face further violence if her abortion or use of contraception is not kept confidential
- A woman may have been forced or coerced into having an abortion

### *Women living with HIV*

Women receiving abortion care who are HIV-positive need specific information, support, counseling, and medical care. If counselors have not undergone extensive HIV training, they should refer HIV-positive women to appropriate services, where available. HIV-positive women should be offered information that can help them better understand their condition and improve their own health, as well as the health of their sexual partners and children.

*HIV infection poses significant threats to the health and longevity of women of childbearing age and their children. Reported rates of HIV transmission from mother to child range from 15 to 45%. These rates can be lowered to less than 5% with the development of routine antiretroviral therapy in areas of the world with access to these medications. Despite the risks, women living with HIV have the same rights as other women to decide whether to carry a pregnancy to term or have an abortion.*

### *Women who engage in sex work*

Women's reasons for engaging in sex work, as well as their feelings and perceptions about these activities, vary widely. Women who do sex work have the same rights as women who do not, and should be treated with respect and nonjudgmental attitudes. Counselors' assumptions about women's sexual activities, partner choices, types of relationships (intimate versus commercial) or power to negotiate within sexual relationships can negatively affect the counseling session. Counselors can be most effective by meeting her needs for health services and referrals.

### *Women with cognitive and developmental disabilities and/or mental illness*

Cognitive and developmental disabilities and mental illness vary widely, and some women will need more assistance than others. Women may come to the clinic with their partner, caregiver, parent, friend or relative. While it may be helpful to engage the companion in discussions about the woman's needs, condition, informed consent, choices about care and contraceptive options, it is critical that the counselor address the woman directly

A common misperception is that women with cognitive and developmental disabilities and/or mental illnesses are not sexually active. Many women with these conditions are able to engage in safe, consensual sexual relationships. It is important to note, however, that women with these conditions

are at an increased risk for sexual violence and coercive sexual activity, potentially by their caregivers. If sexual violence is suspected, the counselor should speak with the woman in private and refer her to appropriate community services.

Communication with a woman who has a cognitive disability may take some extra time and effort on the counselor's part.

The woman may or may not be her own guardian, which can affect her ability to give informed consent. If she is able to make decisions about her own care, the counselor should make an extra effort to ensure that the woman clearly understands what she is consenting to and what her choices are. Women with cognitive disabilities may be quick to agree or to answer yes before they fully understand a situation.

### *Women in refugee and displaced settings*

Refugee and displaced women may be dealing with many different emotional stresses related to safety and personal-security issues; institutional, societal and personal violence; displacement from family, culture and home; lack of food; lack of access to comprehensive medical care; and insecurity about the future. Many women have been victims of violence during the initial period of displacement, while many others continue to experience violence in their present location. It is important when counseling refugee and displaced women to let them guide the counseling process. The provider must be sensitive to language differences between the provider and the woman, and have a native speaker of the woman's language translate if possible.

### *Women who have experienced genital cutting*

Counselors may encounter women who have undergone female genital cutting (FGC) or female genital mutilation (FGM). It is defined as the partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.

Women may not want to bring up the subject of FGC with their counselor or may not realize that it will affect their abortion care. If the woman has undergone genital cutting, it is very important that the counselor use sensitivity when questioning her about it and not assume that all women have the same experience with FGC.

### *Women with advanced gestational age*

Women who present at more advanced gestational ages often have faced multiple barriers that prevented earlier presentation, including not knowing they were pregnant, needing more time to make their decision and poor access to health services. Moreover, once they do present for care they may be met with negative or stigmatizing attitudes which further delay care. Understanding the social and emotional issues that are often a part of second trimester abortion and providing prompt, sensitive care or referral are an essential part of woman-centered care.

### *Women who partner with women*

Counselors should not assume that women seeking abortion services only have male sexual partners. There are various reasons why a woman who partners with women would seek abortion services. She may have had consensual sexual intercourse with a man or she may have experienced sexual violence. Some women engage in sexual relationships with both men and women. The circumstances surrounding the pregnancy will vary, as will the woman's feelings about the abortion. Counselors should not assume that the pregnancy was unwanted or discount the woman's risk for a future pregnancy.

Depending on cultural norms, it may be very difficult for the woman to disclose the fact that she partners with women. Counselors can make it easier by assuring the woman that the conversation is confidential, and by showing respect for the woman's partner, family and other choices.

# Contraceptive Services

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## Key topics in this module:

- Postabortion contraceptive counseling and method provision
- Service delivery models
- Effective contraceptive counseling
- Medical appropriateness of contraceptive methods following an abortion
- Emergency contraception (EC)
- Specialized situations for counseling or referrals

## 1.0 Introduction

International organizations recognize that access to contraception is a basic human right, fundamental to reproductive and sexual

*The term “contraception” is used in this curriculum rather than “family planning.” Many women receiving contraceptive services are trying to avoid getting pregnant as opposed to planning a family. This may be particularly relevant for young women. It is important for providers not to make assumptions about women’s reproductive intentions.*

health. The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends all women should receive contraceptive information and be offered counseling for and methods of postabortion contraception, including emergency contraception, before leaving the health-care facility. A consensus statement by the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO), the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM), the International Council of Nurses (ICN), and USAID is in agreement that all women should receive contraceptive counseling and services after spontaneous or induced abortion, irrespective of the procedure used. The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) Charter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights includes the right to choose whether or not to marry and to plan a family, and the right to decide whether and when to have children. National laws and health norms in many countries support these rights.

Following are some key facts about contraceptive care:

- All women receiving abortion care are at a critical juncture in their reproductive lives and can benefit from compassionate counseling about their contraceptive options.
- About 21 percent of all pregnancies will end in elective, induced abortions. Effective contraceptive methods, where they are made widely available and consistently used, can help women prevent pregnancies and therefore significantly decrease the rate of abortion.
- Every woman, including young women, undergoing an abortion should be offered contraceptive counseling and a range of contraceptive methods.
- A study by Boyd et al in 1972 established that ovulation can occur within 10 days following a vacuum aspiration abortion, and subjects in a recent study by Schreiber et al ovulated as soon as 8 days after a medical abortion. Similarly, Ratten found that a woman may ovulate as early as 10 days after an incomplete abortion. Because ovulation can occur almost immediately after a uterine evacuation, contraception should be provided immediately to women who want to prevent or delay pregnancy.

*“If a woman comes to a hospital with an incomplete abortion, we’ve already failed once to help her avoid an unwanted or a mistimed pregnancy. If she leaves the facility without having any means of preventing another pregnancy in the future that may not be wanted, we’ve failed her twice.”*

—Cynthia Steele Verme, Postabortion Care (PAC) Consortium

This module explains why contraceptive counseling and method provision are critical parts of abortion care. It also addresses how to successfully counsel women receiving abortion care so that those who wish to use contraception will be able to choose a method appropriate to their needs and use that method effectively.



## 2.0 Contraceptive counseling and method provision after an abortion

The goal of contraceptive counseling is to help a woman decide if she wants to prevent pregnancy in the short or long term and to assist her in choosing an appropriate contraceptive method. In woman-centered contraceptive counseling, providers focus on each woman's unique needs, reproductive intentions, life circumstances and clinical conditions.

Contraceptive use can promote women's health and rights by:

- Allowing mothers to achieve spacing between births and a small family size, which improves infant health and saves infant lives;
- Improving women's quality of life by allowing her to be in control of her reproductive health including the number and timing of her children;
- Helping women avoid unwanted pregnancies, which prevents unnecessary exposure to potential risks during pregnancy and delivery.

Postabortion contraceptive services are effective when they are based on individual women's needs. Contraceptive counseling should help each woman assess her situation and needs and make an informed decision for herself. Contraceptive use is most effective when the woman has been informed about the advantages, risks, side effects, and likelihood of success of all appropriate options and their alternatives.

## 3.0 Models of service delivery

Contraceptive counseling and method provision can take place at various points and in different ways during abortion services. Service-delivery models include:

- Providers who work in the area of the facility where abortion care is provided can offer counseling and method provision. This method of service delivery can reduce barriers to access. If contraceptive services cannot be provided in the same area as abortion care, arrangements should be made to help women undergoing abortion easily access the area where contraceptive services are provided.
- Arrangements can be made for staff from another area or facility to come to the abortion-care area to counsel and dispense methods.
- Counseling can be provided at the abortion-care facility with referrals to another facility where women can obtain contraceptive methods.

- Women can go to another clinic for services.
- Community-based contraceptive counseling and method provision by trained individuals such as village health workers or staff of community-based organizations.

Providing contraceptive services at the same time and in the same location as the abortion care can help ensure that a woman receives a contraceptive method before leaving the facility. If a woman is eligible and has been counseled and consented to the method, all methods of contraception—including intrauterine devices (IUDs) and female sterilization—may be started at the same time as a vacuum aspiration. Most methods of contraception can be given at the same time as the first pill of a medical abortion. After medical abortion, an IUD may be inserted when it is reasonably certain that a woman is no longer pregnant. (See Table 7-1 in Section 8.1 for more information.)

## 4.0 Women’s contraceptive needs following an abortion

Although some women who seek abortions may want to become pregnant again soon, some desire contraception to prevent or delay another pregnancy. These women generally seek more effective, long-term contraceptive methods and have high continuation rates with their method of choice. A provider may begin by asking whether and when the woman wants to become pregnant again and if she desires contraception.

A woman’s ability to use contraception successfully may not always be in her control. Providers should empathetically help each woman assess her own situation, consider which method might help her prevent a future unwanted pregnancy, and discuss possible solutions to challenges she may have using contraception. In some cases, discreet long-acting methods that do not require daily adherence such as IUDs or implants may be more effective and may help increase her successful use of contraception. Providers need to avoid blaming women for not preventing past unwanted pregnancies, as this can lead to women’s reluctance to seek services in the future. Providers should also be aware of cultural attitudes and beliefs that may influence a woman’s use of contraception, particularly young women.

### 4.1 Contraceptive failure

Providers will encounter women who have terminated unwanted pregnancies that resulted from contraceptive failure. Contraceptive failure happens for several reasons:

Failure of the contraceptive

- No method is 100 percent effective. Even when a modern method of contraception is used correctly and consistently,

some women will become pregnant.

Failure to use the method or failure to use it correctly or consistently for various reasons such as:

- Forgetting to use a method consistently
- Not being able to afford contraceptives on a regular basis
- Stopping use due to unexpected side effects or misunderstandings about effects on fertility or health
- Disapproval of husband/partner, mother-in-law, other family members, religious leaders or other influential people
- Sex was non-consensual
- Concerns about being stigmatized due to cultural attitudes that equate contraceptive use with promiscuity

There are also health-system-related failures that can result in women not being able to access or correctly use contraceptive methods, including:

- Provider did not adequately explain how to use the method
- National reproductive-health policies limit access to contraception for certain women, such as young or unmarried women
- Contraceptive methods are too expensive
- Family-planning clinics do not reliably stock the woman's preferred methods
- Contraceptive service locations and times are not convenient
- Contraceptive service protocols limit re-supply; for example, dispensing only one-month supply at a time

## 5.0 Rights to privacy, confidentiality and informed choice

Privacy and confidentiality are essential, especially in abortion-care settings.

- Women should receive counseling in a private area where they are not seen or overheard by others. The provider should assure the woman that the discussion is confidential.
- Providers should follow professional protocols that protect confidentiality. This includes not releasing the woman's information without her consent and not discussing her situation in the presence of others, including her partner or family members.

*Providers must ensure that every woman receiving abortion-related care knows:*

- *Ovulation and thus pregnancy can occur almost immediately after a uterine evacuation*
- *In general, all methods of contraception can be used immediately following a uterine evacuation*
- *Where she can obtain contraceptive services and methods including emergency contraception (EC)*

All women, including young women, have the right to make a free and informed choice about the contraceptive method she will use. Acceptance of contraception or of a specific method should never be a prerequisite for obtaining abortion care. Free and informed choice means that a woman chooses a method voluntarily, without coercion or pressure. It requires that she have a variety of methods to choose from and a clear understanding of the benefits and risks of each method.

## 6.0 Involvement of partners

The woman should be asked whether or not she wants her partner included in contraceptive counseling. In some cases, inclusion of partners in contraceptive counseling can increase the effectiveness of the counseling. Male partners' support of contraception is a strong predictor of contraceptive use. Counseling male partners can increase their awareness and use of male contraceptive methods, such as male condoms and vasectomy.

If the woman's partner wants to be included in the contraceptive-counseling process, the provider should first meet alone with the woman to determine if she wants the partner involved. If a woman does not want her partner involved, she should be counseled and given the method privately and no information from the visit should be shared with her partner.

If the woman's partner does not approve of contraception but the woman still wants to use it, the provider can help her select a method that does not require her partner's cooperation, such as an injectable, implant or IUD. The provider should also discuss possible consequences, such as violence, if the woman's partner learns of her contraceptive use. If appropriate, the provider should help the woman explore how she would protect herself in such an event and should provide referrals to appropriate services. (Please see the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module. Also see Additional resources, Contraceptive Services.)

## 7.0 Essential steps for contraceptive counseling

A provider who counsels effectively does more than describe the various contraceptive methods available; he or she establishes trust with the woman, comes to understand her needs and tailors the counseling session to meet those needs. Contraceptive counseling requires an open exchange of information that can only occur in an atmosphere of mutual respect. (Please see the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module.)

The following steps have been adapted from the GATHER technique, a widely used approach in contraceptive services.

### *Greet and establish rapport*

- Secure a private space to talk, greet the woman in a friendly

way, speak directly to her and demonstrate interest and concern.

- Ask if it is an appropriate time to discuss contraception, assure her that the conversation will be kept confidential and ask if she wants her partner present.

### *Ask the woman*

- Ask the woman about her needs. Using open-ended questions, discuss the factors that led to the abortion and determine if the pregnancy was unplanned.
- If she was using contraception, ask her to explain how failure occurred. Explain human reproduction, if necessary. Some women who seek an abortion may not fully understand basic information on how they became pregnant or how contraception prevents pregnancy. This may be particularly true for young women.
- The woman may have needed a therapeutic abortion where future pregnancies may pose health risks, or the pregnancy may have been terminated due to fetal abnormalities.
- Ask the woman if she desires to delay or prevent future pregnancy. Some women may not be interested in delaying pregnancy. For these women, contraceptive counseling and information on the benefits of spacing children may still be useful for future reference, or if a delay in pregnancy is medically recommended. Many women desire contraception to prevent or delay another pregnancy.
- Consider the woman's clinical condition and her personal situation.

(Please see Appendix A: Individual factors and counseling recommendations and rationales.)

### *Tell the woman about characteristics of available methods*

- Determine which contraceptive methods are available and accessible at the facility and in the community;
- Explain characteristics, side effects and effectiveness of the methods available, and direct her to accessible places to obtain them.

### *Help the woman choose her method*

- Support the woman in selecting the contraceptive method that best suits her and her partner;
- Solicit follow-up questions, explaining the characteristics of different methods and exploring resupply issues, including

where contraceptives may be available in her community;

- Discuss potential barriers to successful use of contraception and ways to overcome them.

### *Explain how the method works*

- Ensure she understands how the method works
- Help her develop a plan for continued use

### *Return for follow-up care and refer to other resources*

- Encourage her to return if she has concerns or problems with her method or the method becomes unacceptable. She should also return if she wants to change methods, if she needs re-supply or if she wishes to stop using contraception.
- Discussions about contraception may reveal other factors affecting a woman's sexual and reproductive health, such as violence or commercial sex work.
- Providers should have resource lists available.

## **8.0 Medical eligibility for contraceptive use after a uterine evacuation**

When providing contraception to a woman, her medical eligibility for each method must be considered. In general, women (including young women) can use all modern contraceptive methods immediately following a uterine evacuation, provided that:

- There are no severe complications requiring further treatment.
- The woman receives adequate counseling and gives informed consent.
- The provider screens for any precautions for using a particular contraceptive method.

There are some notes of caution:

- Women should not have sexual intercourse until any medical complications are resolved and their chosen contraceptive method becomes effective.
- Fertility-awareness based methods should only be started after the resumption of regular menses.
- Some medical conditions require a delay in the use of certain methods. Another contraceptive method should be offered to the woman for use in the interim.

Based on WHO data, the following section discusses which methods are appropriate or inappropriate for various clinical

conditions. See Appendix B: Guidelines for selection of contraception by method. The contraceptive methods referred to include:

- Barrier methods such as male and female condoms, spermicides, diaphragms and cervical caps;
- Hormonal methods such as oral contraceptives, injectables, implants, skin patches and vaginal rings;
- Intrauterine methods such as IUDs and intrauterine systems (IUS);
- Fertility awareness-based methods such as basal body temperature and calendar methods;
- Emergency contraception, which must be used within five days after unprotected intercourse and includes a specific regimen of contraceptive pills or insertion of an IUD;
- Surgical methods such as male and female sterilization.

### Long-Acting Reversible Contraceptives (LARC)

*Long-term contraceptives such as IUDs and implants have been found to be more effective in preventing future pregnancies and have higher satisfaction than pills, for both adult and young women. Also, women who use IUDs and implants are satisfied with them, leading to longer continuation than pills or injectables. Because unintended pregnancy occurs when women stop or switch methods, satisfaction and continuation are important strengths of IUDs and implants as contraceptive methods.*

## 8.1 Uncomplicated uterine evacuation using medical methods

Medical eligibility after a medical abortion is not different from that of other first-trimester methods.

Most modern hormonal contraceptive methods can be used immediately with misoprostol, provided that there are no contraindications. This recommendation is based on expert opinion. Delaying provision of contraceptive methods puts women at risk of unintended pregnancy. A woman who wants contraception should be provided her preferred method as soon as possible.

Table 7-1: When to start contraception after MA

Contraceptive method	Initiation timing
Oral contraceptive pills, contraceptive ring and patch	Day 1 of the MA regimen
Implant	Day 1 of the MA regimen
Injection	Day 1 of the MA regimen
IUD	As soon as reasonably sure woman is no longer pregnant
Sterilization	As soon as reasonably sure woman is no longer pregnant
Fertility awareness-based methods	Following one post abortion menses in a woman with a history of regular periods

## 8.2 Uncomplicated vacuum aspiration

All modern contraceptive methods can be used immediately.

## 8.3 Vacuum aspiration with complications

In cases where an infection is evident or presumed, the provider should advise the woman to avoid intercourse until the infection is resolved or ruled out. All methods of contraception can be given after an abortion complicated by an infection, except for the intrauterine device and female sterilization. An intrauterine device may be inserted or sterilization performed once the infection is resolved.

Genital injuries or excessive blood are not medical eligibility contraindications, but providers need to take these conditions into consideration. Genital injury includes uterine perforations, cervical tears, vaginal trauma and lacerations. These injuries may require a delay in the use of certain contraceptive methods. Methods that may be temporarily restricted include female sterilization, IUD, IUS, spermicides and barrier methods other than the male condom.

Excessive blood loss may require a delay in the use of female sterilization and IUDs, depending on the severity of the loss. For sterilization, delay is recommended if laboratory tests or clinical signs indicate anemia.

## 9.0 Emergency contraception

Emergency contraception (EC) is a particularly important option for preventing pregnancy after unprotected intercourse or contraceptive failure and is often easily available in pharmacies and chemist shops. For women receiving abortion services,



providing EC pills in advance as a back-up method in case of contraceptive failure may help prevent future unwanted pregnancies. The use of EC will not terminate or interfere with a pregnancy once it is established.

There are two types of EC:

- Intrauterine device (IUD): When inserted within five days after unprotected intercourse, a copper IUD is 99 percent effective in preventing pregnancy.
- Emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs): The pills are 75 to 95 percent effective when used within five days after unprotected intercourse.

To be most effective, ECPs should be started as soon as possible after unprotected intercourse but may be taken up to 5 days after unprotected intercourse.

- Although either progestin-only pills (POPs) or combined estrogen-progestin oral pills (COCs) may be used, POPs are more effective and produce fewer side effects.
- When taken within 24 hours of unprotected intercourse, progestin-only ECPs have been found to reduce the risk of pregnancy by 95 percent.
- When taken within 72 hours of unprotected intercourse, ECPs that contain progestin-only reduce the risk of pregnancy by 89 percent, while ECPs that contain both estrogen and progestin reduce the risk of pregnancy by 75 percent.

## 10.0 Special contraceptive counseling considerations

For the following women and issues, there are certain specialized considerations providers should keep in mind. Information on how providers can meet the specific contraceptive needs of women in these circumstances is provided in Appendix C: Special contraceptive counseling considerations. Special considerations include:

- Young women
- Multiple abortions
- Violence
- Living with HIV
- Women engaged in sex work
- Women with cognitive and developmental disabilities and mental illness
- Refugees and displaced persons
- Female genital cutting

### Supply emergency contraception pills

*In some settings, pills specifically packaged for EC are available. Where packaged ECPs are not available, taking a specific dose of commonly packaged oral contraceptives is acceptable. Recommended dosages depend on the formulation of the particular pills used. The following are examples of ECP regimens:*

- POPs: Single dose of 1.5mg of levonorgestrel taken within five days of unprotected intercourse. In countries where pills containing 1.5mg of levonorgestrel are not available, two pills of 0.75mg can be taken together. Other POPs with levonorgestrel can also be used but, depending on the pill composition, women will need to take the number of pills equal to 1.5mg of levonorgestrel.
- COCs: Two doses of 0.1mg (100mcg) of ethinyl estradiol plus either 0.5mg of levonorgestrel or 1.0mg of norgestrel taken 12 hours apart but within 120 hours after unprotected intercourse.

*Women should be advised that the progestin-only regimen has the highest effectiveness and fewest side effects.*

## 11.0 Considerations for postabortion care

- Eligibility for contraception after postabortion care is the same as after induced abortion.
- If postabortion care is uncomplicated, all methods of contraception may be offered and provided to the woman as long as she is medically eligible, understands the methods and gives informed consent.
- If a woman has signs and symptoms of infection, IUD placement or female sterilization should be delayed until the infection has resolved.

## 12.0 Summary

- Every woman receiving abortion care, including young women, should be offered contraceptive counseling and, if she desires, a contraceptive method.
- Contraceptive services support the basic human right to decide whether and when to have children. Women receiving contraceptive services have a right to privacy, confidentiality and informed choice.
- To be effective, providers must establish trust, strive to understand a woman's contraceptive preferences and needs, and tailor the counseling session to meet those needs.
- There are several possible service-delivery models for providing contraceptive services. Providing contraceptive services at the same time and in the same location as the abortion care can help ensure that a woman receives a contraceptive method before leaving the facility.
- Women receiving abortion care may have a history of contraceptive use that includes failure of the contraceptive, incorrect use or non-use of their chosen method or failure of the health system to provide their contraceptive of choice.
- Inclusion of partners in contraceptive counseling may increase the effectiveness of the counseling, but should only be done if the woman, during a one-to-one conversation with the provider, indicates that she wants her partner involved. If not, she should be counseled and given the method privately and no information from the visit should be shared with her partner.
- Providers need to be knowledgeable about the range of contraceptive methods and consider each woman's medical eligibility for various methods, including EC.
- Providers should understand that women may have special situations in their lives that will affect their contraceptive needs and use, and should be prepared to address those situations.

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## Appendix A: Individual factors and counseling recommendations and rationales

If the woman	Recommendations	Rationales
Does not want to be pregnant soon	Consider all reversible methods.	Seeking an abortion usually suggests that the woman does not want to be pregnant at this time.
Is under stress or in pain	Consider all reversible methods. Do not encourage use of permanent methods at this time. Provide referral for continued contraceptive care.	Stress and pain interfere with making free, informed decisions, and this is not usually a good time for a woman to make a permanent decision.
Was using a contraceptive method when she became pregnant	Assess why contraception failed and what problems the woman might have had using the method effectively. Help the woman choose a method that she will be able to use effectively. Ensure that she understands how to use the method, get follow-up care and resupply, discontinue use and change methods.	Method failure, unacceptability, ineffective use or lack of access to supplies may have led to the unwanted pregnancy. These factors may still be present and may lead to another unwanted pregnancy.
Has stopped using a method	Assess why the woman stopped using contraception, including side effects or lack of access to resupply.  Help the woman choose a method that she will be able to use effectively.  Make sure she understands how to use the method, get follow-up care and resupply, discontinue use and change methods.	Unacceptability or lack of access may have led to unwanted pregnancy.  These factors may still be present and may lead to another unwanted pregnancy.
Is young	Consider all methods including long-acting methods like the intrauterine device or implants.	Young women are eligible for all forms of contraception, similar to older women.
Has a partner who is unwilling to use condoms or will prevent use of another method	If the woman wishes, include her partner in counseling. Protect the woman's confidentiality in all instances, even if she does involve her partner. Discuss methods that the woman can use without her partner's knowledge, such as injectables, IUDs or implants.  Do not recommend methods that the woman will not be able to use effectively.	In some instances, involving the male in counseling will lead to his use of and support for contraception; however, if the woman, for whatever reasons, does not want to involve a partner, her wishes should be respected.
Wants to become pregnant soon	Do not try to persuade her to accept a method. Provide information or a referral if the woman needs other reproductive-health services.	Women having an abortion may want to become pregnant again soon.

*Note that more than one factor may apply.*

*(Adapted from Leonard and Ladipo, 1994.)*

## Appendix B: Guidelines for selection of contraception by method

Method	Timing After Abortion*	Advantages	Remarks
<b>Non-Fitted Barriers</b> Latex and vinyl male/female condoms; vaginal sponge and suppositories such as foaming tablets, jelly or film	May be used immediately after abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No method-related health risks</li> <li>• Inexpensive</li> <li>• Good interim method if initiation of another method must be postponed</li> <li>• No medical supervision required</li> <li>• Latex and vinyl condoms provide protection against RTIs and STIs (HBV and HIV)</li> <li>• Easily discontinued</li> <li>• Effective immediately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In typical use, less effective than IUD or hormonal methods</li> <li>• Requires use with each incident of intercourse</li> <li>• Requires continued motivation</li> <li>• Resupply must be available</li> <li>• May interfere with intercourse</li> </ul>
<b>Fitted Barriers Used With Spermicides</b> Diaphragm or cervical cap with foam or jelly	Diaphragm can be fitted immediately after abortion  Delay fitting cervical cap until bleeding has stopped and uterus has returned to prepregnancy size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No method-related health risks</li> <li>• Inexpensive</li> <li>• No medical supervision required</li> <li>• Some protection against RTIs and STIs (HBV and HIV)</li> <li>• Easily discontinued</li> <li>• Effective immediately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less effective than IUD or hormonal methods</li> <li>• Requires use with each incident of intercourse</li> <li>• Requires continued motivation</li> <li>• Resupply of spermicides must be available</li> <li>• Associated with urinary-tract infections in some users</li> <li>• Requires fitting by trained service provider</li> </ul>
<b>Oral Contraceptives</b> Combined and progestin-only	May be used immediately after abortion or on the same day as the first dose of MA drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly effective</li> <li>• Available in some settings in community pharmacy or chemist shops</li> <li>• Can be started immediately, even if infection is present</li> <li>• Can be provided by non-physicians</li> <li>• Does not interfere with intercourse</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires continued motivation and daily use</li> <li>• Resupply must be available</li> <li>• No protection against STIs/HIV</li> <li>• Effectiveness may be lowered with long-term use of certain medications, including rifampin, dilantin and griseofulvin</li> </ul>

\*This information applies to methods after first-trimester abortion.

## Appendix B: Guidelines for selection of contraception by method (continued)

Method	Timing After Abortion*	Advantages	Remarks
<b>Emergency Contraceptive Pills</b>	May be used immediately after abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Important back-up method when contraception fails (for example, condom breaks), when no method is used or when sex is forced</li> <li>• Available in some settings in community pharmacy or chemist shops</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing emergency contraceptive pills in advance as a back-up method may help prevent future unwanted pregnancies</li> <li>• No protection against STIs/HIV</li> <li>• Generally less effective than other contraceptive methods</li> <li>• May have side effects such as nausea and vomiting</li> </ul>
<b>Vaginal Rings</b>	May be used immediately after abortion or on the same day as the first dose of MA drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly effective</li> <li>• Can be provided by non-physicians</li> <li>• Does not require daily attention from user; stays in vagina for three weeks once inserted</li> <li>• Can be inserted by user</li> <li>• Available in some settings in community pharmacy or chemist shops</li> <li>• Highly effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resupply must be available</li> <li>• Effectiveness may be lowered with long-term use of certain medications such as rifampin, dilantin and griseofulvin</li> </ul>
<b>Skin Patches</b>	May be used immediately after abortion or on the same day as the first dose of MA drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be started immediately, even if infection is present</li> <li>• Can be provided by non-physicians</li> <li>• Available in some settings in community pharmacy or chemist shops</li> <li>• Does not interfere with intercourse</li> <li>• Does not require daily attention from user; applied once a week</li> <li>• Applied by user</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resupply must be available</li> <li>• Effectiveness may be lowered with long-term use of certain medications such as rifampin, dilantin and griseofulvin</li> <li>• For the first cycle, if applied later than 24 hours after menstrual period starts, back-up method must be used for seven days</li> </ul>

\* This information applies to methods after first-trimester uterine evacuation.



## Appendix B: Guidelines for selection of contraception by method (continued)

Method	Timing After Abortion*	Advantages	Remarks
<b>Progestin-Only Injectables DMPA, NET-EN</b>	May be given immediately after abortion or on the same day as the first dose of MA drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly effective</li> <li>• Can be started immediately, even if infection is present</li> <li>• Can be provided by non-physician</li> <li>• Does not interfere with intercourse</li> <li>• Not user-dependent, except for remembering to get the injection every two or three months</li> <li>• No supplies needed by user</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May cause irregular bleeding, especially amenorrhea; excessive bleeding may occur in rare instances</li> <li>• Delayed return to fertility after stopping use</li> <li>• Must receive injections every two or three months</li> <li>• In many settings, must go to the clinic for resupply</li> </ul>
<b>Combined Injectables</b>	May be given immediately after abortion or on the same day as the first dose of MA drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly effective</li> <li>• Can be started immediately, even if infection is present</li> <li>• Can be provided by non-physician</li> <li>• Does not interfere with intercourse</li> <li>• Not user-dependent, except for remembering to get the injection every two or three months</li> <li>• No supplies needed by user</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May cause heavy and/or irregular bleeding initially, especially for the first few months; then regular monthly bleeding usually resumes</li> <li>• Delayed return to fertility</li> <li>• Must receive injections every two or three months</li> <li>• In many settings, must go to the clinic for resupply</li> </ul>
<b>Progestin-Only Implants</b>	May be inserted immediately after abortion or on the same day as the first dose of MA drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly effective</li> <li>• Long-term contraception</li> <li>• Immediate return to fertility on removal</li> <li>• Does not interfere with intercourse</li> <li>• No supplies needed by user</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May cause irregular bleeding, especially spotting, or amenorrhea</li> <li>• Trained provider required to insert and remove</li> <li>• Cost-effectiveness depends on how long used</li> </ul>
* This information applies to methods after first-trimester uterine evacuation.			

## Appendix B: Guidelines for selection of contraception by method *(continued)*

Method	Timing After Abortion*	Advantages	Remarks
<b>IUD/IUS‡</b>	IUD/IUSs can be inserted after vacuum aspiration, provided the risk or presence of infection can be ruled out. After MA, IUD/IUSs can be inserted as soon as reasonably sure woman is no longer pregnant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Highly effective</li> <li>• Long-term contraception; effective for five to 10 years, depending on the type</li> <li>• Immediate return to fertility following removal</li> <li>• Does not interfere with intercourse</li> <li>• No supplies needed by user</li> <li>• Requires only monthly checking for strings by user</li> <li>• Only one follow-up visit needed unless there are problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May increase menstrual bleeding and cramping during the first few months</li> <li>• Hormone treated IUD/ IUS can decrease bleeding or cause amenorrhea. Hormone treated IUD/ IUS are associated with secondary health benefits. Complications can include uterine perforation during insertion, which is rare, and expulsion</li> <li>• May increase risk of pelvic inflammatory disease (PID) and subsequent infertility for women at risk for RTIs and STIs (HBV and HIV)</li> <li>• Trained provider required to insert and remove</li> </ul>
<b>Female Voluntary Sterilization (FVS)</b>	FVS can be performed after uncomplicated vacuum aspiration. After MA, FVS may be performed as soon as it is reasonably certain a woman is no longer pregnant. Consider bridging with a short term method if there is a delay.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Permanent method</li> <li>• Highly effective</li> <li>• No change in sexual function</li> <li>• No long-term side effects</li> <li>• Immediately effective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adequate counseling and fully informed consent are required before VS procedures</li> <li>• Slight possibility of surgical complications</li> <li>• Requires trained staff and appropriate equipment</li> </ul>
<b>Fertility Awareness</b>	May use method after first normal period has returned. Only for use in a woman with a history of regular periods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No cost associated with method</li> <li>• No method-related health risks</li> <li>• No medical supervision required</li> <li>• Easily discontinued</li> <li>• Effective immediately</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unreliable immediately after abortion</li> <li>• Alternative methods recommended until resumption of normal cycle</li> <li>• Requires extensive instruction and counseling</li> <li>• Requires continued motivation and a thorough understanding by the woman and her partner of how to use the method</li> <li>• Does not protect against STIs/HIV</li> </ul>

Adapted from: Benson et al., 1992; WHO, 2010b

\* This information applies to methods after first-trimester uterine evacuation.

‡ See Section 9.0 for information on emergency contraceptive IUDs

## Appendix C: Special contraceptive counseling considerations

(Please see Appendix A: Special considerations in the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module, for more information.)

### Young women (ages 10-24)

Young women's contraceptive needs vary greatly. A young married woman with one child who wants to avoid having a second may have different considerations than a young woman who may be at higher risk for STIs, including HIV. Some young women may want to become pregnant immediately and do not require contraception. When providing contraceptive counseling and services, it is important to ask what the young woman's immediate and longer-term reproductive plans are and then provide appropriate counseling.

Contraceptive counseling should also include information on fertility awareness, by asking what the client knows about her menstrual cycle and fertility and building on that to educate her about the fertile and infertile points in her cycle. Fertility awareness-based methods are not recommended for young women with erratic or irregular menstrual cycles. As with abortion, young women may have concerns about the safety or efficacy of contraceptive methods, which may be based on misinformation. They may not know how pregnancy occurs or is prevented. For example, they may have heard that pregnancy won't occur if they have intercourse in certain positions, in water or during menstruation, or believe that contraception will cause future permanent infertility. Because of misinformation like this, it is important that providers explain how a contraceptive works, including efficacy, potential side effects such as weight gain or breast tenderness and their incidence, and the long-term clinical implications of any such side effects. Providers can ask indirect questions such as "What are some things your friends say about how you can and can't get pregnant?" and "What are some things you heard about this method?" to find out whether a young woman is misinformed.

Contraceptive counseling should be reality-based. That is, it should begin by uncovering and addressing what clients believe, whether or not it is accurate, in order to avoid the method's discontinuation. Providers should also learn from the young woman what barriers she may face in using different contraceptive methods and help the young woman identify the most appropriate option for her. A young woman's privacy needs can also influence her selection of contraceptive method; for example, injectables, implants or an intrauterine device may suit a young woman with high privacy needs, even if her preferred method might otherwise be something else.

Making a larger range of contraceptive methods available is correlated with increased acceptance of a method, among young and adult women. In addition to her method of choice, the young woman should be offered to leave the facility with at least one dose of contraceptive pills (ECPs), in case of an accident or contraceptive failure.

The following information should also be presented when discussing contraception with young women:

#### *Medical eligibility for young women*

Clinical eligibility guidelines for postabortion contraceptives for young women are the same as for adult women. Three methods have implications for young women that bear additional discussion.

#### *Sterilization*

There is no clinical contraindication for sterilization in young women. However, women under the age of 30 are significantly more likely to experience regret after sterilization. During counseling, providers should emphasize that it is a permanent method, and make it clear that there is no extra

benefit to doing the procedure at the time of the abortion versus using a non-permanent method for some time to be sure it is the method she wants. There may be laws and policies in place that affect a minor's ability to consent to permanent surgical modification and whether sterilization is an option for minors. Providers should offer information in a factual manner and support the young woman's informed decision.

### *Long-acting contraceptive methods*

Long-acting reversible contraception such as intrauterine devices (IUDs) or implants are safe and effective and benefit young women. For all women, these methods are more effective at preventing pregnancy than other modern methods including pills, injections and condoms. In addition, because women who use IUDs or implants do not have to remember pills every day, buy more supplies or get an injection every three months there is no chance of method failure because of problems with use. Young women have more difficulty using short acting methods than older women resulting in pregnancy rates that are double that of older women who use short acting methods. Therefore the ease of use of IUDs and implant may be particularly beneficial for young women. Finally, women who use IUDs and implants are satisfied with them, leading to longer continuation than pills or injectables. Because unintended pregnancy occurs when women stop or switch methods, satisfaction and continuation are keys to the effectiveness of IUDs and implants.

### *Intrauterine devices (IUDs)*

Young women are medically eligible to use IUDs. There are no clinical contraindications based on age alone. IUDs are less likely to be selected by young women than by older women in some countries. It is unclear whether this is in part due to providers' reluctance to offer IUDs to young women or young women's reluctance after being given accurate, unbiased information on the method. However, a study in New Zealand found that women who did leave with an IUD in place were 70 percent less likely to return for an abortion in the next three years than those who left with combined oral contraceptive pills (Roberts 2010). Providers should give this information to clients but not push them to accept an IUD if the young woman is not interested in doing so.

### *Injectables*

Injectables include progestin-only and estrogen and progestin ("combined") formulas, including Depo-Provera (DMPA) and Mesigyna and Norigynon (NET-EN). In the same New Zealand study, DMPA was associated with a 40 percent decrease in likelihood of returning for abortion, compared to combined oral contraceptives pills (Roberts 2010).

There has been some concern that DMPA may permanently decrease bone mineral density (BMD) in young women, as it does temporarily decrease BMD and adolescents have not yet attained their peak bone mass. A study specifically on adolescent women found that all of them had complete recovery of BMD within 12 months of discontinuation, and length of use of DMPA did not affect this recovery. However, WHO's latest recommendations on medical eligibility for contraceptives states that most studies have found that women regain BMD after discontinuing DMPA but that it is unclear whether use in young women will affect peak bone mass, and thus list it as a Category 2 method ("generally use the method" – in comparison, Category 1 means "use method in any circumstances") for women under 18.

## **Women with multiple abortions**

If a woman does not want to become pregnant and has experienced multiple unwanted pregnancies and abortions, the provider should help the woman identify any difficulties she may have using or accessing contraception and work with her to resolve those difficulties.

When discussing contraception with a woman who has had multiple abortions:

- Explore with the woman her history of contraceptive use. If she has not been using contraception, ask her about this, using non-judgmental language.
- If she has been using contraception, identify and resolve any difficulties she has experienced with her chosen method or help her select a method that may be more appropriate for her.
- If resupply of her chosen method has been problematic, help her identify a method that she can obtain more consistently.
- Advise the woman about how to access and use emergency contraception (EC) if she has unprotected intercourse or if contraceptive failure occurs. If possible, provide her with a supply of emergency contraceptive pills (ECPs).

## Women who have experienced violence

When helping a woman who has experienced violence, select an appropriate contraceptive method and ask her to consider whether there is a connection between the violence and her contraceptive use. If the violence is a result of her contraceptive use, help her consider a method that cannot be detected by others. If the woman cannot control the circumstances of her sexual activity, advise her on using methods that do not require partner participation such as injectables, intrauterine devices and implants and also how to access and use EC. It may be beneficial to provide ECPs in advance.

## Women living with HIV

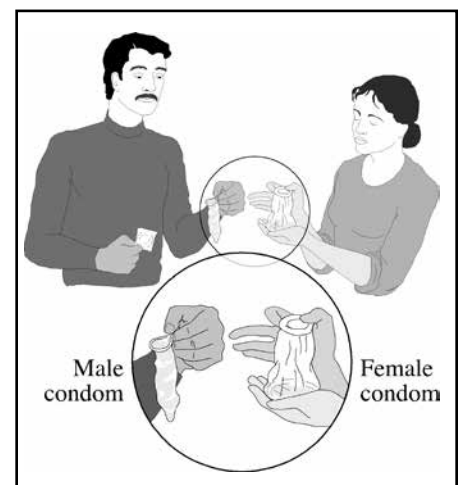
The following information should be presented when discussing contraception with an HIV-positive woman:

- Male and female condoms help protect against HIV transmission and need to be used correctly each time intercourse occurs.
- If the woman engages in unprotected sexual intercourse with an infected partner, she may become infected with a different strain of HIV or other sexually transmitted infections (STIs).
- Dual protection is recommended. This practice consists of the simultaneous correct and consistent use of male or female condoms for STI/HIV protection with another, more effective contraceptive method for pregnancy prevention, **or** with ECPs as a back-up method for pregnancy prevention. Women being treated for HIV need information on contraceptive options in relation to their treatment regimens.

## Women who engage in sex work

The following information should be presented when discussing contraception with women who engage in sex work:

- Providers should recommend the use of dual protection, through the simultaneous use of condoms and another method, for protection against both STIs and unwanted pregnancy. If male condom use is not feasible for the woman, she may want to consider the use of female condoms, if available.
- Providers should advise against using an IUD or IUS, as the woman is at increased risk of having or contracting an STI.
- The woman should be informed on how to access and use ECPs.



Condoms for both males and females

It may be beneficial to provide the woman with ECPs in advance.

## Women with cognitive and developmental disabilities and/or mental illness

The provider should begin by assessing what knowledge and experience the woman already has regarding contraception. The provider can then assist her in determining which method is most suitable for her by asking who she has sex with and under what circumstances.

The following information should be considered when discussing contraception with women who have cognitive disabilities and/or mental illness:

- The woman may have difficulty remembering how or when to use certain methods, such as taking a pill every day; however, these methods may still be a good option if instructions are given clearly and the woman has a caregiver who can help remind her and establish the method as part of her daily or monthly routine.
- Some women with developmental disabilities may have trouble with fine motor skills; in such cases, certain methods, such as diaphragms, may not be advisable.
- Women in this population should be instructed on how to use and negotiate barrier methods, and providers should emphasize that they must be used every time she engages in intercourse if she wants to prevent pregnancy and STIs.
- The provider should demonstrate the method—using actual condoms, diaphragms or cervical caps—and/or use illustrative instructions.
- Providers should also give the woman written and/or illustrative instructions to take home or other helpful tools such as a calendar.
- It is probable that many women in this population do not know in advance when they will engage in sexual intercourse. For this reason, the advance provision of EC pills, with specific instructions, may be advisable.
- Under no circumstances should any method be performed or provided without the woman's explicit consent. Women with cognitive disabilities and/or mental illness have the same right as other women to make choices regarding childbearing.
- Regarding informed consent, providers should be aware that the woman may or may not be her own guardian. If the woman is indeed able to make decisions about her own care, the provider should make an extra effort to ensure that she clearly understands what she is consenting to and what her choices are.

## Women in refugee and displaced settings

Such settings have complex needs and limitations, and are outside the scope of this curriculum. Please see Additional resources, Contraceptive Services for information on providing contraceptives and other reproductive health services to women in these situations.

## Woman who have experienced genital cutting

A woman's type of genital cutting and her preferences around deinfibulation and reinfibulation need to be considered when supporting her in selecting her preferred contraceptive method. A recent review of the evidence shows no known increased incidence of HIV infection among women who

have undergone FGC. As for all women, encourage the use of barrier methods, such as male and female condoms, to decrease the risk of HIV infection. (Please see Additional resources, Contraceptive Services.)

## Women who partner with women

Providers should not make contraceptive-related assumptions about women who state that they have female sexual partners. Women who partner with women may also engage in sexual relationships with men, be at risk for STI/HIV and unwanted pregnancy, desire a future pregnancy, and/or need contraceptive information and methods. Providers should engage in an open discussion with the woman to determine her risks and needs.





# Infection Prevention

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## Key topics in this module:

- Common routes of infection transmission
- Essential elements of infection prevention, including standard precautions
- Management of occupational exposures

## 1.0 Introduction

Health-care facilities are prime settings for infection transmission because of the presence of numerous types of infectious agents.

- Health-care workers are exposed to infectious agents and contaminated materials as part of their daily work.
- Clients are exposed when they receive health-care services.

- Families and communities may be affected when clients and health-care workers unknowingly carry infections home from the health-care facility.

Most formally trained health-care workers are knowledgeable about infection-prevention techniques. It is the health-care worker's responsibility to take correct and consistent measures to guard against the spread of infection, using appropriate hygiene and infection-prevention techniques and behaviors.

This module addresses the application of infection-prevention principles in abortion-care settings.

## 2.0 Infection transmission

Microorganisms are on and within the body, on medical instruments and equipment, and on every surface. Each microorganism has a specific route of transmission from one person to another. A pathogen is any microorganism that can cause infection and lead to disease. Each pathogen requires specific prevention measures, depending on how it is transmitted. This module focuses on preventing infections from bloodborne pathogens that are primarily transmitted through exposure to blood and other body fluids in a health-care setting.

Bacteria, viruses, protozoa, fungi and parasites are examples of pathogens that can be present in blood. Pathogens such as HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), HBV (Hepatitis B Virus), HCV (Hepatitis C Virus) and Ebola can cause infection and disease in humans.

Bloodborne pathogens are:

- Invisible to the naked eye
- Transmitted through blood, secretions, excretions and certain other body fluids
- Able to cause infection when infectious fluid enters the body through a cut, open sore or other opening in the skin or mucous membranes of the eyes, mouth or genitals
- Able to cause disease in humans without noticeable signs or symptoms

In the clinic setting, bloodborne pathogens can spread:

- From client to health-care worker
- From health-care worker to client
- From client to client
- From health-care worker to health-care worker
- From health-care worker or health facility to family and community members

Health-care workers most often risk infection with bloodborne pathogens in two ways:

1. Punctures with contaminated sharp instruments, such as hypodermic needles
2. Contact with blood on non-intact skin such as cuts or sores

Transmission of bloodborne pathogens, especially HIV, from health-care workers to clients is extremely rare. Work assignments should not be based on workers' medical diagnoses, but on their skill and abilities.

### 3.0 Elements of infection prevention

Infection-prevention protocols are employed broadly to prevent infections regardless of their transmission routes. Health-care workers must use standard precautions, formerly called universal precautions, during contact with all clients and staff, as a person may carry infection without showing any noticeable signs or symptoms. Standard precautions are the proper handling of blood and body fluids and the use of appropriate prevention techniques with all clients and staff at all times, regardless of their actual or perceived health status.

Using standard precautions minimizes the risk of pathogen transmission from contaminated sharp instruments that can penetrate the skin, and from infected blood or body fluids that can splash into the eyes or other mucous membranes or enter the body through a cut or broken skin.

Standard precautions involve infection-control measures that are designed to block transmission between the person and potentially infectious body fluids. These measures include proper handwashing techniques and wearing barriers such as gowns, gloves, aprons, masks, eyewear and footwear.

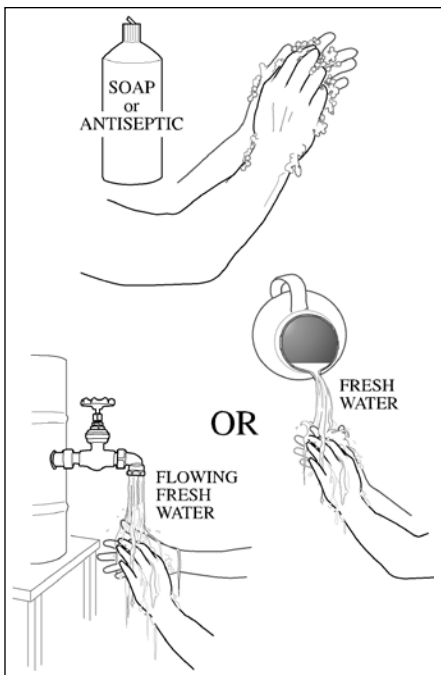
Standard precautions should be applied in all situations where health-care workers anticipate contact with:

- Blood
- Bodily fluids
- Secretions and excretions other than perspiration, regardless of whether they contain visible blood
- Non-intact skin
- Mucous membranes

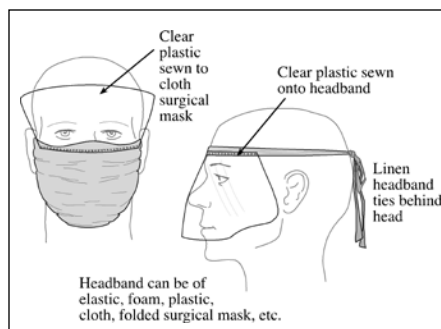
Health-care workers should treat the blood and body fluids of all persons as potential sources of infection, independent of diagnosis or perceived risk. Standard precautions should be followed with all clients and all workers, regardless of their presumed infection

### Essential elements of infection prevention:

- Handwashing
- Personal protective barriers
- Proper handling and disposal of sharp instruments and items
- Proper handling and processing of instruments and materials
- Aseptic technique
- Environmental cleanliness
- Proper disposal of infectious waste



Handwashing



Face shields

status or diagnosis, and there is no reason to treat individuals with known bloodborne diseases differently.

All workers who risk exposure to blood or other body fluids should be vaccinated against HBV to reduce their risk of infection by that virus.

## 3.1 Handwashing

Hands are the most common vehicle for infection transmission. Handwashing is one of the most essential, yet most neglected, elements of infection prevention in health-care settings. Handwashing should be routine before and after each client contact, and after contact with potentially contaminated items, even if gloves are worn.

- Health-care workers should wash their hands by rubbing them together with clean, flowing water and soap.
- A brush may be used to clean hands thoroughly.
- It is essential to use fresh water because microorganisms can thrive in a container of water used by multiple people.
- When running water is not available by faucet, spigot or pump, one person can pour fresh water from a container, enabling another person to wash.
- Because shared and reused towels can transmit pathogens, it is ideal to use disposable towels or a clean towel each time handwashing occurs.
- Large towels can be cut into smaller towels or hands can be air-dried to conserve resources.

## 3.2 Use of personal protective barriers

Health-care workers must wear personal protective barriers such as gloves, gowns, aprons, footwear, eyewear, masks or shields to reduce their risk of infection by decreasing the likelihood of their exposure to microorganisms. Appropriate barriers must be worn whenever there is the possibility of contact with blood or other body fluids.

Using gloves properly:

- Always change gloves between client contacts; after contact with a potentially contaminated item; before touching sterile instruments; and between rectal and vaginal examinations.
- Wear gloves when drawing blood or starting an intravenous line.
- Remove gloves and wash hands immediately following a procedure.

- Wear gloves (ideally, utility gloves) while cleaning if there is the potential for hand contact with blood or other body fluids.

### 3.3 Proper handling and disposal of sharp instruments and items

Sharp instruments or items, called sharps, include:

- Hypodermic and suture needles
- Scissors
- Tenacula
- Glass
- Blades

Sharps present a special risk of infection to health-care workers, clients and community members because they can puncture skin and introduce pathogens directly into the bloodstream. Such punctures occur most often when needles are recapped, cleaned, or disposed of inappropriately.

The proper handling and disposal of sharps can significantly reduce this risk:

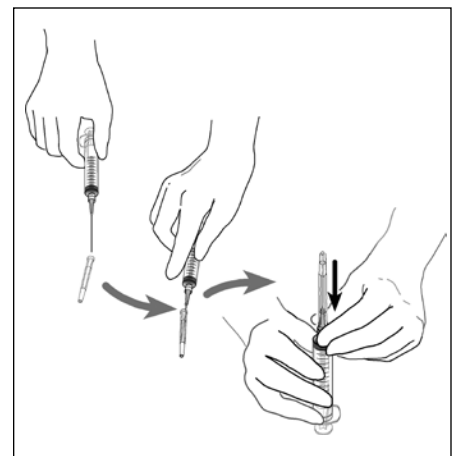
- Do not carry hypodermic needles.
- Set aside a specific area to keep sharp objects during procedures.
- Announce the presence and passage of any “sharps.”
- Dispose of needles and syringes immediately, in puncture resistant containers (without recapping, removing, cutting or bending them. Locate these containers wherever sharps are used. If syringes must be recapped for repeated use during a procedure, use the “scoop method.” (Please see Appendix A: Sharps container for box assembly instructions),



Personal protective barriers

#### Scoop method for recapping syringes

- Hold the syringe and scoop the cap onto the needle without touching the cap or needle.
- Pull the cap onto the needle by holding the cap near the base.
- Never put fingers on the tip of the cap while pushing the cap onto the needle, as the needle can perforate the tip of the cap and stick the fingers.



Scoop and pull technique

### 3.4 Handling and processing instruments and materials

Microorganisms can live on instruments and materials used during abortion procedures. Health-care workers must remove microorganisms from contaminated instruments and materials to prevent them from infecting other women during subsequent procedures. (Please see Module 10: MVA Instruments.)

### 3.5 Aseptic technique

The three critical components of aseptic technique for surgical procedures are:

- Antiseptic preparation
- No-touch technique
- Properly processed instruments

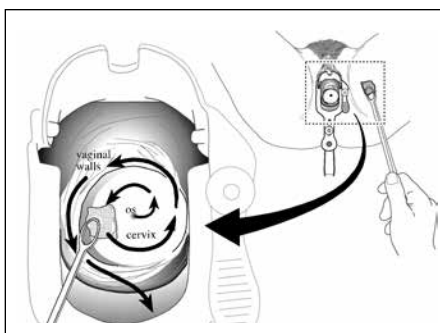
### *Antiseptic preparation*

During vacuum-aspiration procedures, post-procedure infection can be caused by the introduction of a woman's resident vaginal flora into her uterus. Therefore, it is critical to remove microorganisms normally present in the vagina and cervix prior to inserting an instrument.

- Ask the woman about any allergic reactions to antiseptics.
- Ensure that the perineal area is clean.
- Using the no-touch technique, the provider should use an antiseptic-soaked sponge to clean the cervical os and, if desired, the vaginal walls. With each new sponge, start at the os and spiral outward. Continue until the os has been completely covered by antiseptic. Do not clean the cervix with the same gauze used for cleaning the vagina. Povidine-iodine or chlorhexidine may be used for antiseptic solution.
- Saline may be used if antiseptics are not available.

### *No-touch technique*

It is possible to introduce pathogens, especially vaginal ones, into the uterus when passing an instrument into the uterine cavity. To avoid introducing pathogens, it is essential to use no-touch technique during surgical procedures and when handling sterile instruments, such as hypodermic needles and cannulae.



Cervical preparation

- Always handle instruments by the end that does not come into contact with the woman.
- No instrument that enters a woman's uterus should in contact with a contaminated surface before insertion through her cervix.
- The tenaculum, cannula or dilator tips should not touch the providers' gloves, the woman's vaginal walls, or unsterile parts of the instrument area.

### *Properly processed instruments*

All reusable medical instruments must be properly processed between clients. The techniques for properly processing instruments are discussed in Module 10: MVA Instruments.

## 3.6 Environmental cleanliness

Because health-care workers can spread infection when touching

clinic surfaces and clients, it is important that everything in the clinical setting, including clients, instruments and equipment, be kept clean and dry.

- A chemical that kills microorganisms is called a germicide.
- Antiseptics are weaker germicides that are used for cleaning the body.
- Strong germicides used for cleaning equipment and processing instruments are called disinfectants. Ideally, a disinfectant of 0.5 percent chlorine solution can be used for cleaning rooms and equipment, although it is acceptable to use soap and water.

**Note:** Glutaraldehyde and chlorine are hazardous substances. Use personal protective equipment when mixing. Refer to the manufacturer's safety instructions to establish safe use. (Please see Appendix B: Mixing instructions to produce 0.5% chlorine solution.)

At the beginning of each clinic session:

- Wipe all horizontal surfaces with a clean cloth, including procedure tables, chairs, trolley tops, lamps and counters.
- Mop floors with a clean mop to remove any dust.

Between clients:

- Clean blood or other body fluids with a 0.5% chlorine solution or other disinfectant. Clean any potentially contaminated surfaces, such as procedure tables and trolley tops, with a clean cloth dampened with a disinfectant cleaning solution.
- Clean visibly soiled areas of the floor, walls or ceiling with a disinfectant cleaning solution.
- Check sharps disposal containers and replace them if they are three-quarters full.
- Remove infectious waste.

At the end of each day:

- Check sharps disposal containers and replace them if they are three-quarters full.
- Remove infectious waste.
- Clean all surfaces with a clean cloth dampened with a disinfectant cleaning solution.
- Mop floors with a disinfectant cleaning solution.
- Wash waste containers with a disinfectant cleaning solution.

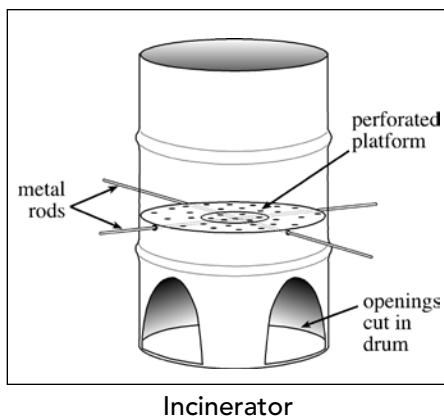
### 3.7 Disposal of infectious waste

Any disposable material that has come in contact with body fluids should be considered infectious waste and disposed of properly. Infectious waste can include

- Human tissue, such as products of conception (POC)
- Body fluids
- Materials containing blood or body fluids, such as bandages, surgical sponges, hypodermic and suture needles, scalpel blades, blood tubes and pipettes
- Disposable medical instruments

Some local protocols dictate that a health facility's infectious waste be removed by a second party, such as a private company or government organization, and disposed of off-site. Wherever infectious waste is deposited, it must always be contained and, ideally, incinerated.

All infectious waste must at least be secured and contained. It is unacceptable to store infectious waste in open containers or throw waste into an unsecured open pile, particularly near bodies of water; this exposes the community to infection. Contaminated sharp items should be placed in containers made from material that is not easily perforated, such as heavy cardboard or plastic.



To dispose of infectious waste, including POC:

- Burning solid infectious waste in an incinerator or oil drum is the best option.
- Open burning in a secured area is an acceptable alternative.
- Bury solid infectious waste on-site, as long as it is secured behind a fence or wall away from any water source. Initial depth should be 2 to 5 meters deep. As waste is added, cover it with 10 to 30cm (four to 10 inches) of soil. When the level of waste reaches to within 30 to 50 cm of the ground surface, fill the pit with dirt, seal it with concrete, and dig another pit. Burying waste is the next best option after burning.
- Pour liquid infectious waste down a sink or drain connected to an adequately treated sewer or pit latrine. Burial of infectious liquid with other infectious waste is an acceptable alternative.

Products of conception resulting from medical abortion should be disposed of in the same way as other infectious waste. If a woman passes the POC at home, she should be advised to dispose of them by whatever appropriate means are available to her, such as pouring them down a toilet that is used for feces or by burying them away from a water source. If another person is going to dispose of the waste, he or she should use the precautions noted in this module for handling infectious waste.



## 4.0 Management of occupational exposure

In the event that a health-care worker is exposed to blood or other body fluids in any way—for example, by needle puncture or a splash to the face or skin— follow these procedures:

- If the exposure caused a bleeding wound, briefly allow the wound to bleed.
- Immediately flush the exposed area with clean water. Wash wounds and skin thoroughly with soap and water. Flush the mucous membranes (nose, eyes, mouth) with water or saline only. If water is not available, use an antiseptic solution.
- Determine the type of fluid and type of exposure.
- Evaluate the exposure source by testing a known source or by evaluating the risk posed by an unknown source.
- Evaluate the exposed person's immune status, including his or her history of HBV vaccination.
- Give post-exposure prophylaxis for exposures posing a risk of infection.
- Offer voluntary, confidential HIV, HBV and HCV counseling and testing, if available.
- Consult an infectious-disease specialist, if possible.
- Record the exposure and actions taken according to facility protocols. Discuss how another exposure could be prevented in the future and share lessons learned with all staff.
- During follow-up care, advise the exposed person to seek medical evaluation for any acute illness that develops.

## 5.0 Considerations for postabortion care

All considerations are the same as those for induced abortion care.

## 6.0 Summary

- Health-care facilities are prime settings for infection transmission to health-care workers, clients and community members because of the presence of numerous types of infectious agents.
- Standard precautions should be applied in all situations where health-care workers anticipate contact with blood, secretions, excretions and other body fluids, non-intact skin, and mucous membranes.
- Hands are the most common vehicle for infection transmission. The essential elements of infection prevention

are handwashing, use of personal protective barriers, proper handling and disposal of sharp instruments and items, proper handling and processing of instruments and materials, use of aseptic technique, environmental cleanliness and proper disposal of infectious waste.

- The three critical components of aseptic technique for vacuum aspiration are antiseptic preparation, no-touch technique and properly processed instruments.
- All infectious waste should be incinerated or, at the very least, secured and contained properly.
- If a health-care worker is exposed to blood or other body fluids, follow appropriate procedures for the management of occupational exposures.

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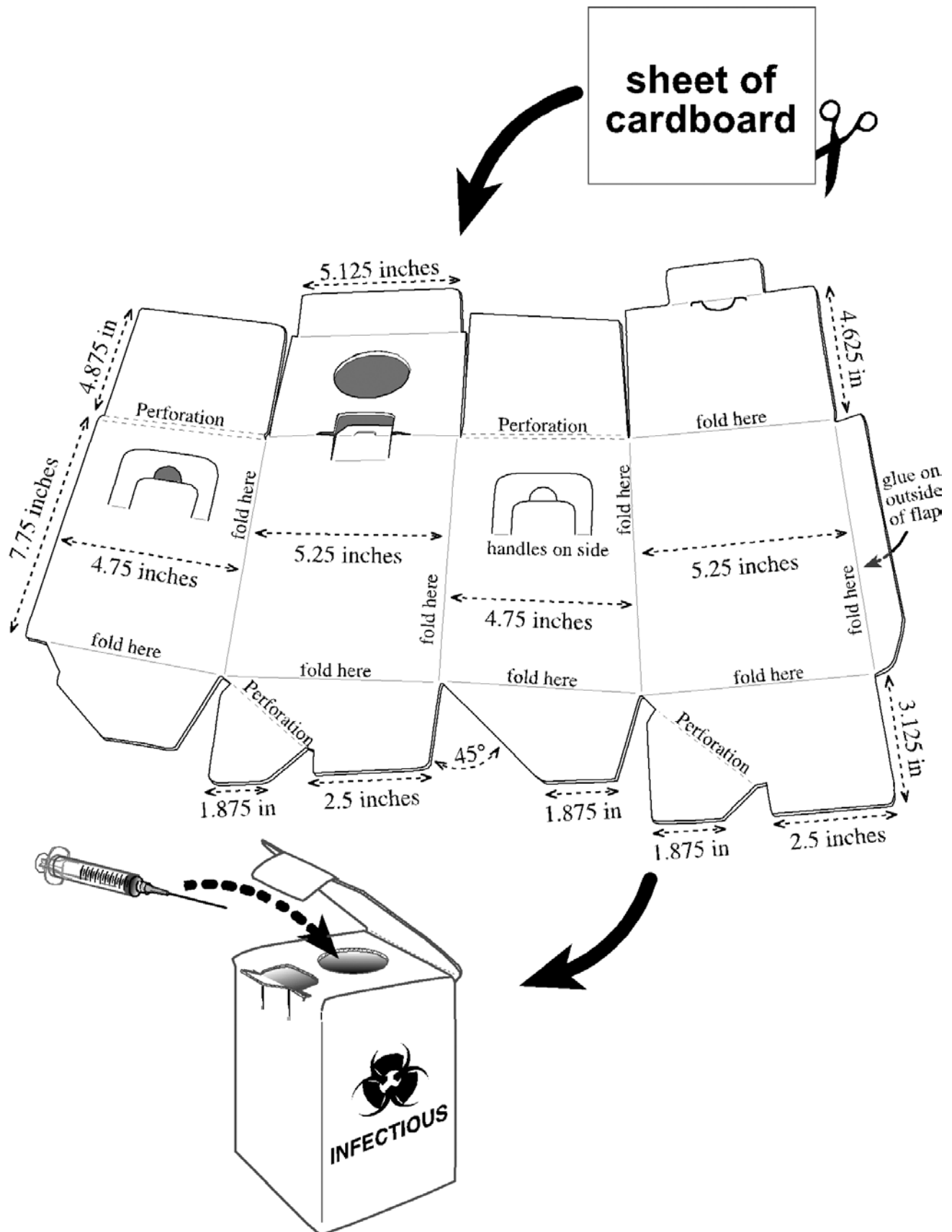
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## Appendix A: Sharps container

## Instructions for making a sharps container



## Appendix B: Mixing instructions to produce 0.5% chlorine solution (mix according to the strength of the locally available brand of bleach)

Chlorine Compound	Available Chlorine in Compound	† To Produce 0.5% Solution
Sodium Hypochlorite Solution (Bleach)*	3.5% (Africa, JIK; Nepal, Robin; Jamaica, Ajax)	Mix 10mL bleach with 60mL water (1 part bleach to 6 parts water)
	5% (France & Vietnam, Eau de Javel; Canada & USA, Clorox, household bleach; Peru, Clorox)	Mix 10mL bleach with 90mL water (1 part bleach to 9 parts water)
	6% (Mexico, Blanqueador)	Mix 10mL bleach with 110mL water (1 part bleach to 11 parts water)
	10% (UK, Chloros; Peru, Liguria)	Mix 10mL bleach with 190mL water (1 part bleach to 19 parts water)
	15% (France, Extrait de Javel; UK, Chloros)	Mix 10mL bleach with 290mL water (1 part bleach to 29 parts water)
Calcium Hypochlorite	70%	Dissolve 7 grams calcium hypochlorite in 1L water
NaDCC (Sodium Dichloroisocyanurate)	60%	Dissolve 8.5g NaDCC in 1L water
NaDCC-Based Tablets (Sodium Dichloroisocyanurate)	1.5g per tablet	Dissolve 4 tablets in 1L water
Chloramine (Tosylchloramide sodium)	25%	Dissolve 20g in 1L boiled water

(Adapted from Tietjen 2003.)

† A 0.5% solution is recommended since clean (boiled or filtered) water is often not available for making the solution and much of the chlorine may be inactivated by microscopic organic matter in the water. Where boiled or filtered water is available, a 0.1% solution is satisfactory.

\* Glutaraldehyde and chlorine are hazardous substances. If processing instruments or for environmental use, take necessary precautions such as using personal protective equipment. Refer to the manufacturer's safety instructions to establish safe use.

# Clinical Assessment

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## Key topics in this module:

- Complete clinical assessment
- Conditions such as ectopic pregnancy and reproductive-tract infections
- Special client considerations

## 1.0 Introduction

Before performing a uterine evacuation, it is essential to assess a woman's clinical status and eligibility for medical methods or vacuum aspiration. This allows the provider to assist the woman in making an informed choice about her preferred method of uterine evacuation.

The assessment should be conducted in private. The components of a complete clinical assessment are:

- Client history
- Physical exam
- Collection of specimens and ordering of any lab tests, only if needed

An important part of the clinical assessment is an evaluation of the woman's emotional state, relevant relationship and family circumstances, and support systems, as they have a direct bearing on her clinical experience. Open, supportive communication and a gentle, reassuring manner help ensure that the provider obtains the relevant information needed to offer the best possible care for the woman. (Please see the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module.)

## 2.0 Client history

A client history is important to determine the woman's gestational age and eligibility for medical abortion or vacuum aspiration, and to provide information that will help the provider meet her other reproductive and sexual health needs. The provider needs to ask the woman about and record her medical history, including:

- First day of last menstrual period (LMP)
- Signs and symptoms of pregnancy
- Whether she had a pregnancy test or ultrasound and the results of the tests
- Whether she has had any bleeding or spotting during the pregnancy
- Known drug allergies
- Medications including misoprostol or herbal remedies
- Obstetric and gynecological history, such as number of previous pregnancies, live births, miscarriages or abortions, history of contraceptive use, history of ectopic pregnancy, menstrual history, fibroids, infections or any recent abortion-related care
- Sexual history, such as number of partners or recent new partners
- HIV status and presence of sexually transmitted infection (STI)
- Surgical history
- Physical or cognitive disability, including mental illness
- Known health conditions, (Table 9-1: Health conditions.)

(Please see a client intake form in Appendix B.)

If a woman has any of the following health conditions, uterine

evacuation provision may require a higher degree of clinical judgment, skill and monitoring. A uterine evacuation procedure may need to be modified to suit the health needs of the woman. Referral to a higher-level facility may also be appropriate.

Table 9-1: Health conditions

Health Condition	Comments
Hypertension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Methylergonovine should not be used in women with hypertension</li> </ul>
Seizure disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The woman should take her usual dose of anti-seizure medication on the day of the uterine evacuation procedure and resume her medication as soon as possible. She may receive sedation with benzodiazepines and other pain control measures before performing the procedure.</li> <li>• Because some anti-epileptic drugs interact with hormonal contraception, contraceptive options should be carefully reviewed for medical eligibility.</li> </ul>
Anemia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If hematocrit or hemoglobin is very low, be prepared to manage bleeding and treat appropriately.</li> </ul>
Blood-clotting disorders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the woman has an active clotting disorder, proceed with caution.</li> <li>• Treatment in a higher-level facility may be appropriate.</li> </ul>
Diabetes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No changes in diet or medications are recommended for vacuum aspiration with local anesthesia.</li> <li>• High blood glucose levels are preferable to low blood glucose levels at the time of vacuum aspiration.</li> </ul>
Heart disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If symptomatic or severe disease, vacuum aspiration may be performed in an operating room and monitored with the assistance of an anesthetist.</li> </ul>
Asthma	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women with mild or well controlled asthma may have a routine vacuum aspiration or medical abortion.</li> <li>• Women with an acute asthma attack or poorly controlled asthma may need to have delayed care until asthma is under control.</li> <li>• Misoprostol is safe for use in women with asthma.</li> </ul>
Suspected ectopic pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate and treat or refer according to local protocol.</li> <li>• Ectopic pregnancy is a life-threatening emergency that requires treatment.</li> </ul>

Table 9-1: Health conditions (continued)

Health Condition	Comments
Cervical stenosis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider performing vacuum aspiration under ultrasound guidance, using an agent such as misoprostol or laminaria to prepare the cervix prior to procedure.</li> <li>Medical methods may be offered.</li> </ul>
Alcohol or drug abuse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Women may require larger doses of medication for pain control and sedation due to tolerance.</li> </ul>

### Last menstrual period

The LMP refers to the first day of a woman's last menstrual period. A woman may need help remembering this date. Questions about where she was, what she was doing and what was happening in her life may help her recall when her last period began.

LMP estimations may be difficult for other reasons, including:

- Some women experience bleeding during early pregnancy, which can be mistaken for a menstrual period.
- A young woman may experience irregular menstrual cycles or may never have experienced a menstrual period before she becomes pregnant.
- Breastfeeding women may become pregnant without having regular menstrual periods.
- Certain methods of contraception may make menstrual cycles irregular or infrequent.

Use of LMP to estimate gestational age may be more accurate for women who rely heavily on fertility awareness methods. However, a woman's LMP should not be the only factor in determining the gestational age of a pregnancy.

## Prior self-administration of misoprostol

In some settings, providers will frequently see women who self-administered misoprostol to terminate a pregnancy prior to seeking care in the health system. Providers should be aware of the clinical implications that may accompany prior misoprostol use. If women used the recommended regimens, the success rate for misoprostol only is 85 percent. For the 15 percent of unsuccessful abortions, women may present with an ongoing pregnancy or may require vacuum aspiration to empty the uterus. Some women may present with significant bleeding that needs urgent treatment. Women with an ongoing pregnancy should be counseled about the very rare risk of birth defects if they choose to continue the pregnancy.

- If misoprostol has been used to terminate a pregnancy 13 weeks or greater, providers should be alert to the potential for heavy bleeding, which may be stopped by vacuum aspiration.
- Cervical dilatation may not be needed in vacuum aspiration when misoprostol has been used to initiate an abortion because misoprostol softens the cervix.

(Please see the Uterine Evacuation with Medical Methods module.)

## 3.0 Physical examination

Clinicians who provide abortion or postabortion care should have strong skills in pelvic examination and be competent in diagnosing and dating early pregnancy. Three commonly used approaches to pregnancy dating are:

- Determining the date of the last menstrual period (LMP)
- Performing a pelvic exam to assess uterine size
- Using ultrasound

Gestational age can be accurately estimated based on LMP and pelvic examination.



### Assessing gestational age

*In multiple studies, a woman's report of her last menstrual period combined with a clinician's bimanual exam is accurate within 1-2 weeks over 90 percent of the time. Gestational age does not have to be exact for either vacuum aspiration or medical abortion. Ultrasound is not routinely required for abortion provision. Even when it is used, determining gestational age is accurate within about one week in the first trimester and two weeks in the second trimester.*

*Although rare, greatly underestimating gestational age in women who have a vacuum aspiration may result in increased risks and complications for the woman, particularly at later gestations. If the underestimation is clinically significant, she may need cervical preparation or dilatation and evacuation (D&E) to safely complete the procedure. For medical abortion, underestimating gestational age is not likely to be clinically important because MA efficacy and safety decrease only gradually as gestational age increases. For either procedure, confirmation of gestational age by a second clinician or ultrasound may be used for women whose gestational age is unclear based on history and exam. Ultrasound is important to confirm intrauterine pregnancy in the case of a suspected ectopic pregnancy. In cases of incomplete abortion, providers need to estimate actual uterine size rather than gestational age.*

## 3.1 General health

The physical exam should begin with a general health assessment, which includes:

- Checking and recording the woman's vital signs, such as temperature, pulse and blood pressure
- Noting signs of general health, including weakness, lethargy, anemia or malnourishment
- Checking the woman's abdomen for masses and tenderness

Women who have suffered complications of an unsafe abortion may need urgent care. (Please see Section 8.0: Considerations for postabortion care in this module, and the Complications module.)



Check abdomen

## 3.2 Pelvic examination

The pelvic examination includes a speculum and bimanual exam, which may be conducted consecutively or in either order. Prior to performing a pelvic exam, the clinician should ask the woman to empty her bladder and let her know what to expect. This is especially important if this is the woman's first pelvic exam, which is most likely in young or nulliparous women.

### Positioning the woman

- Help the woman move into the lithotomy position.
- Use drapes or linens to make sure her privacy is protected.
- Attend to any special anatomical or physical needs, including disability, arthritis or injuries.
- Attend to any IV lines or other critical items.
- Ensure that she feels as comfortable as possible.

### Verbal reassurance

*Explain to the woman what to expect and what she might feel before beginning the pelvic exam. Ask her if she would like to have a support person with her. If this is her first pelvic exam, she may be anxious, and it is particularly important to reassure her. (For more examples of verbal reassurance, please see the Uterine Evacuation Procedure with Ipas MVA Plus® module.)*

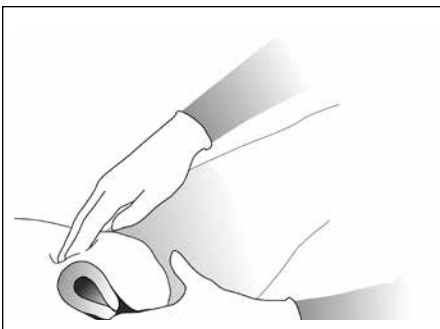


Lithotomy position

## Speculum exam

The speculum exam can be performed during the clinical assessment or during preparation for the uterine evacuation procedure. Before inserting the speculum, inspect the external genitalia and perineum. Note whether there are ulcers or signs of STIs on the external genitalia.

- Warm the speculum if possible; this can be done under the exam light.
- Gently insert a speculum of the appropriate size and inspect the cervix and vaginal canal carefully.
- Check for bleeding. If present, check the amount and source of the bleeding.
- Check for an open cervical os or products of conception in the os or vagina
- Note if any blood or any discharge has an odor. Infection is sometimes indicated by a foul odor.
- Note any pus or discharge from the cervical os. Active cervical infection present at the time of a uterine evacuation procedure increases the chance of postabortal infection.
  - If infection is present or suspected, take samples for culture, if possible.
  - Women with signs and symptoms of a reproductive tract infection should be treated immediately and the procedure can be performed without delay. (Please see Appendix A: Provision of Antibiotics.)
- Note any cervical lesions; visual inspection of the cervix can help identify cervical dysplasia. (Please see Additional resources, Clinical Assessment.)
- Check for prior self-administration of misoprostol or other signs of unsafe induced abortion. For more guidance on clinical assessment and treatment in these cases, see Section 8.0: Considerations for Postabortion Care in this module, and Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual, Second Edition.



Perform bimanual exam

## Bimanual exam

- The provider should perform a bimanual exam to assess the size, consistency and position of the uterus and adnexa.
- Signs of pregnancy, including softening of the cervix and softening and enlargement of the uterus, are detectable during the bimanual exam as early as six to eight weeks since the LMP.
- Women with signs of a pelvic infection will have cervical, uterine or lower abdominal tenderness on bimanual exam

- After 6 weeks gestation, the uterus increases in size by approximately 1 centimeter per week and takes on a roundish shape.
- To assess the uterus and adnexa, the provider places two fingers into the vagina and then palpates the abdomen with the other hand. The size of the uterus is then compared with the history of amenorrhea.
- The technique of assessing uterine size is the same in all women, including young women.

### Dorsal position

*Where leg supports are not available, the dorsal or “frog-leg” position can be used. In this position, the woman’s pelvis should be raised by placing a stack of blankets or linens under her lower back or upper buttocks.*

If the uterus is **smaller** than expected, providers should consider one of the following conditions:

- The woman is not pregnant
- Inaccurate menstrual dating
- Ectopic pregnancy
- Spontaneous or incomplete abortion, missed abortion or abnormal intrauterine pregnancy, such as molar pregnancy
- Normal variation between women at a given length of pregnancy

If the uterus is **larger** than expected, providers should consider one of the following conditions:

- Inaccurate menstrual dating
- Multiple pregnancies
- Uterine anomalies such as fibroids or bicornuate uterus
- Molar pregnancy (although the uterus can sometimes also be smaller)
- Normal variation between women at a given length of pregnancy

Situations that make it difficult to accurately assess uterine size include fibroids, retroverted position of the uterus, obesity, full bladder or the woman contracting (not relaxing) her abdominal muscles. If there is uncertainty about the gestational age, or if there is a discrepancy between uterine size and gestational age as determined by LMP, it may be helpful to ask another provider to check the uterine size by bimanual exam or, if readily available, use ultrasound.<sup>13</sup>

## 4.0 Laboratory tests

In most cases, providers only need the information obtained from a woman’s history and physical examination to confirm pregnancy and gestational age. If the typical signs of pregnancy are unclear and the provider is unsure whether the woman is pregnant, laboratory tests are helpful. According to the World Health Organization (WHO),

“obtaining such tests should not hinder or delay uterine evacuation.”

- Hemoglobin or hematocrit tests to detect anemia may be helpful in areas where anemia is prevalent in order to treat women and help providers manage bleeding during the abortion.
- The need for routine Rhesus (Rh) immunization for Rh negative women undergoing early abortion has not been proven by clinical studies and Rh testing is not required to provide abortion services. Where Rh immunoglobulin is available and routinely provided to Rh-negative women, this protocol should also be applied for women undergoing abortion. It should be administered at the time of the procedure when performing vacuum aspiration and, in the case of medical abortion, when the first pill of the abortion regimen is taken.
- The abortion visit is an opportunity to screen for other reproductive health issues including cervical dysplasia and cancer and reproductive tract infections. These services may be offered to women if they are available but are not required to provide abortion care. (Please see Additional Resources, Clinical Assessment.)

## 5.0 Ultrasound exam and ectopic pregnancy

### *Ultrasound*

Ultrasound is not required for early abortion or postabortion care. Ultrasound can be used when there is difficulty assessing gestational age based on history and exam, to assess abortion completion and to diagnose other conditions requiring treatment, such as ectopic pregnancy. Routine ultrasound may increase the cost of the procedure and the likelihood of unnecessary intervention. (Please see Additional resources, Clinical Assessment.)

### *Ectopic pregnancy*

Ectopic pregnancy may be suspected in women during clinical assessment due to her history, risk factors or physical exam or in the course of follow-up care. The symptoms of ectopic pregnancy are nonspecific and may be associated with threatened

Table 9-2: Risk factors for ectopic pregnancy

Risk factors for ectopic pregnancy	Risk of ectopic in the current pregnancy
Previous ectopic pregnancy	10-15%
History of tubal surgery including sterilization	25-50%
Presence of intrauterine device	25-50%

or spontaneous abortion or normally developing intrauterine pregnancy. (Please see the Complications module.)

Even with careful screening, only half of women presenting to an emergency room with ectopic pregnancy have risk factors or a suspicious physical exam. Ultrasound and serial BHCG testing can aid in the diagnosis of unruptured ectopic pregnancy, but access to these tests may be limited in developing countries. Vacuum aspiration can assist in the diagnosis of ectopic pregnancy. If a woman has risk factors or signs and symptoms of an unruptured ectopic pregnancy, vacuum aspiration and careful tissue inspection can confirm an intrauterine pregnancy.

## 6.0 Reproductive-tract infections

Administering prophylactic antibiotics to all women at the time of vacuum aspiration helps reduce their risk of infection. If prophylactic antibiotics are not available, however, vacuum aspiration should still be performed. For women with signs and symptoms of infection, therapeutic antibiotics to treat the infection should be given immediately and the procedure can still be performed. If women presenting for abortion care are routinely screened for reproductive tract infections, they do not have to wait for laboratory results before having a procedure. (Please see Appendix A: Provision of antibiotics.)

For medical abortion, prophylactic antibiotics are not recommended. For women with signs and symptoms of infection, therapeutic antibiotics to treat the infection should be given immediately. (Please see the Uterine Evacuation with Medical Methods module.)

## 7.0 Special considerations during clinical assessment

### *Young women*

Young women may have never had a clinical or pelvic exam and may be apprehensive. Providers should be particularly sensitive when physically examining young women.

### *Female genital cutting*

Women who have undergone female genital cutting (FGC) may need specialized care. (Please see Additional resources, Clinical Assessment.)

### *Violence*

Women who have experienced violence may be afraid or feel uncomfortable about being touched. There are often no physical signs of violence against women. However, providers should be alert to the following signs, while understanding that these signs

can also be present outside the context of violence:

- New or old bruises on the woman's body, including the genital area, head, neck or upper arm
- Injuries that do not fully match the explanation of how they occurred
- Burns or marks with distinctive patterns, such as cigarette burns
- STIs, pelvic inflammatory disease, urinary-tract infection, chronic irritable bowel syndrome, chronic pelvic pain
- Vaginal bleeding, painful defecation or painful urination and abdominal or pelvic pain

These signs may indicate the need for further discussion and screening for violence by providers to determine if a woman is in a dangerous situation. If this proves to be the case, providers should do what they can to help the woman before she leaves their care. Referrals to existing resources should be made before she leaves the facility, as many women may not return for follow-up appointments. (Please see appendix A: Special considerations, in the informed consent, information and counseling module.)

## 8.0 Considerations for postabortion care

- Women who are pregnant and present with vaginal bleeding and/or lower abdominal pain or cramping may have a threatened abortion, a spontaneous missed or incomplete abortion, complications from a safe, self-induced or unsafe abortion, or complications resulting from previous postabortion care.
- Clinical assessment should focus on the health status of the woman and whether she has suffered any abortion-related complications.
- Women presenting for postabortion care may show a range of symptoms from mild to severe including:
  - Light to moderate vaginal bleeding
  - Severe vaginal bleeding/hemorrhage
  - Pelvic infection/sepsis
  - Intra-abdominal injury
- Women who present for postabortion care need to have a rapid initial assessment for shock. Women who are unstable due to hemorrhage or sepsis need to be stabilized and treatment started immediately. Treatment may require immediate uterine evacuation.
- Once a woman has been stabilized, the clinical assessment should focus on the type of abortion (incomplete or missed),

whether there are complications that need attention and her eligibility for methods of uterine evacuation.

- For postabortion care, the uterus should be smaller than the woman's report of her LMP.
- Management of the abortion depends on:
  - Type of abortion (missed abortion or incomplete abortion)
  - Size of uterus
  - Medical eligibility
  - Availability of equipment and supplies
  - Woman's preference

(Please see Appendix C: Diagnosis and treatment of types of abortion.)

For more information about clinical assessment for postabortion care, see Ipas's Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual, Second Edition.

## 9.0 Summary

- During the clinical assessment, the provider should meet with the woman in private to discuss her information and perform an examination.
- Clinical assessment for abortion should include taking a client history, conducting a physical exam, and, if needed, collection of specimens and ordering of any lab tests.
- Client history helps determine the woman's gestational age and eligibility for medical abortion or vacuum aspiration, and provides information to help the provider meet her other reproductive and sexual health needs.
- The physical examination involves assessing the women's general health and performing a pelvic exam.
- Laboratory testing and ultrasound are not required for routine abortion services but may be helpful if a woman's pregnancy status and dating are unclear.
- Women presenting for postabortion care need to be stabilized and then clinical assessment can focus on determining abortion-related complications and eligibility for vacuum aspiration or misoprostol.
- Where possible, prophylactic antibiotics should be administered prior to vacuum aspiration to help reduce women's risk of post-procedure infections. Prophylactic antibiotics are not needed for medical methods of uterine evacuation. Lack of access to antibiotics should not be a barrier to abortion care.

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## Appendix A: Provision of antibiotics

### Prophylactic antibiotics

#### *Vacuum aspiration*

The risk of infection after a safe early vacuum aspiration is low at around 1%. Even though post-operative infection is rare, the administration of prophylactic antibiotics to all women who undergo vacuum aspiration is recommended. However, lack of antibiotics should not be a barrier to providing abortion services.

The ideal medication, dose and timing for prophylactic antibiotics before vacuum aspiration has not been established but a single dose of nitroimidazoles, tetracyclines or penicillins have all been shown to be effective. Commonly used regimens include:

- doxycycline 200-500mg orally prior to the procedure
- metronidazole 400mg orally every 4 hours x 3 doses

#### *Medical methods*

The risk of infection after medical abortion is very low, around 0.3%. Prophylactic antibiotics prior to medical methods of uterine evacuation are not recommended.

### Therapeutic antibiotics

Therapeutic antibiotics should be administered to all women who are suspected of or who have been diagnosed with an infection. If possible, women at high risk should be screened and treated for sexually transmitted infections in addition to receiving prophylactic antibiotics. Women who are screened for sexually transmitted infections do not need to wait for results before having the abortion procedure. If the testing is positive, they may be treated after the abortion. Women who have signs and symptoms of active infection when they present for abortion should be treated for the infection and provided abortion services without delay.

## Appendix B: Sample client intake form

Client's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Age \_\_\_\_\_

Abortion Indication \_\_\_\_\_

Obstetrical history: G \_\_\_\_\_ P \_\_\_\_\_

# of vaginal deliveries \_\_\_\_\_ # of cesarean sections \_\_\_\_\_ previous ectopic pregnancy? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Any previous complications? \_\_\_\_\_

### Medical History:

Body System	Check (✓) if yes	Diagnosis
Respiratory (e.g. asthma)		
Cardiovascular (e.g. hypertension)		
Gastrointestinal		
Endocrine and Metabolic (e.g. diabetes)		
Genitourinary (other than pregnancies or sterilization)		
Neurologic (e.g. seizure disorder)		
Psychiatric		
Hematologic (e.g. bleeding disorders and/or anemia)		
Allergies		
Surgeries (other than cesarean)		

### Physical Exam:

BP \_\_\_\_\_ Pulse \_\_\_\_\_ Temp \_\_\_\_\_

Heart:	Bimanual Exam:
Lungs:	Other:
Abomen:	

### Dating:

First day of last menstrual period \_\_\_\_\_

Uterine size by bimanual exam \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*Today's Estimated Gestational Age \_\_\_\_\_\*\*\*\*

### Optional Testing:

These tests are not required to offer abortion services but may be performed as indicated:

Hb/Hct \_\_\_\_\_ Blood type \_\_\_\_\_

Rh-immunoglobulin given (if indicated) ☐ Yes ☐ No

Pregnancy test and date \_\_\_\_\_

HIV testing offered ☐ Yes ☐ No Accepted? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Other reproductive health testing? (e.g., pap smear) \_\_\_\_\_

Ultrasound Date \_\_\_\_\_ Gestational Age \_\_\_\_\_

Today's gestational age by ultrasound \_\_\_\_\_

Planned Contraception \_\_\_\_\_

### For Medical Methods:

Regimen prescribed: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions for administration given: ☐ Yes

Pain management plan: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up visit (if necessary): Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

### For Vacuum Aspiration:

Antibiotics given: ☐ Yes Type \_\_\_\_\_

Pain management plan: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-up visit (if necessary) Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C: Diagnosis and treatment of types of abortion

Probable Diagnosis and Definition	Signs and Symptoms	Management Options
<b>Threatened abortion</b> – vaginal bleeding in woman with a viable intrauterine pregnancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light bleeding</li> <li>• Cramping/pain</li> <li>• Closed cervix</li> <li>• Uterine size corresponds to LMP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reassurance</li> <li>• Expectant management</li> <li>• If continued bleeding, further clinical assessment</li> </ul>
<b>Incomplete abortion</b> – an abortion—whether spontaneous or induced—in which some pregnancy tissue passes out of the uterus but some remains	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light to heavy bleeding</li> <li>• Cramping/pain</li> <li>• Open cervix</li> <li>• May see tissue at the cervical os</li> <li>• Uterine size corresponds to or is smaller than LMP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on the clinical condition and the woman's preference, she may be offered expectant management, misoprostol or vacuum aspiration</li> <li>• Antibiotics if indicated</li> <li>• Pain control</li> </ul>
<b>Missed abortion</b> – a kind of miscarriage; the pregnancy ends, but the tissue remains in the uterus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light to no bleeding</li> <li>• Cramping/pain</li> <li>• Closed cervix</li> <li>• Uterine size smaller than LMP</li> <li>• Diagnosis may be made on ultrasound</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Depending on the clinical condition and the woman's preference, she may be offered expectant management, misoprostol or vacuum aspiration</li> </ul>
<b>Complete abortion</b> – all products of conception have been expelled from the uterus and the os is closed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light bleeding</li> <li>• Cramping/pain</li> <li>• Closed cervix</li> <li>• Uterine size smaller than LMP</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectant management</li> <li>• Antibiotics if indicated</li> <li>• Pain control</li> </ul>

# Ipas MVA Instruments

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## Key topics in this module:

- Instrument features and use
- Processing and care of instruments

## 1.0 Introduction

The objective of this module is to explain the features of the Ipas MVA Plus® aspirator and Ipas EasyGrip® cannulae used for uterine evacuation, as well as provide information about the care and use of these instruments. The module will also explain how to process and store the instruments.

## 2.0 Instrument features and use

Ipas MVA Plus and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae are safe, effective instruments designed to meet women's uterine evacuation needs.

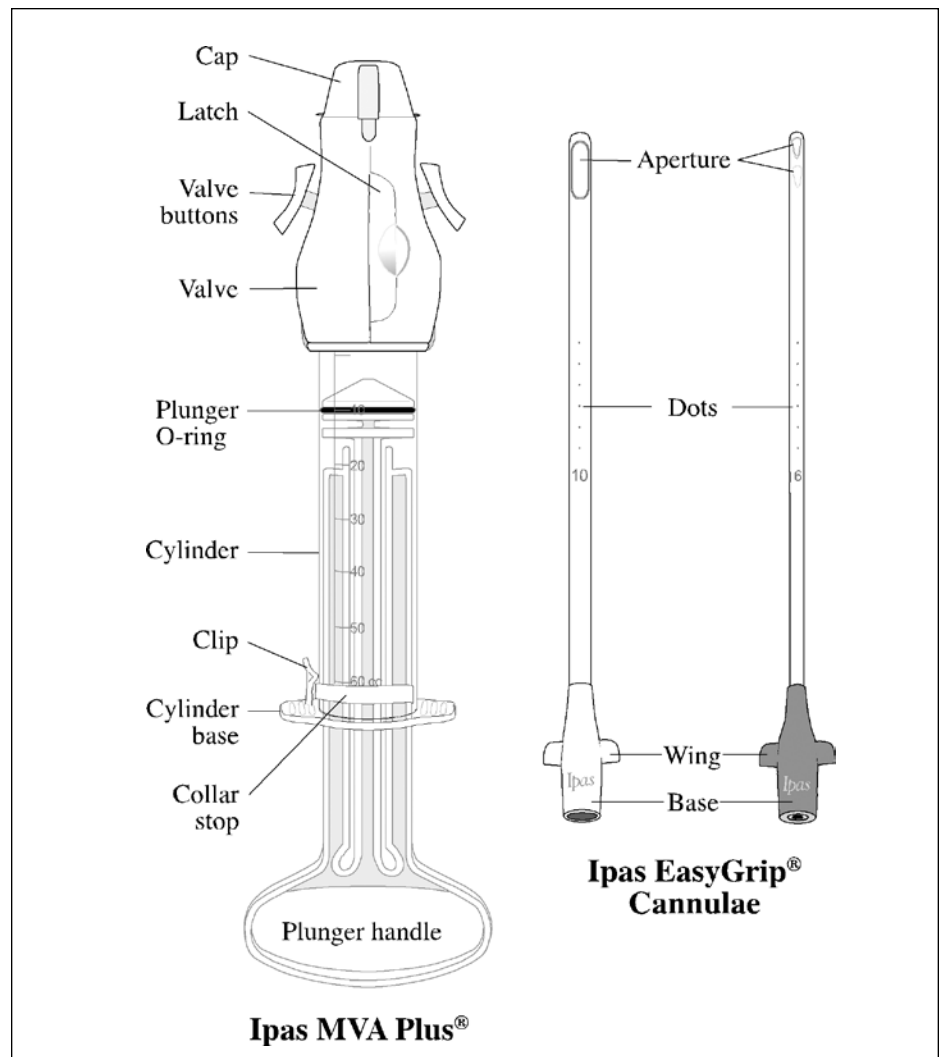
Other models of Ipas instruments are similar. (Please see Appendix A: Comparison of Ipas Instruments.)

## 2.1 Description of Ipas MVA instruments

MVA instruments consist of a manual vacuum source (aspirator) that produces suction and holds tissue and blood removed in uterine evacuation procedures. Cannulae are attached to the aspirator and used to apply suction to aspirate tissue from the uterus.

### *Aspirators*

The Ipas MVA Plus aspirator provides a vacuum of 24 to 26 inches (609.6 to 660.4mm) of mercury. It is composed of a hinged valve with a cap, a removable liner, a pair of buttons that control the vacuum, a plunger with a handle, a collar stop with a retaining clip, an O-ring and a 60cc cylinder for holding evacuated uterine contents. The Ipas MVA Plus is compatible with Ipas EasyGrip cannulae, flexible Karman cannulae, and cannulae from other major manufacturers.



Instrument parts assembled

Ipas MVA Plus aspirators are designed for multiple use. Aspirators are clean when shipped and must be high-level disinfected or sterilized prior to first use and after each procedure to remove contaminants. Aspirators do not need to remain high-level disinfected or sterile at the time of use.

The Ipas MVA Plus aspirator is made of steam-autoclavable materials and was designed specifically to allow steam contact with all surfaces when disassembled. It can also be processed with cold sterilization or high-level disinfection.

## *Cannulae*

Ipas EasyGrip cannulae are compatible with the Ipas MVA Plus aspirator and the Ipas double-valve aspirator, but they do not fit the Ipas single-valve aspirator. Ipas EasyGrip cannulae, depending on size, have either one aperture (9, 10 and 12mm sizes) or two apertures (4, 5, 6, 7 and 8mm sizes).

The winged shape of the base of the cannulae provides leverage, making it easy to attach a cannula to the aspirator and remove it quickly. No adapters are needed with Ipas EasyGrip cannulae. There are six dots on each cannula, with the first located 6cm from the end and the other dots at 1cm intervals. The dots indicate the location of the main aperture.

Ipas EasyGrip cannulae are considered “semi-rigid” cannulae. This means that the cannulae are less pliable than the flexible Karman cannulae. Some providers have reported that the smallest Ipas EasyGrip cannulae feel a bit firmer than the flexible Karman cannulae and are easier to insert through the cervix, while other providers have reported no notable difference in the feel and flexibility of the cannulae.

Each cannula is sterilized with ethylene oxide after packaging and remains sterile until the stated expiration date, as long as the package is intact. Cannulae must be sterile or high-level disinfected (HLD) when used.

Ipas EasyGrip cannulae are reusable after processing where regulations allow. These cannulae require high-level disinfection or sterilization between patients and must be HLD or sterile when inserted into the uterus.

The flexible Karman cannulae are single-use devices. After use, treat and dispose as infectious waste.

Ipas EasyGrip cannulae are made of steam-autoclavable materials. All Ipas cannulae can be processed with cold sterilization or high-level disinfection.

Always follow proper protocols on the processing of medical instruments and on the disposal of infectious waste when processing and discarding MVA instruments.

## 2.2 Uses of Ipas MVA Plus aspirator and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae

All Ipas aspirators and cannulae up to 12mm are intended for uterine evacuation/ uterine aspiration in obstetrics and gynecology clients. Clinical indications for uterine aspiration with this product are: treatment of incomplete abortion for uterine sizes up to 12 weeks since the last menstrual period (LMP), first-trimester abortion (also called menstrual regulation in some countries) and endometrial biopsy.

## 2.3 Contraindications, warnings and precautions

Endometrial biopsy should not be performed in cases of suspected pregnancy. There are no known contraindications for other clinical indications.

As with any uterine evacuation procedure, one or more of the following may occur during or after an MVA procedure: vagal reaction, incomplete evacuation, uterine or cervical injury or perforation, pelvic infection or acute hematometra. Rarely, some of these conditions can lead to secondary infertility, serious injury or death. (Please see the Complications module.)

Any life-threatening conditions that are present when a woman seeks care should be addressed immediately. These include: shock, hemorrhage, cervical or pelvic infection, sepsis, perforation or abdominal injury, as may occur with incomplete abortion or with clandestine abortion. Uterine evacuation is an important component of definitive management in these cases and once the woman is stabilized, the procedure should not be delayed. History of blood dyscrasia may be a factor in the woman's care.

The provider should not perform uterine evacuation until the size and position of the uterus and cervix have been determined. Large fibroids or uterine anomalies may make it difficult to determine the size of the uterus and hard to perform intrauterine procedures, including MVA. (Please see the Clinical Assessment module.)

It is important to use a cannula size appropriate to the size of the uterus and amount of cervical dilation present. Using a cannula that is too small may result in retained tissue or loss of suction. Following are the ranges of suggested cannula sizes relative to uterine size for uterine evacuation with MVA:

- Uterine size 4-6 weeks since the LMP: 4–7mm cannula
- Uterine size 7-9 weeks since the LMP: 5–10mm cannula
- Uterine size 9-12 weeks since the LMP: 8–12mm cannula

## 2.4 Functioning of the Ipas MVA Plus<sup>®</sup> aspirator

Appropriate client preparation, counseling and informed consent



should be performed before any uterine evacuation procedure. To perform the procedure, a cannula is inserted through the cervical os and then attached to an aspirator in which a vacuum has been prepared. The vacuum is then started by releasing the valve buttons and the cannula is used to aspirate the uterus as required. Suction can be started and stopped as needed during the procedure.

Specific guidance on performing uterine-aspiration procedures is included later in this module.

### *Preparing a vacuum and checking vacuum retention*

With the Ipas MVA Plus, a vacuum should be prepared in the aspirator and the vacuum checked before beginning the procedure. To prepare a vacuum in the aspirator, follow the steps below:

1. Begin with the valve buttons open (not depressed), the plunger positioned all the way into the cylinder and the collar stop locked in place, with the tabs pushed down into the holes in the cylinder.
2. Push the buttons down and forward until they lock into place.
3. Create a vacuum by pulling the plunger back until the arms of the plunger snap outward and catch on the wide sides of the cylinder base. Both plunger arms must be fully extended to the sides and secured over the edges of the cylinder. Incorrect positioning of the arms can allow them to slip back inside the cylinder, possibly injecting the contents of the aspirator back into the uterus.

The vacuum-charged aspirator should **never** be grasped by the plunger arms. If the charged aspirator is grasped by both arms, it may inadvertently release the plunger back into the cylinder. Releasing the plunger into the cylinder during a procedure could push the aspirator contents back into the uterus.

4. Check the aspirator for vacuum retention before each use. To do this, follow steps 1, 2, and 3 and then let the aspirator sit for a few moments after establishing the vacuum. Then push the buttons to release the vacuum. A rush of air into the aspirator should be heard, indicating that a vacuum was retained.
5. If the rush of air is not heard, displace the collar stop, withdraw the plunger and check the following:
  - a. Is the plunger O-ring intact, rather than nicked or damaged, free of foreign bodies and positioned in the groove?
  - b. Is the cylinder firmly placed in the valve?
  - c. Has the plunger O-ring been properly lubricated, over-lubricated, or not lubricated at all?
6. Create a vacuum and test it again. If the vacuum is still not retained, discard and use another aspirator.

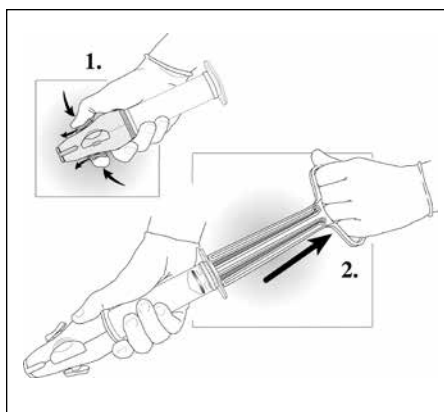
### **Ipas 3mm cannulae for endometrial biopsy**

*The Ipas 3mm cannula intended use and clinical indication is endometrial biopsy in gynecology patients. Applications for endometrial biopsy may include cases of:*

- Infertility
- Abnormal uterine bleeding
- Amenorrhea
- Screening for endometrial infections
- Screening for endometrial cancer

*Ipas 3mm cannulae have two apertures and a winged base. Each cannula is sterilized with ethylene oxide (ETO) after packaging and remains sterile until the stated expiration date, as long as the package is intact. Cannulae must be sterile or high-level disinfected (HLD) when used. An adapter is required for use with the Ipas double-valve aspirator and the Ipas MVA Plus aspirator. No adapters are required for use with the Ipas single-valve aspirator.*

*Ipas 3mm cannulae are single-use devices. After use, treat soiled cannulae as infectious waste.*



Create a vacuum

## Stopping and starting suction

To start suction, release the valve buttons on the vacuum-charged aspirator. To stop suction, push the buttons to close the valve. During use, suction is started after the cannula is in place in the uterus. It may be stopped and started during the procedure, if needed.

## 3.0 Processing and care of Ipas instruments

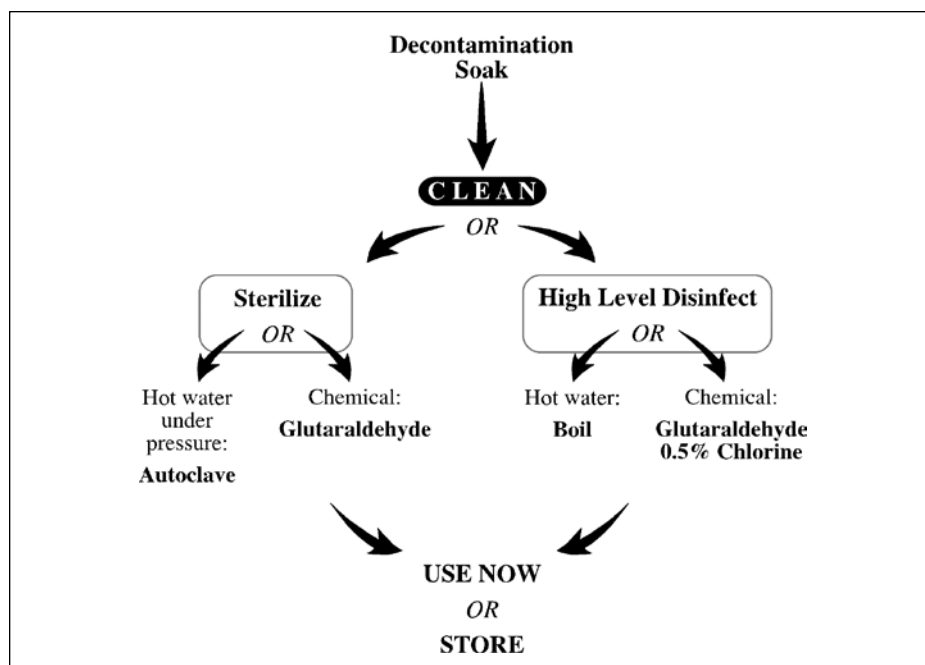
With the worldwide increase of infectious agents such as the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis B (HBV) and other infectious microorganisms that can be transmitted in a clinical setting, health workers must be vigilant about protecting their clients, themselves, their families and their communities. Many of these microorganisms live in blood, other body fluids and excretions and on body surfaces, and they can continue to live on every item that they come in contact with, including instruments used for MVA procedures. Microorganisms that can live on medical instruments include endospores and bacteria, which have a hard outer coating and are difficult to destroy. (Please see the Infection Prevention module for more information.)

Refer to the chart below to determine a protocol for processing.

The four basic steps for processing contaminated Ipas MVA Plus aspirators and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae are:

1. Decontamination soak
2. Cleaning
3. Sterilization or high-level disinfection
4. Storage

The MVA aspirator does not directly touch the woman's body. However, when it is used, the cylinder fills with blood. There is the potential risk that some contaminants from a previous woman could be introduced to another woman if the MVA aspirator is not fully processed (soaked, cleaned and sterilized or HLD) between each use. Therefore, after cleaning, the Ipas MVA Plus must undergo high-level disinfection or sterilization between patients to remove contaminants. Once processed, the aspirator may be kept in a clean container.



Options for processing

After cleaning, the Ipas MVA Plus and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae must undergo high-level disinfection or sterilization between patients to remove contaminants. Devices are then safe to use for the next procedure. Aspirators do not need to remain high-level disinfected or sterile for the next use. Cannulae must be high-level disinfected or sterile at the time of use.

Table 10-1 (below) shows common processing methods for Ipas instruments. Using inappropriate methods may damage the instruments and render them unusable.

(Please see Appendix B: Methods for processing Ipas MVA plus aspirators and adapters and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae.)

Table 10-1: Summary of Common Processing Methods for Ipas Instruments						
Instrument	Status when supplied by Ipas	Minimum level of processing required for use	High-level disinfection		Sterilization	
			Chlorine <sup>†</sup>	Boiling	Steam	Glutaral-dehyde <sup>†</sup>
<p>All Ipas instruments that are reused should be kept wet until cleaning. A disinfectant such as a 0.5% chlorine solution can be used.</p> <p><b>CAUTION:</b> Letting the instruments dry may make it difficult to completely remove all contaminants. To clean aspirators, wash all surfaces thoroughly in warm water and detergent. Detergent is preferable to soap, which can leave a residue.</p>						
Ipas MVA Plus aspirator	Clean	HLD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ipas Single- Valve aspirator	Clean	HLD	Yes	No	No	Yes
Adapters	Clean	HLD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ipas EasyGrip cannula	Sterile (ETO)	HLD	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ipas Double-Valve* aspirator	Sterile (ETO)	Single use only				
Flexible Karman cannula	Sterile (ETO)	Single use only				
Ipas3mm cannula	Sterile (ETO)	Single use only				
<p>† Liquid processing agents are hazardous substances. When processing instruments, take necessary precautions, such as using personal protective equipment. Refer to the manufacturer's safety instructions to establish safe use.</p> <p>* Ipas Double-Valve aspirator is ONLY available in the United States and the United Kingdom at the time of this publication</p>						

## 3.1 Standard precautions

It is important to follow standard precautions for infection prevention when processing instruments. Even following a decontamination soak, instruments will retain harmful microorganisms.

- Always wear gloves when handling blood or other body fluids.
- Use personal protective barriers, such as gowns or face protection, when a given part of the body may be exposed to blood or other body fluids.
- Consider all blood and other body fluids from every person to be infectious.
- Guard against skin punctures from sharp instruments.
- Wash hands immediately before and after contact with contaminated items, even if gloves were worn.

(Please see the Infection Prevention module for more information.)

*Note:* Glutaraldehyde and chlorine are hazardous substances. If processing instruments, or if using to clean the facility, take necessary precautions such as using personal protective equipment. Refer to the manufacturer's safety instructions to establish safe use.

## 3.2 Decontamination soak

Following the procedure, all instruments to be reused should be kept wet until they can be cleaned. A 0.5% chlorine solution can be used. Soaking instruments immediately after use removes some material and makes them easier to clean by preventing material from drying on them. For easy accessibility, the container used for the decontamination soak should be kept close to the procedure area—for example, on the bottom shelf of the instrument trolley. Soaking in a disinfectant, however, does not make items safe to handle with bare hands. It is essential to wear gloves and face protection.

### Steps

1. Fill a plastic container with solution. A 0.5% chlorine solution can be used.
2. Wearing gloves, submerge the cannula and aspirator completely. Make sure to draw the solution into the aspirator and cannula.
3. Soak instruments until ready to clean.
4. Use gloves or forceps when removing instruments from the solution.

If the cannula will not be reused, dispose of it and other infectious waste appropriately.

Do not let the instruments dry before cleaning as this may make it difficult to completely remove all contaminants.

### 3.3 Cleaning

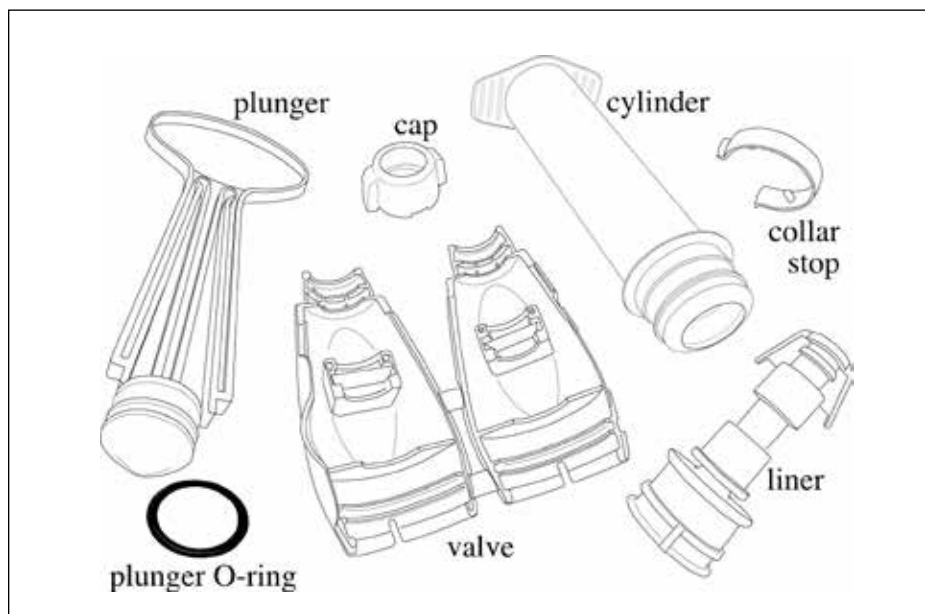
The second step in instrument processing is cleaning. Thorough physical cleaning is essential before sterilization or HLD to remove organic and inorganic material on the instruments which can interfere with the effectiveness of these processes. This is the most important step to ensure proper final decontamination of instruments.

#### *Disassembly of Ipas instruments*

Ipas aspirators must be disassembled for processing, and they must be correctly assembled after processing in order to function properly.

To disassemble the Ipas MVA Plus aspirator:

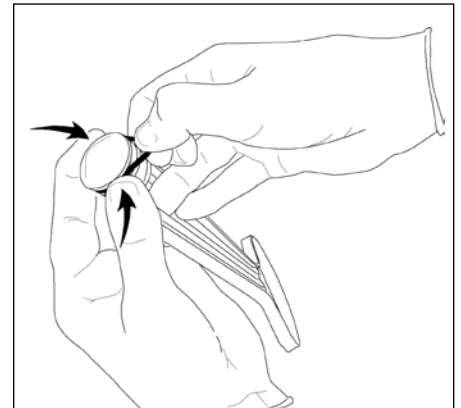
1. Pull the cylinder out of the valve.
2. Press down the cap-release tabs to remove the cap. Then open the hinged valve by pulling open the clasp and remove the valve liner.
3. Disengage the collar stop by sliding it sideways under the retaining clip or removing it completely from the cylinder.
4. Pull the plunger completely out of the cylinder.
5. Displace the O-ring from the plunger by squeezing the sides of the O-ring and rolling it down into the groove below. It is not necessary to completely remove it.



MVA parts disassembled

#### **Key points on soaking instruments**

- Barriers must be worn at all times when cleaning dirty instruments.
- The purpose of the soak step is to keep instruments wet for effective cleaning.
- Soaking in chlorine solution does not make instruments safe to handle with bare hands.
- There is no 10-minute requirement for soaking.
- Any solution, including tap water, can be used; a 0.5% chlorine solution can be used if desired.



Remove the O-ring



Clean thoroughly

## Steps in cleaning

Disassemble instruments before cleaning.

1. Remove remaining tissue or blood by washing all surfaces thoroughly in warm water and detergent or soap. Detergent is preferable, as soap may leave a sticky residue. If tissue or dried blood is trapped inside the cannula, flush water through the cannula repeatedly or use a cotton-tipped probe or soft cloth to remove material.
2. Clean the crevices and interior of the cylinder, valve parts and plunger using a soft-bristle brush, being careful not to splash.
3. Clean each item until no tissue or blood is visible upon careful inspection, then rinse.
4. Allow items to dry.

**Caution:** Do not use any pointed or sharp objects to clean the valve or to move the O-ring. This could damage the valve liner or the O-ring and prevent the device from maintaining vacuum.

## 3.4 Sterilization and high-level disinfection

Sterilization or high-level disinfection (HLD) of instruments further inactivates microorganisms. Sterilization effectively eliminates all microorganisms, including endospores. High-level disinfection eliminates all microorganisms except endospores. For any sterilization or high-level disinfection process to be effective, physical cleaning to remove all visible traces of soil is required.

**After cleaning, aspirators and cannulae must undergo sterilization or high-level disinfection between patients to remove contaminants. Devices are then safe to use for the next procedure. Aspirators do not need to remain sterile or high-level disinfected for the next use. Cannulae must be sterile or high-level disinfected at the time of use.**

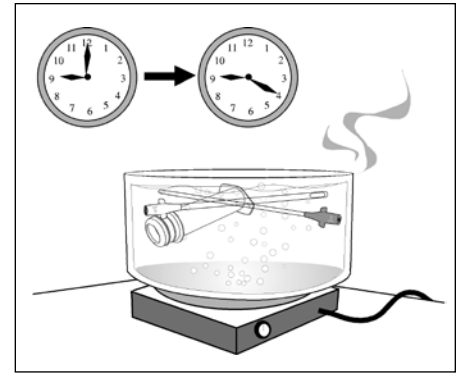
For optimal infection prevention, items should be processed using a method that provides the highest level of effectiveness. When best practices are followed, the following methods are listed in order of effectiveness:

- Sterilization using steam autoclave
- Sterilization using cold methods (such as glutaraldehyde)
- HLD methods (for example, boiling, chlorine, other cold methods)

High-level disinfection or sterilization according to one of the options below is required to reuse Ipas aspirators or cannulae. Additional methods which are less universally available for sterilization and high-level disinfection are included in Appendix

## B: Methods for Processing Ipas MVA Plus® Aspirators and Adaptors and Ipas EasyGrip® Cannulae.

- Steam autoclave instruments at 121°C (250°F) with a pressure of 106kPa (15 lbs/in<sup>2</sup>) for 30 minutes.
- Sterilize using glutaraldehyde. Soak the clean instruments in glutaraldehyde (Cidex or a similar product) for 10 hours. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations for the product used. All Ipas aspirators can withstand glutaraldehyde processing.
- High-level disinfect by boiling. Place the clean instruments in water at a rolling boil for 20 minutes. High-level disinfect using glutaraldehyde. Soak the clean instruments in glutaraldehyde (Cidex or a similar product) for 20 minutes. Follow manufacturer's recommendations for the product used.
- High-level disinfect using a 0.5% chlorine solution. Soak the clean instruments in a 0.5% chlorine solution for 20 minutes.



Boiling MVA instruments

*Note:* Ipas double-valve and single-valve aspirators will crack or melt if autoclaved. The Ipas MVA Plus aspirator, Ipas EasyGrip cannulae and flexible Karman cannulae can be boiled; however, Ipas Double-Valve and Single-Valve aspirators can crack or melt if boiled.

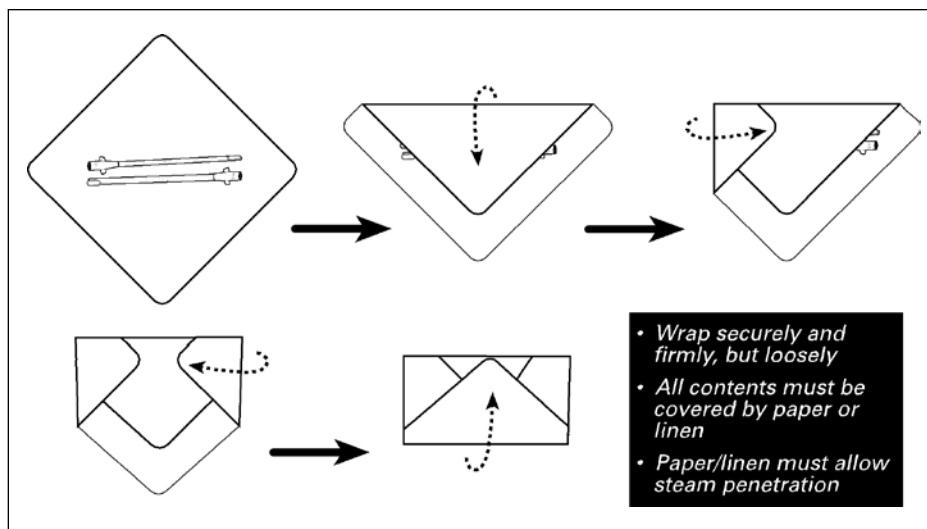
### Steps to sterilize using steam autoclave

1. All parts of the Ipas MVA Plus aspirator and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae can be steam sterilized at 121°C (250°F). Parts should not touch each other and the collar stop should be completely removed from the cylinder. Arrange the instruments without obstructing apertures or the opening at the base end of the cannulae to allow drainage.
2. Since the cannulae, particularly the smaller sizes, may curve in a steam autoclave, package them in paper or linen. Place the clean Ipas EasyGrip cannulae and the Ipas MVA Plus aspirator in a single layer in a steam autoclave. Note that steam sterilizing unwrapped Ipas EasyGrip cannulae for 30 minutes may result in slight curvature.
3. Process instruments in the steam autoclave for 30 minutes at 121°C (250°F).
4. Cool all instruments before using.

**Caution:** Do not use temperature settings over 121°C (250°F). Specifically, do not use higher temperature settings for shorter periods of time (known as “flash” autoclaving), as this may damage the instruments. Be sure that the autoclave is set to the correct parameters before autoclaving.

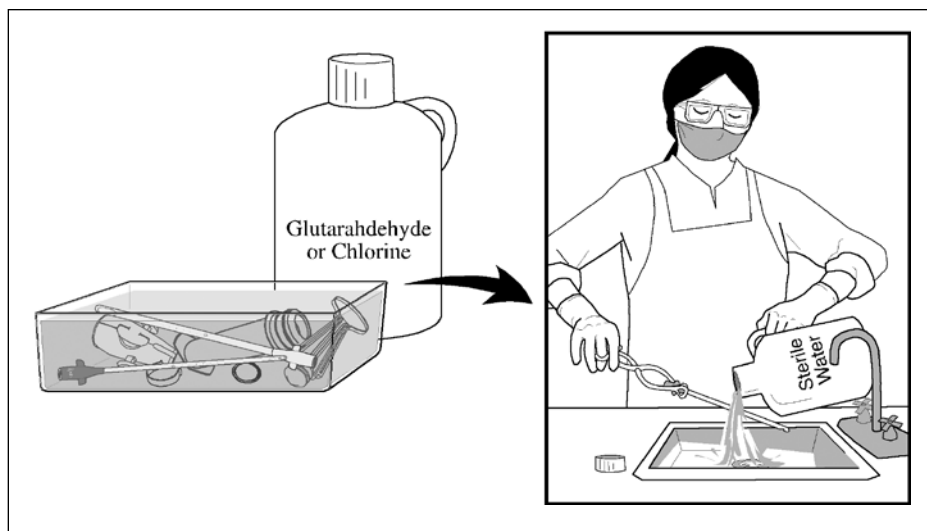
### Steps to sterilize using glutaraldehyde

1. Completely immerse the instruments so that the solution fills them completely.
2. Soak in glutaraldehyde solution for the time recommended by the manufacturer—for example, 10 hours for Cidex.



Paper wrap

3. Remove with sterile gloves or forceps.
4. Rinse all parts with sterile water. Do not use tap water to rinse.
5. Dry with a sterile cloth, if desired.
6. Change the solution according to the manufacturer's instructions. Generally, glutaraldehyde has a 14-day shelf-life after being activated, but it should be discarded sooner if the solution becomes cloudy. Do not use below 25°C(77°F).



HLD soak and rinse

Once instruments have been sterilized, anything that subsequently comes in contact with them must also be sterile, for example, gloves or a storage container.



### *Steps to high-level disinfect by boiling*

1. Place the instruments in water at a rolling boil. Items do not need to be fully immersed
2. Boil for 20 minutes.
3. Remove using HLD or sterile gloves or forceps.
4. Dry with a sterile cloth, if desired.
5. Cool before use. Handle the cannulae by the base ends when removing. Grasping hot instruments may cause flattening. The boiling process may discolor cannulae without affecting their function. Do not boil Ipas single-valve or double-valve aspirators.

### *Steps to high-level disinfect using glutaraldehyde*

1. Completely immerse the instruments so that the solution fills them completely.
2. Soak in glutaraldehyde solution for the time recommended by the manufacturer—for example, 20 minutes for Cidex.
3. Remove from solution using HLD or sterile gloves or forceps.
4. Rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water.
5. Dry with a sterile cloth, if desired.
6. Change the solution according to manufacturer's instructions—every 14 days or sooner if the solution becomes cloudy.

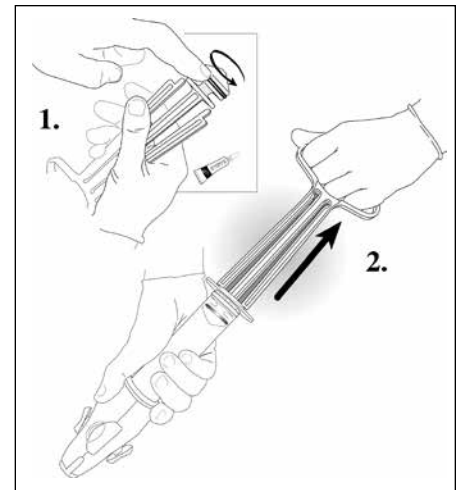
### *Steps to high-level disinfect using a 0.5% chlorine soak*

1. Completely immerse instruments so that the solution fills them completely. Use a plastic (non-metal) container.
2. Soak in a 0.5% chlorine solution for 20 minutes.
3. Remove from solution using HLD or sterile gloves or forceps.
4. Rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water.
5. Dry with a sterile cloth, if desired. Chlorine solution should be changed daily or sooner if it becomes cloudy.

## **3.5 Assembly and lubrication of the aspirator**

Aspirators should be reassembled after processing and the plunger O-ring should be lubricated. They must be correctly assembled after processing in order to function properly. To assemble the Ipas MVA Plus aspirator:

1. Place the valve liner in position inside the valve by aligning the internal ridges. Close the valve until it snaps in place.



Steps to lubrication

2. Snap the cap into place on the end of the valve.
3. Push the cylinder into the base of the valve.
4. Place the plunger O-ring in the groove at the end of the plunger and lubricate it by spreading one drop of lubricant around the O-ring with a fingertip. Silicone, which is not sterile, is provided with the aspirator; other non-petroleum-based lubricants can also be used. **Caution:** Excessive lubrication can cause the aspirator to lose vacuum. Do not over-lubricate the plunger O-ring. Do not lubricate other parts of the aspirator.
5. When reassembling the aspirator, ensure that the plunger is introduced straight into the cylinder and not introduced at an angle.
6. Squeeze the plunger arms and fully insert the plunger into the cylinder.
7. Move the plunger in and out to lubricate the cylinder.
8. Insert the tabs of the collar stop into the holes in the cylinder so that the plunger cannot be pulled out of the cylinder.

Always check that the aspirator retains a vacuum before using it. (Please see Section 2.4 for instructions on how to check for vacuum retention.)

## 3.6 Storage of instruments

Store instruments in an environment that preserves the level of processing desired. Once instruments have been processed, the challenge is to ensure that they are not re-contaminated during storage or handling. It is very important to maintain sterility or high-level disinfection of instruments until the actual time of use. After an instrument has been processed, it remains only as clean as the last item with which it came in contact.

Instruments should be kept in dry, covered, HLD or sterile containers with tight-fitting lids, protected from dust and other contaminants. Ideally, instruments that have been processed by wet methods—such as soaking in glutaraldehyde or chlorine or boiling in water—should be used daily. If they are not used in that time period, they should be reprocessed. Items that have been processed using wet methods are more prone to microbial growth; there is often no efficient way to dry items that have been processed by wet methods. Reaching into storage containers repeatedly using transfer forceps also invites contamination.

## 3.7 Disposal and replacement

Dispose of contaminated Ipas aspirators and cannulae as infectious waste.

If any of the following have occurred, the instruments should be discarded and replaced:

**Aspirators:**

- Cylinder has become cracked or brittle
- Valve parts have become cracked, bent or broken
- Buttons have broken
- Plunger arms no longer lock
- Aspirator no longer holds a vacuum
- Mineral deposits inhibit the plunger movement

**Cannulae:**

- Cannula has become brittle
- Cannula has become cracked, twisted or bent, particularly around the aperture
- Tissue cannot be removed during the cleaning process

## 4.0 Summary

- The Ipas MVA Plus aspirator is composed of a valve body, plunger, a 60cc cylinder and a collar stop.
- Ipas EasyGrip cannulae are available in sizes 4,5,6,7,8,9,10, and 12 mm, have either one aperture (9, 10 and 12mm sizes) or two apertures (4, 5, 6, 7 and 8mm sizes), and do not require separate adapters.
- Both the MVA Plus aspirator and the Ipas EasyGrip cannulae are steam-autoclavable.
- Ipas 3mm cannulae are for single-use in endometrial biopsy procedures and require an adaptor when used with the MVA Plus aspirator.
- Clinical indications for uterine aspiration with Ipas MVA Plus and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae are: treatment of incomplete abortion for uterine sizes up to 12 weeks since the last menstrual period (LMP), first-trimester abortion (also called menstrual regulation in some countries) and endometrial biopsy.
- Endometrial biopsy should not be performed in cases of suspected pregnancy. There are no known contraindications for other clinical indications.
- Providers should be able to prepare a vacuum, check vacuum retention, and start and stop suction.

### Disinfectants used in processing Ipas instruments

Any chemical that kills microorganisms is a germicide. Strong germicides called disinfectants are used for cleaning equipment. Weaker germicides called antiseptics are used on people. Antiseptics should not be used for cleaning or processing instruments and equipment, as they are not strong enough to be effective. The following agents should not be used for instrument processing: formaldehyde solution, which is toxic; formalin chambers, which are ineffective; and hydrogen peroxide, which is light sensitive.

A 0.5% chlorine solution can be used for the decontamination soak and high-level disinfection of instruments, and can also be used as a general all-purpose cleaning solution for the clinical equipment and environment. This mixture of sodium hypochlorite (bleach) or other chlorine compounds, such as calcium hypochlorite, is a strong disinfectant for many objects, as well as typically inexpensive. The correct concentration can easily be mixed using a locally available agent and water.

(Please see Appendix B: Methods for processing Ipas MVA Plus® aspirators and adaptors and Ipas EasyGrip® cannulae for more information.) Health-care workers should use different buckets of 0.5% chlorine solution for soaking, high-level disinfecting and general cleaning. The same bucket of solution should not be used for more than one purpose

- After cleaning, aspirators and cannulae must undergo sterilization or high-level disinfection between patients to remove contaminants.
- After fully processing, aspirators do not need to remain sterile or high-level disinfected for the next use. Cannulae must be sterile or high-level disinfected at the time of use.
- Protocols for processing must be appropriate for the specific aspirators and cannulae in use.
- Processing options for sterilizing instruments are: autoclaving or glutaraldehyde.
- Processing options for high-level disinfecting instruments are: boiling, glutaraldehyde, or 0.5% chlorine solution.
- The plunger O-ring must be lubricated with one drop of lubricant after processing.
- Proper handling and storage are essential to maintaining the sterility or high-level disinfection of instruments.
- Instruments that are worn out or damaged should be discarded or replaced.

## References

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World Health Organization (2012). *Safe abortion: Technical and policy guidance for health systems* (second ed.). Geneva: World Health Organization (WHO).

## Appendix A: Comparison of Ipas instruments

The charts below highlight design features and compatibility between Ipas aspirators and cannulae.

Comparison of Ipas Aspirators			
Characteristic	Ipas MVA Plus	Ipas Single-Valve	Ipas Double-Valve
Holding Capacity	60cc	60cc	60cc
Suction Capacity	24-26 inches (609.6–660.4mm) of mercury	24-26 inches (609.6–660.4mm) of mercury	24–26 inches (609.6–660.4mm) of mercury
Compatibility with Ipas cannulae	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compatible with Ipas EasyGrip cannulae, all sizes, no adapters needed</li> <li>Compatible with all sizes of flexible Karman cannulae; 12mm does not require separate adapter</li> <li>Compatible with the Ipas 3mm cannula. Requires 6mm adapter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not compatible with Ipas EasyGrip cannulae</li> <li>Compatible with flexible Karman cannulae, sizes 4, 5, 6mm only. No separate adapters needed</li> <li>Compatible with the Ipas 3mm cannulae. No separate adapters needed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compatible with Ipas EasyGrip cannulae, all sizes, no adapters needed</li> <li>Compatible with all sizes of flexible Karman cannulae; 12mm does not require separate adapter</li> <li>Compatible with the Ipas 3mm cannula. Requires 6mm adapter</li> </ul>
Processing methods*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must be high-level disinfected or sterilized between uses</li> <li>High-level disinfection (HLD) with 0.5% chlorine▲</li> <li>HLD by boiling</li> <li>HLD with Cidex® / glutaraldehyde▲</li> <li>HLD with Cidex OPA▲</li> <li>HLD with Sporox®II ▲</li> <li>Sterilization with steam autoclave (250° F; 121°C)</li> <li>Sterilization with Cidex® / glutaraldehyde▲</li> <li>Sterilization with STERRAD®100S</li> <li>Sterilization with SporoxII▲</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Must be high-level disinfected or sterilized between uses</li> <li>High-level disinfection (HLD) with 0.5% chlorine▲</li> <li>DO NOT BOIL</li> <li>HLD with Cidex® / glutaraldehyde▲</li> <li>HLD with Cidex OPA▲</li> <li>HLD with Sporox®II ▲</li> <li>DO NOT USE IN STEAM AUTOCLAVE</li> <li>Sterilization with Cidex® / glutaraldehyde▲</li> <li>Sterilization with SporoxII▲</li> </ul>	SINGLE USE ONLY
Valve design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valve liner is removable by opening hinged valve body</li> <li>2 valve buttons</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valve liner is removable</li> <li>1 valve button</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Valve liner is not removable</li> <li>2 valve buttons</li> <li>Valve O-ring required</li> </ul>
Cylinder design	Collar stop must be displaced or removed for processing	Collar stop must be removed for processing	SINGLE USE ONLY
Plunger design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plunger O-ring must be displaced or removed for processing</li> <li>Ergonomic handle</li> </ul>	Plunger O-ring must be displaced or removed for processing	SINGLE USE ONLY

\* The Ipas MVA Plus and the Ipas Single-Valve Aspirator must be HIGH-LEVEL DISINFECTED OR STERILIZED BETWEEN USES.

▲ Liquid processing agents are hazardous substances. When processing instruments, take necessary precautions, such as using personal protective equipment. Refer to the manufacturer's safety instructions to establish safe use.

## Appendix B: Methods for processing Ipas MVA Plus aspirators and adaptors and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae

Processing MVA Aspirators and Adaptors			
Method <sup>#</sup>	Agent	Time	Precautions
High-Level Disinfect (HLD)	<b>Chlorine▲</b> Dilute to 0.5%.	20 minutes	Completely immerse disassembled parts. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water. Discard solution daily or sooner if solution becomes cloudy.
	<b>Boiling water*</b> (Ipas MVA Plus and Adaptors only)	20 minutes	Disassembled parts do not need to be fully immersed. Bring to room temperature before use.
	<b>2% Glutaraldehyde</b> (Cidex®)▲ Follow manufacturer's Instructions for mixing.	20 minutes or follow manufacturer's instructions	Completely immerse disassembled parts. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water. Discard solution 14 days after mixing or sooner if solution becomes cloudy. Do not use below 77°F (25°C).
	<b>Glutaraldehyde</b> (other solutions)▲ Follow manufacturer's Instructions for mixing.	Follow manufacturer's instructions	Completely immerse disassembled parts. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water. Usually discard solution 14 days after mixing or sooner if solution becomes cloudy.
	<b>Sporox▲</b>	30 minutes	Completely immerse disassembled parts. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water. Discard solution 21 days or sooner as indicated by results from SPOROX® test vials. Use at 68°F (20°C).
	<b>Cidex OPA▲</b>	12 minutes	Completely immerse disassembled parts. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water. Discard solution 14 days or sooner as indicated by Cidex OPA solution test strips. Do not use below 68°F (20°C). Note: Cidex OPA will discolor the liners of the Ipas MVA Plus and the Single-valve aspirator.

<sup>#</sup> Ipas aspirators must be HIGH-LEVEL DISINFECTED OR STERILIZED BETWEEN USES.

\* **CAUTION:** Never boil or steam autoclave the plungers from the Ipas Single-Valve aspirator as they will emit formaldehyde. Do not interchange plungers between aspirator types.

▲ Liquid processing agents are hazardous substances. When processing instruments, take necessary precautions, such as using personal protective equipment. Refer to the manufacturer's safety instructions to establish safe use.

## Appendix B: Methods for processing Ipas MVA Plus aspirators and adaptors and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae (continued)

Processing MVA Aspirators and Adaptors (continued)			
Method <sup>#</sup>	Agent	Time	Precautions
Sterilize	<b>Steam autoclave*</b> (Ipas MVA Plus and Adapters only)	Sterility is achieved at 121°C (250°F) for 30 minutes with pressure of 106kPa (15lbs/in <sup>2</sup> ) Do not use other autoclave settings. Specifically, do not use higher settings for shorter periods of time (known as “flash autoclaving.”)	Place the disassembled aspirator in linen or paper.  Steam must penetrate all surfaces. Parts should not touch and should be arranged so openings are not obstructed, permitting drainage.  With the Ipas MVA Plus, the collar stop must be completely removed (not held with the retaining clip).  Bring to room temperature before use.
	<b>2%Glutaraldehyde (Cidex®)▲</b> Follow manufacturer’s Instructions for mixing.	10 hours	Completely immerse disassembled parts. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile water. Usually discard solution 14 days after mixing or sooner if solution becomes cloudy. Do not use below 77°F (25°C).
	<b>Glutaraldehyde (other solutions)▲</b> Follow manufacturer’s Instructions for mixing.	Follow manufacturer’s instructions.	Completely immerse disassembled parts. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile water. Usually discard solution 14 days after mixing or sooner if solution becomes cloudy.
	<b>STERRAD® 100S</b> (Ipas MVA Plus and adapters only)	55 minutes	Place the disassembled aspirator along with a chemical indicator strip in an approved tray or peel pack.
	<b>SporoxII▲</b>	6 hours	Completely immerse disassembled parts. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile water. Discard solution 21 days or sooner as indicated by results from SPOROX® test vials. Use at 68°F (20°C).

<sup>#</sup> Ipas aspirators must be HIGH-LEVEL DISINFECTED OR STERILIZED BETWEEN USES.

\* **CAUTION:** Never boil or steam autoclave the plungers from the Ipas Single-Valve aspirator as they will emit formaldehyde. Do not interchange plungers between aspirator types.

▲ Liquid processing agents are hazardous substances. When processing instruments, take necessary precautions, such as using personal protective equipment. Refer to the manufacturer’s safety instructions to establish safe use.

## Appendix B: Methods for processing Ipas MVA Plus aspirators and adaptors and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae *(continued)*

Processing Ipas EasyGrip Cannulae			
Method <sup>#</sup>	Agent	Time	Precautions
High-Level Disinfect (HLD)	Chlorine▲ Dilute to 0.5%.	20 minutes	Items must be fully immersed. Discard solution daily or sooner if solution becomes cloudy. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water.
	Boiling water	20 minutes	Items do not need to be fully immersed. Cannulae may discolor without affecting function. Grasping hot cannulae may cause flattening. Let water cool before removing cannulae and handle by the adapter/base end.
	2% Glutaraldehyde (Cidex®)▲ Follow manufacturer's Instructions for mixing.	20 minutes or follow manufacturer's instructions	Items must be fully immersed. Discard solution 14 days after mixing or sooner if solution becomes cloudy. Do not use below 77°F (25°C). After processing, rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water.
	Glutaraldehyde (other solutions)▲ Follow manufacturer's Instructions for mixing.	Follow manufacturer's instructions	Items must be fully immersed. Usually discard solution 14 days after mixing or sooner if solution becomes cloudy. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water.
	SporoxII▲	30 minutes	Items must be fully immersed. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water. Discard solution 21 days or sooner as indicated by results from SPOROX® test vials. Use at 68°F (20°C).
	Cidex OPA▲	12 minutes	Items must be fully immersed. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile or boiled water. Discard solution 14 days or sooner as indicated by Cidex OPA solution test strips. Do not use below 68°F (20°C). Note: Cidex OPA will discolor the liners of the Ipas MVA Plus and the Single-valve aspirator.

<sup>#</sup> Ipas EasyGrip cannulae must be HIGH-LEVEL DISINFECTED OR STERILIZED BETWEEN USES.

▲ Liquid processing agents are hazardous substances. When processing instruments, take necessary precautions, such as using personal protective equipment. Refer to the manufacturer's safety instructions to establish safe use.

In addition to these options for sterilization and high-level disinfection, Ipas EasyGrip cannulae can be sterilized with ethylene oxide (ETO). The Ipas MVA Plus® aspirator should not be processed with this method.



## Appendix B: Methods for processing Ipas MVA Plus aspirators and adaptors and Ipas EasyGrip cannulae (continued)

Processing Ipas EasyGrip Cannulae (continued)			
Method <sup>#</sup>	Agent	Time	Precautions
Sterilize	Steam autoclave*	Sterility is achieved at 121°C (250°F) for 30 minutes with pressure of 106kPa(15 lbs/in <sup>2</sup> ) Do not use other autoclave settings. Specifically, do not use higher settings for shorter periods of time (known as “flash autoclaving.”)	Steam must penetrate all surfaces. Parts should not touch and should be arranged so openings are not obstructed, permitting drainage.  Ipas EasyGrip cannulae, particularly the smaller sizes, may curve in steam autoclaves. To minimize this, package them by wrapping in paper or linen, and lay the package flat along the side or on the bottom of the autoclave. Be sure no other objects in the autoclave are positioned to cause bending of the cannulae.
	2% Glutaraldehyde (Cidex)▲ Follow manufacturer's instructions for mixing.	10 hours	Items must be fully immersed. Discard solution 14 days after mixing or sooner if solution becomes cloudy. Do not use below 77°F (25°C). After processing, rinse all parts with sterile water.
	Glutaraldehyde (other solutions)▲ Follow manufacturer's instructions for mixing.	Follow manufacturer's instructions.	Items must be fully immersed. Usually discard solution 14 days after mixing or sooner if solution becomes cloudy. After processing, rinse all parts with sterile water.
	SporoxII▲	6 hours	Items must be fully immersed. Discard solution 21 days or sooner as indicated by results from SPOROX test vials. Use at 68°F (20°C). After processing, rinse all parts with sterile water.

<sup>#</sup> Ipas EasyGrip cannulae must be HIGH-LEVEL DISINFECTED OR STERILIZED BETWEEN USES.

▲ Liquid processing agents are hazardous substances. When processing instruments, take necessary precautions, such as using personal protective equipment. Refer to the manufacturer's safety instructions to establish safe use.

In addition to these options for sterilization and high-level disinfection, Ipas EasyGrip cannulae can be sterilized with ethylene oxide (ETO). The Ipas MVA Plus<sup>®</sup> aspirator should not be processed with this method.



# Uterine Evacuation Procedure with Ipas MVA Plus

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## Key topics in this module:

- Preparation for an MVA procedure
- Pain management
- Uterine evacuation procedure with Ipas MVA Plus
- Post-procedure care
- Follow-up care
- Special considerations: Young women

## 1.0 Introduction

The objective of this module is to explain the steps involved in a manual vacuum aspiration (MVA) procedure using the Ipas MVA Plus aspirator and Ipas Easy Grip cannulae, which are now manufactured and distributed globally by WomanCare Global.

WomanCare Global (WCG) is a nonprofit organization working with partners around the world to improve the lives of women by providing access to affordable, quality reproductive health products. For more information, see [www.womancareglobal.org](http://www.womancareglobal.org).

## 2.0 Preparation

Before the MVA procedure:

- Provide counseling to the woman and obtain informed consent (Please see the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module.)
- Perform a clinical assessment, including physical examination (Please see the Clinical Assessment module.)
- Discuss her contraceptive needs (Please see the Contraceptive Services module.)

## 2.1 Explaining the MVA process to women

Before the procedure, the woman should receive instructions about what she may experience, when to follow up, and when and where to seek medical help in case of a problem. Because some words are probably unfamiliar to her, providers should use simple language. Thorough information on what the woman might expect helps her to be prepared. Reassurance and support during the uterine evacuation process can also be helpful. (Please see the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module.)

## 2.2 Clinical assessment: Physical examination

Clinical assessment prior to uterine evacuation with MVA Plus includes gestational dating, assessment of uterine size, assessment of the woman's general health and any contraindications or precautions.

### *Precautions prior to performing an MVA procedure*

Before beginning, it is important that the provider confirm the uterine size and position to ensure that MVA is the most appropriate method for uterine evacuation. Large fibroids or uterine anomalies may make it difficult to determine the size of the uterus and to perform intrauterine procedures, including MVA. Therefore, providers should be well-trained in determining length of pregnancy prior to using MVA. Prophylactic antibiotics should be administered prior to the VA procedure. (Please see the Clinical Assessment module.)

There are no known contraindications to providing uterine evacuation with MVA Plus.

## 2.3 Contraceptive needs

A woman may ovulate almost immediately after an MVA procedure. Therefore, all women who do not wish to become pregnant should leave the facility with an effective method of contraception. If a woman desires long acting contraception or sterilization but it cannot be provided, an interim method should be given and referral made to the appropriate facility. In general, all modern contraceptive methods can be used immediately following first-trimester MVA provided that there are no contraindications. Fertility awareness-based methods should only be used after a woman has had at least one postabortion menses and only if she had regular menstrual cycles prior to the abortion. IUDs, implants and injectables may be given in the procedure room.

(Please see the Contraceptive Services module.)

## 3.0 Pain management

Most women undergoing first trimester vacuum aspiration will experience pain during the procedure. Many providers underestimate the amount of pain a woman experiences during vacuum aspiration. Women who present for uterine evacuation should be offered all pain management options and provided these services without delay. Providers should always offer gentle, respectful care and provide appropriate information, which can help women stay calm and reduce anxiety and pain.

### 3.1 Factors influencing pain for women receiving abortion care

While most women feel pain during a vacuum aspiration procedure, each woman is unique and there is great variation in their experiences of pain. Providers should avoid stereotypes or assumptions about a woman's pain threshold. Pain management should address both the physical aspects of pain as well as the psychosocial contributors. Physical aspects that have been associated with increased pain during vacuum aspiration include nulliparity, young age, higher gestational age, and dysmenorrhea. Psychosocial elements such as anxiety and depression have also been associated with increased pain.

Aspects of the procedure that can affect pain levels include cervical dilatation, uterine manipulation, the skill and clinical technique of the provider, and the physical environment. Although some women may have a higher pain tolerance, each woman still needs to be offered and given pain management.

It is her choice to refuse it if desired.

### Sample pain-management plan

- Oral analgesics administered 30 minutes prior to the MVA procedure
- Paracervical block
- Non-pharmacological approaches, such as verbal reassurance and gentle clinical technique

## 3.2 Pain-management plan

Prior to performing the procedure, the provider should create a pain-management plan with the woman. The purpose of the plan is to reduce any physical pain and anxiety and minimize medication-induced risks and side effects.

During a uterine evacuation, pain can be reduced with a combination of verbal support, oral medications, paracervical block, skilled and gentle clinical technique, and calming environment. Conscious sedation is an option in centers where it is offered. General anesthesia increases the risk of complications and is not recommended for routine procedures.

- Explain that the MVA procedure usually lasts less than 10 minutes but during that time and perhaps afterwards she will experience some discomfort.
- Discuss various options available to reduce pain, along with their potential side effects.
- Decide on a pain-management plan together, giving the woman control over which methods to use. Providers can increase client satisfaction by allowing the woman to select the method that best fits her individual circumstances.

Each health-care facility should develop a feasible protocol for pain management and ensure adequate supply of necessary medications.

## 3.3 Non-pharmacological methods for pain management

Non-pharmacological methods, including verbal and physical reassurance, gentle clinical technique and calming environment, can decrease a woman's anxiety and perception of pain, and should be considered for every MVA procedure. The woman's perception of pain is strongly affected by her level of anxiety and the amount of information she receives about the procedure. Respectful, supportive care by staff helps reduce anxiety and decrease pain, and should be a standard part of care. Providers can ask which supportive measures a woman prefers. A woman may feel more relaxed and comfortable if a nurse, assistant or companion accompanies her during the procedure. The provider and her companion should ask her in advance about her preference for support measures they will offer.



Provide verbal reassurance

### Verbal and physical reassurance

Verbal and physical reassurance before, during and after the procedure may help some women relax.

Some programs and providers use the term “verbacaine” or

“vocal anesthetic” for the process of verbal reassurance. **Verbal reassurance, however, is not a substitute for pharmacological methods of pain control, but a useful supplement to them.**

A woman may desire silence or distracting conversation, or information about each step of the procedure before it occurs. For example, the provider should let her know that the cramping she feels toward the end of the procedure indicates that the procedure is almost complete. The provider should also determine her preference for physical touch, such as holding her hand or rubbing her arm.

### *Gentle clinical technique*

The provider should always be gentle during physical contact with the woman, ensuring that instruments are at a comfortable temperature. As instruments are inserted and moved, providers should use smooth motions and gentle technique. It is important for providers to inform the woman that they are going to touch her and explain what she is going to feel, before performing the action. Movements that are jerky or sudden can cause the woman additional discomfort.

### *Calming environment*

Facility staff can create a calming environment by providing appropriate music and lighting. Music is effective for pain management during vacuum aspiration and may be helpful for uterine evacuation with medical methods as well.

## 3.4 Pharmacological methods for pain management

### *Oral medications*

Premedication with non-steroidal analgesics such as ibuprofen or naproxen has been shown in clinical trials to decrease pre and post-procedure pain. In addition, premedication with oral anxiolytics such as lorazepam may be of benefit to some women but clinical trial evidence does not support its routine use.

### *Local anesthesia*

A paracervical block with 20mL of buffered lidocaine 1% given three minutes before dilating the cervix has been shown to decrease pain with dilation and aspiration. Paracervical block is a low risk procedure that can be performed by physicians and mid-level providers prior to vacuum aspiration.

### *Conscious sedation*

Conscious sedation using a combination of intravenous medications such as fentanyl and midazolam is an effective means of pain control and improves satisfaction with the abortion

#### Positive statements for verbal reassurance by the health-care team

*“What can I do that would be most helpful to you?”*

*“What do you imagine will be the most difficult part of this for you?”*

*“I can’t promise that it won’t hurt, but I can promise you that the procedure will be done as gently as possible.”*

*“I’ll be right beside you, and you can squeeze my hand during the procedure.”*

*(Adapted from Stewart et al., 2002)*

procedure. However, providing conscious sedation increases the expense, complexity and potential risks of an abortion procedure. Increased monitoring requires facility investments in training and equipment to deliver conscious sedation safely.

(Please see see Appendix A: Pharmacologic approaches to pain management during MVA.)

Any medication administered to the woman should be in full effect by the time the procedure starts. The provider should continually monitor and manage medication-induced side effects and complications.

### 3.5 Post-procedure pain management

Some pain is normal following even uncomplicated uterine evacuation procedures because the uterus is contracting. Pain that increases over time requires clinical evaluation. Analgesics like ibuprofen can help relieve cramping pain. Narcotics are usually not necessary. If narcotics or other strong pain medications were given before, during or after the uterine evacuation procedure, close monitoring may be necessary depending on the route, dose and type of drug given. Providers should inform women about all their choices for pain management in the post-procedure period and provide them with instructions about how to take any pain medications that they receive. (Please see Section 5.0 of this module and Appendix A: Pharmacologic approaches to pain management during MVA.)

## 4.0 Uterine evacuation procedure

### *Steps for performing MVA*

1. Prepare instruments.
2. Prepare the woman.
3. Perform cervical antiseptic prep.
4. Perform paracervical block.
5. Dilate cervix.
6. Insert cannula.
7. Suction uterine contents.
8. Inspect tissue.
9. Perform any concurrent procedures.
10. Take immediate post-procedure steps, including instrument processing.

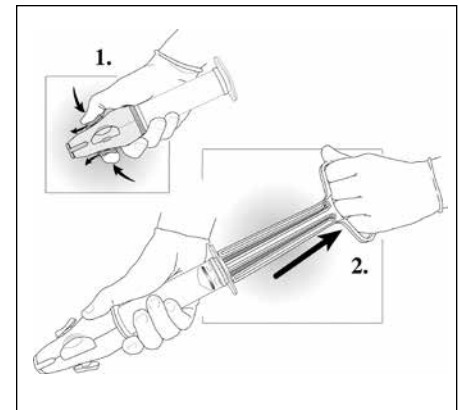


## 4.1 Steps for performing MVA

### Step 1: Prepare instruments.

The provider should check the aspirator for vacuum retention before beginning the MVA procedure, and then create a vacuum for evacuation during the procedure. (Please see the Ipas MVA Instruments module.)

When the uterine contents are likely to be copious, as in cases of hydatidiform mole, it can be helpful to have more than one MVA aspiration device ready for use. It is also useful to have a back-up aspirator readily available in case the first aspirator has technical problems. Alternately, the provider should be prepared to quickly empty and recharge one MVA aspirator, as needed. (Please see Appendix B: Suggested equipment and supplies for uterine evacuation procedure with Ipas MVA Plus®.)



Create a vacuum

### Step 2: Prepare the woman.

Administer pain medication to have maximum effect when procedure begins. Give prophylactic antibiotics to all women, and therapeutic antibiotics if indicated. Ask the woman to empty her bladder. Carefully help her onto the procedure table. Ensure that she is securely positioned and that she has given permission to start the procedure.

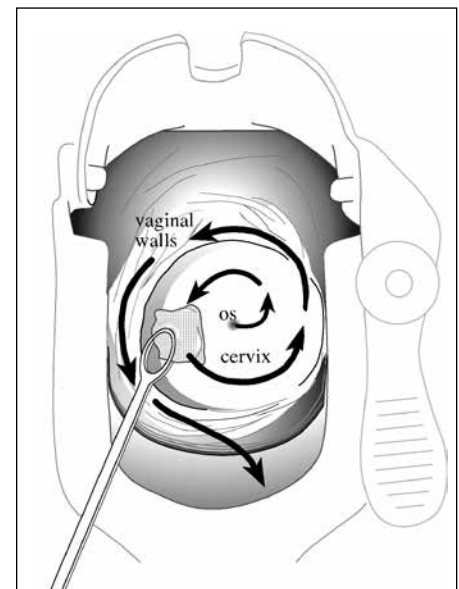


Perform bimanual exam

- Wash hands and put on appropriate barriers, including gloves.
- Perform a bimanual examination to confirm or update findings of the earlier clinical assessment. It is crucial to have an accurate assessment of uterine size and position before performing a uterine evacuation.
- Next, select a speculum. If a range of sizes are available, use the size appropriate to the woman and conducive to the exam or procedure. Insert the speculum.

### Step 3: Perform cervical antiseptic prep.

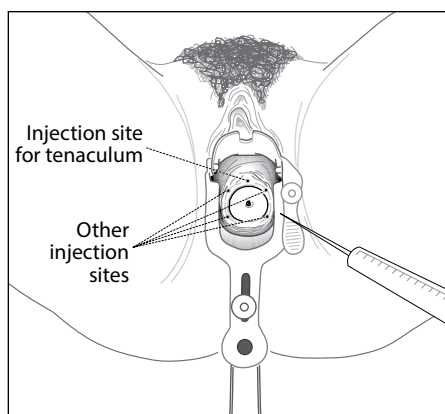
Following the “no-touch technique” throughout, the provider should use an antiseptic-soaked sponge to clean the cervical os and, if desired, the vaginal walls. With each new sponge, start at the os and spiral outward. Continue until the os has been completely covered by antiseptic. Do not clean the cervix with the same gauze used for cleaning the vagina.



Antiseptic cervical preparation

### Step 4: Perform paracervical block.

In clinical practice, techniques for administering the paracervical block vary and are subject to provider preference. The following technique, with minor variations, has been used widely. To minimize clinical risk, use the lowest anesthetic dose possible,



Paracervical block

### Paracervical block technique

*This technique is recommended, as it has been shown to decrease pain of dilation and uterine aspiration:*

- Load a 20mL syringe with unbuffered or buffered 1% lidocaine. If buffering, use 18mL 1% lidocaine with 2ml sodium bicarbonate 8.4%.
- Attach the 20-gauge spinal needle\* to the syringe.
- Inject 2mL superficially into the cervix at the site where the tenaculum will be placed (12 o'clock).
- Grasp the cervix with the tenaculum.
- Inject the remaining 18mL in equal amounts at the cervicovaginal junction at 2, 4, 8 and 10 o'clock. The injection is continuous from superficial to deep to superficial to a depth of 3cm. Always aspirate before injecting to prevent injecting into a vein.
- Dilation begins 3 minutes after the paracervical block is complete.

\* Other needles may be used, such as a hypodermic needle or the needle from an IV insertion set.

usually 10-20mL of 0.5-1% lidocaine solution. When using lidocaine, the recommended dose is less than 200mg/person, as toxicity occurs at that level.

The lidocaine solution should be inserted at the cervicovaginal junction, which marks the transition between the smooth cervical epithelium and vaginal tissue. Compared to cervical tissue, vaginal mucosa is more elastic and appears folded. After inserting the needle but before injecting any local anesthetic, always draw the plunger back slightly to ensure that the needle is not penetrating a blood vessel. If any blood is visible in the syringe, do not inject. Instead, move to a different injection site, and aspirate again before injecting.

### Step 5: Dilate cervix.

Cervical dilatation is required in most, but not all, cases. Dilatation is not needed when the cervix allows a cannula of appropriate size to fit snugly through the os. However, cervical dilatation is an essential step if the cervix is closed or is not yet sufficiently dilated. (Please see the Ipas MVA Instruments module.)

It is essential to carefully examine the position of the uterus and cervix and to gently use instruments that accommodate the woman's anatomy. Dilate the cervix as necessary to allow a cannula approximate to the uterine size to fit snugly through the os.

The provider should dilate gently, never using force. Use mechanical dilators or progressively larger MVA cannulae, being careful not to tear the cervix or create a false opening. The tenaculum can be used to straighten the cervical os to allow for easier passage of the dilators. Uterine perforation can occur, particularly if the provider miscalculates the position, size and depth of the cervix and uterus or uses force to insert instruments.

Women above 12-14 weeks should be given cervical preparation due to their increased need for cervical dilation. Misoprostol may be used for cervical preparation, if available. Cervical preparation may also be helpful for very young women or nulliparous women at lower gestational ages and may be used at the provider's discretion. (Please see Appendix C: Cervical preparation before first-trimester vacuum aspiration.)

### Step 6: Insert cannula.

While gently applying traction to the cervix, insert the cannula through the cervix, just past the cervical os and into the uterine cavity. Alternately, move the cannula slowly into the uterine cavity until it touches the fundus, and then withdraw it slightly. Rotating the cannula while gently applying pressure often helps insertion.

Do not insert the cannula forcefully through the cervical os into the uterus. Forceful movements may cause damage to the cervix or uterine perforation and damage to pelvic organs and blood

vessels. Remain alert to signs that may indicate perforation throughout the procedure, and stop suction immediately if they appear.

### Step 7: Suction uterine contents.

Attach the prepared MVA aspirator to the cannula, holding the tenaculum and the end of the cannula in one hand and the aspirator in the other hand. Suction is started by pressing the buttons in; suction will start immediately.

Evacuate the contents of the uterus by gently and slowly rotating the cannula 180 degrees in each direction, using an in-and-out motion. Blood and tissue will be visible entering the cylinder of the aspiration device through the cannula. It is important not to withdraw the opening of the cannula beyond the cervical os, as this will cause the vacuum to be lost. If this happens, or if the aspirator is full, detach cannula from aspirator and re-establish the vacuum.

Be aware that Ipas EasyGrip® cannulae fit firmly into the valve body and care should be used when disconnecting a cannula from the aspirator.

The following signs indicate that the uterus is empty:

- Red or pink foam appears and no more tissue is seen passing through the cannula
- A gritty sensation is felt as the cannula passes over the surface of the evacuated uterus
- The uterus contracts around (grips) the cannula
- The woman complains of cramping or pain, indicating that the uterus is contracting

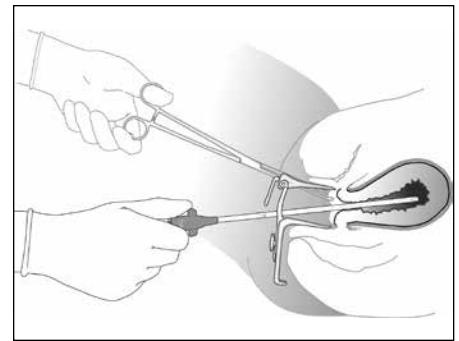
When the procedure is finished, depress the buttons and disconnect the cannula from the aspirator. The wings can aid in this action. Alternately, carefully withdraw the cannula and aspirator together without depressing the buttons. Keep the instruments available in case re-aspiration is required.

### Step 8: Inspect tissue.

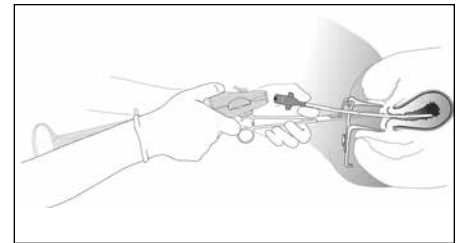
Empty the contents of the aspirator into an appropriate container by removing the cannula, if still connected, releasing the buttons, if not depressed, and gently pushing the plunger completely into the cylinder. Do not push aspirated contents through the cannula, as it will become contaminated. Keep the instruments ready in case further suction is required.

Inspect the tissue for these signs:

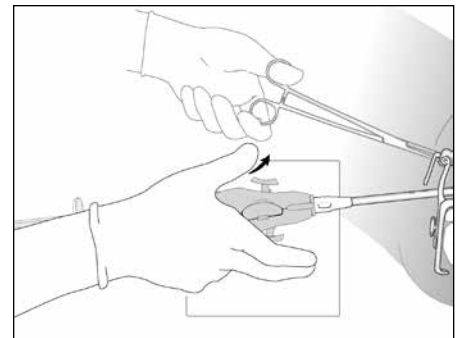
- The quantity and presence of products of conception (POC)



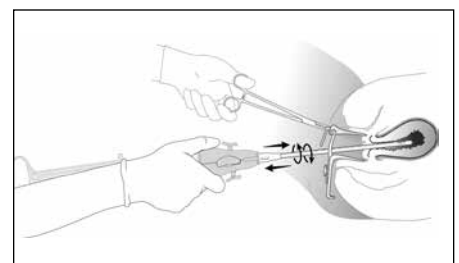
Insert cannula



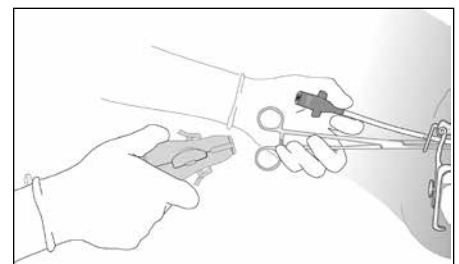
Attach aspirator



Release buttons



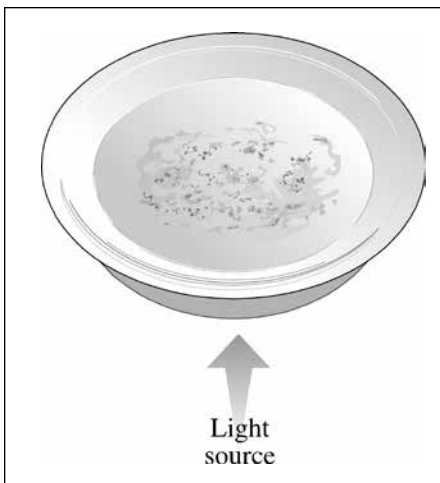
Evacuate uterine contents



Detach cannula from aspirator



Inspect tissue



Detailed tissue inspection

- Complete evacuation
- Molar pregnancy

If the visual inspection is not conclusive, the material should be strained, immersed in water or vinegar, and viewed with light from beneath. If indicated, tissue specimen may also be sent to a pathology laboratory.

Villi and decidua should be visible in the tissue and the amount of tissue should correspond to the uterine size. In cases of molar pregnancy, grape-like chorionic villi are usually seen.

If no POC are visible, less tissue than expected was removed from the uterus or the tissue sample is inconclusive, this may indicate:

- *Incomplete abortion*: The uterine cavity still contains POC, even though it appeared to be empty at the end of the procedure, which may result from using a cannula that is too small or stopping the procedure prematurely
- *A spontaneous abortion* that has already completed itself
- *A failed abortion*
- *Suspected ectopic pregnancy*: When no villi or decidua are seen, ectopic pregnancy is a possibility and should be followed up on immediately
- *Anatomical anomaly*: For example, in a bicornuate or septate uterus, the cannula may have been inserted into the side of the uterus that did not contain the pregnancy

If it appears after tissue inspection that tissue may still be present in the uterus, re-evacuate the uterus.

Wipe the cervix clear with a clean swab to assess the amount of blood still coming from the uterus or any other source before removing the speculum. If significant bleeding continues or other issues are identified, the provider should intervene as needed. (Please see the Complications module.)

Use clinical judgment to determine if a bimanual exam will be necessary to check the size and firmness of the uterus.

### Step 9: Perform any concurrent procedures.

When the MVA procedure is complete, proceed with any contraceptive or other concurrent procedures to be conducted, such as inserting an IUD or implant, performing female sterilization or repairing a cervical tear.

### Step 10: Take immediate post-procedure steps, including instrument processing.

When the uterine evacuation and any additional procedures are

complete, providers should take the following steps:

- Immediately process or discard all instruments, including the aspirator and cannula, according to instrument-processing procedures. (Please see the Ipas MVA Instruments module.)
- Remove barriers, such as gloves, and wash hands.
- Reassure the woman that the procedure is finished.
- Help her into a comfortable resting position on the table.
- Assist with moving her to the recovery area.
- Record information about the procedure, according to local protocol.

## 4.2 Solving instrument technical problems

The most common technical problem seen with MVA instruments is loss of vacuum. In most MVA procedures, the aspirator vacuum remains constant until the aspirator is approximately 80 percent, or 50mL, full. However, a decrease in vacuum may occur before the aspiration is complete for the following reasons:

- The aspirator is full.
- The cannula is withdrawn past the external os.
- The cannula becomes clogged.
- The instrument is incorrectly assembled.

### *Aspirator is full*

If the aspirator fills up so that suction stops:

- Depress the buttons.
- Disconnect the aspirator from the cannula, leaving the cannula in place inside the uterus.
- Either empty the aspirator into a container by pressing the buttons and pushing the plunger into the cylinder or replace the aspirator.
- Re-establish vacuum in the aspirator, reattach it to the cannula and resume the aspiration.

*Note:* Many clinicians keep a second prepared aspirator on hand during the procedure and switch aspirators if one becomes full.

### *Cannula is withdrawn prematurely*

If the aperture of the cannula is accidentally withdrawn from the uterus beyond the external os, remove the cannula, taking care not

to contaminate it through contact with the vaginal walls or other non-sterile surfaces:

- Detach the aspirator from the cannula, empty the aspirator, then re-establish vacuum.
- Reinsert the cannula if it has not been contaminated. If contamination has occurred, insert another sterile or HLD cannula.
- Reconnect the aspirator, release the vacuum and continue aspiration.

### *Cannula is clogged*

If the cannula becomes clogged, a lack of tissue or bubbles flowing into the aspirator will be noted:

- Ease the cannula back toward, but not through, the cervical os. This movement will often unclog the cannula.

If this does not unclog the cannula:

- Depress the valve buttons and remove the cannula from the uterus, taking care to prevent contamination.
- Remove tissue from the opening in the cannula using sterile or HLD forceps.
- Reinsert the cannula using no-touch technique.
- Reattach the aspirator and continue the procedure.

*Caution:* Never try to unclog the cannula by pushing the plunger back into the cylinder.

### *Incorrect assembly*

If the aspirator does not seem to hold a vacuum at all, reassemble and test the vacuum of the instrument. Incorrect assembly is likely to cause loss of vacuum. (Please see Appendix G: Tips for using the Ipas MVA Plus® and the Ipas MVA instruments module.)

## 5.0 Post-procedure care

Post-procedure care includes all services provided after the medical procedures are complete but before a woman is released from the facility. It is necessary to ensure that any complications that occur during or immediately after medical care are identified and addressed. Post-procedure care provides an opportunity for the woman to obtain information about how to identify and seek treatment for complications that could arise after she has left the facility.

## 5.1 Physical monitoring

Immediately after the uterine aspiration procedure has been completed, the woman's vital signs should be taken. She should then be allowed to rest and continue her recovery while being monitored until her baseline vital signs return. The length of the recovery period will vary depending on the woman's condition, the ease of the procedure, the types of pain medication administered and any other procedures performed. The purpose of monitoring is to:

- Ensure adequate recovery from the procedure as well as from perioperative medications;
- Detect and manage symptoms of post-procedure complications;
- Provide counseling and referral for other reproductive-health needs, including contraceptive counseling and services;
- Provide information about what to expect and what to do following discharge from the facility.



Take vital signs

While the woman is recovering, the provider should closely monitor her physiological status, including vital signs, in accordance with facility protocols. The provider should evaluate the woman's bleeding at least twice before she is discharged to confirm that bleeding and cramping have decreased. Methods include asking the woman to describe her bleeding, looking for blood on her clothes and assessing her appearance.

Women who are experiencing excessive blood loss may appear pale and increasingly weak, possibly with diminished consciousness and abdominal pain. They may have a drop in blood pressure or increase in heart rate. Prolonged, severe cramping and excessive bleeding are not normal.

If any of the following symptoms are observed during the post-procedure period, the woman will either need to receive, or be referred for, immediate medical treatment:

- *Significant physical decline as reflected in vital signs or physiological status*
- *Dizziness, shortness of breath or fainting:* These symptoms may be caused by internal or external blood loss or a transient vasovagal reaction
- *Severe vaginal bleeding:* While some post-procedure bleeding is expected, the amount of bleeding should decrease over time, and excessive bleeding may be a sign of incomplete abortion, lack of normal uterine tone, cervical laceration or other complications
- *Severe abdominal pain or cramps:* Some post-procedure cramping is normal, but the severity of cramping should

decrease over time. Severe, prolonged cramping may be a sign of uterine perforation or postabortal hematometra, which is a pooling of blood in the uterus that can occur following uterine evacuation. Postabortal hematometra can present either immediately following the procedure or several days later

- *Signs of a hematometra include an enlarged, tender uterus:* A woman who has a hematometra needs a repeat aspiration procedure



Explore feelings

## 5.2 Other physical health issues

If anemia is suspected or has been diagnosed, the provider should discuss dietary recommendations and nutritional supplements with the woman. Treatments for anemia include iron tablets and iron-rich foods such as green, leafy vegetables and red meat.

(Please see Section 3.5 for information about post-procedure pain management.)

## 5.3 Emotional monitoring and support

Staff who work with women during the post-procedure period should be trained to assess and respond sensitively to each woman's emotional state, and to monitor and provide care accordingly. A woman's emotional state affects the amount of pain she experiences and her rate of recovery. When a woman receives emotional support, she is better able to understand and accept her medical condition, recommended care and possible health outcomes.

Before discharge, the woman should be offered counseling support. The provider can refer her for other services, when appropriate, such as support services for women who have experienced violence. (Please see the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module.)

## 5.4 Contraceptive counseling

Ideally, contraceptive counseling should be provided before the procedure (as described in Section 2.3) and women should choose their desired method. In the recovery area, make sure that the woman knows how to use the method of contraception she has chosen and answer any of her questions. If she has not received contraceptive counseling before the procedure, it can be provided during the recovery period or prior to discharge. (Please see the Contraceptive Services module.)

## 5.5 Recovery and discharge

For most women, the in-facility recovery period will last 30



minutes to an hour. The post-sedation protocols of each facility will differ, but full recovery generally means that the woman is awake, alert and able to walk without assistance, has normal vital signs, and agrees that she feels ready to leave. In addition, she should be showing signs of normal recovery from the uterine evacuation and any other procedures—for example, slowed bleeding and decreased abdominal pain.

The woman may be discharged as soon as she is physiologically stable and has received all necessary information about her follow-up care.

A follow-up visit is not required following a routine uterine aspiration procedure. However, some women may desire follow-up for reassurance that the procedure was uncomplicated or to discuss contraception or other health issues. If a woman desires follow-up, providers can schedule a visit before she leaves the facility.

Prior to discharge, the woman should receive post-procedure counseling and information, including:

- Instructions for taking any prescribed medications
- Information about resumption of sexual activity, return to fertility and contraception
- Signs of a normal recovery
- Signs and symptoms requiring immediate emergency attention (see box)
- Written or graphic instructions for obtaining emergency care, with 24-hour contact information and emergency phone numbers, if available
- List of counseling and other services at the facility or in the community
- Date, time and location of follow-up visit if desired

Referrals for other reproductive and psychosocial needs are an essential part of abortion care. Providers should ensure that when the woman leaves the facility she has all the information and referrals she needs to make informed choices about her health, fertility and care. (Please see Appendix D: Sample clinical referral form, and the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module.)

## 5.6 Discharge of women with complications

Women who experienced complications during or after abortion care may need additional discharge instructions. Providers should place particular emphasis on the importance of follow-up care. It is essential that providers and facilities develop adequate



Provide instructions for medications

### Danger signs after abortion

Advise the woman to watch for signs and symptoms that require immediate medical care:

- Fever
- Chills
- Vomiting
- Fainting
- Severe pain
- Heavy bleeding (more than normal menstrual bleeding)

The following signs and symptoms should be monitored if they worsen rather than diminish over time:

- Prolonged cramping (more than a few days of abdominal pain, cramping or backache)
- Pain in the abdomen or distension of the abdomen
- Prolonged bleeding (more than two weeks of light bleeding)
- Odd or bad-smelling vaginal discharge
- Delay in resumption of menstrual periods (more than eight weeks)
- Dizziness

(Adapted from WHO 1995)

protocols for following up with women who are at high risk for delayed complications or adverse sequelae.

Women who experience complications of MVA need clear, evidence-based explanations of the situation and should be included in decision making about their treatment options. Fears about complications, perhaps compounded by pain, can add to the emotional stress that may accompany the abortion process. Most women cope better with their situation when they receive accurate, thorough information and have the opportunity to ask questions and express their feelings.

(Please see Appendix E: Discharge information sheet, and the Complications module.)

## 6.0 Follow-Up care

Routine follow-up after uterine evacuation using MVA is not necessary. If there are complications, the woman should return to the facility immediately. If the woman desires follow-up care, an optional visit may be scheduled 1-2 weeks after an abortion. If the woman returns for follow-up care, the provider should:

1. Confirm the success of the abortion
  - a. Ask how the woman has been feeling since the procedure, including her bleeding pattern and whether pregnancy symptoms have resolved or continued.
  - b. Conduct a physical examination.
  - c. If there is any doubt, the provider can conduct or refer for an ultrasound to look for a gestational sac or an ongoing pregnancy.
2. Stabilize, treat or refer for any acute problems and ensure that any earlier complications have been resolved.
3. Perform vacuum aspiration to complete the process in the case of a continuing pregnancy.
4. Inform the woman of what to expect following completion or continued treatment.
5. Review any laboratory tests results.
6. Provide a contraceptive method, if desired and not already provided.
7. Refer for other medical, gynecologic or counseling services where indicated.

Information for each of these steps can be found in this module as well as in the Clinical Assessment module; the Complications module; the Contraceptive Services module; and the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module. For an example

of useful forms, see Appendix D: Sample clinical referral form, Appendix E: Discharge information sheet and Appendix F: Sample follow-up visit medical form.

## 7.0 Special considerations: Young women

Most aspects of providing abortion care for young women are the same as for adult women, but there are some special considerations.

This is likely a young woman's first pelvic exam, and she may be nervous or afraid. Therefore, providers should take special care to:

- Ensure that there is at least visual and preferably auditory privacy.
- Explain what you are doing at each step.
- Perform the examination as gently and smoothly as possible. If a range of specula sizes are available, use the size appropriate to the woman and conducive to the exam or procedure.

A nulliparous woman is more likely to have a tight cervix and thus probably requires a slower dilation process. Although women of all ages need pain management, the perception of pain and use of analgesia has been found to be higher on average in younger women than in older women.

## 8.0 Considerations for postabortion care

- PAC treatment can be an emergency situation, and the woman's condition can change quickly at any point during her care. The provider should remain alert for changes in the patient's emotions and physiology throughout the procedure, as these changes may indicate complications.
- Women who are unstable due to hemorrhage or sepsis need to be stabilized and treatment started immediately. Treatment may require immediate uterine evacuation.
- Cervical dilatation is required in some cases.
- Pain management should be provided, including paracervical block, to address pain due to cervical manipulation.

## 9.0 Summary

- Before an MVA procedure, providers should counsel the woman and obtain informed consent, perform a clinical assessment including physical examination, and discuss her contraceptive needs.
- An assessment of uterine size and position must be

completed before performing a uterine evacuation procedure. Providers should not attempt a uterine evacuation until the size has been determined.

- Prophylactic antibiotics should be administered prior to the procedure.
- All women who present for abortion should be offered pain management and provided these services without delay. Providers should always offer gentle, respectful care and provide appropriate information, which can help women stay calm and reduce anxiety and pain.
- Pain and discomfort during an MVA procedure can be reduced using a combination of verbal support, oral medications, paracervical block, gentle clinical technique and calming environment.
- It is recommended that providers administer a paracervical block to all women undergoing an MVA procedure for uterine evacuation.
- Cervical dilatation can be performed by using mechanical dilators, progressively larger MVA cannulae, or misoprostol. Cervical dilatation is required in most, but not all, cases. Dilatation is not needed when the cervix allows a cannula of appropriate size to fit snugly through the os. In cases over 12-14 weeks, cervical preparation is recommended for all women.
- Signs that indicate the uterus is empty include: red or pink foam appears and no more tissue is seen passing through the cannula; a gritty sensation is felt as the cannula passes over the surface of the evacuated uterus; the uterus contracts around (grips) the cannula; the woman complains of or notes pain, indicating that the uterus is contracting.
- Evacuated tissue should be inspected for quantity and the presence of POC and signs of complete evacuation or molar pregnancy.
- No visible POC, a lower quantity of tissue than expected or an inconclusive tissue sample may indicate incomplete abortion, completed spontaneous abortion, failed abortion, suspected ectopic pregnancy or anatomical anomaly.
- Instrument technical problems that can occur during an MVA procedure include a full aspirator, a cannula that is clogged or withdrawn prematurely, or a loss of vacuum due to incorrect assembly.
- The purpose of post-procedure monitoring is to ensure that the woman is recovering well, to detect and manage any complications, to offer counseling and referrals and to provide the woman with discharge instructions and information.

- Follow-up for a routine vacuum aspiration procedure is not necessary as long as she has good information about when to seek care for an emergency and has been provided with her chosen contraception. A woman may have follow-up if she would like reassurance that she is well after a procedure.
- Referral protocols and resource lists that provide simple, accurate and up-to-date information are essential components of an effective referral system.
- It is essential to provide information that can help the woman identify and seek attention for any danger signs that may appear after she has left the facility.
- Every woman should be offered contraceptive counseling and, if desired, a contraceptive method or referral before being discharged from the facility.

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## Appendix A: Pharmacologic approaches to pain management during MVA

### Pain medication

Though the medications shown below are commonly used for pain management during uterine evacuation, many other options exist.

This table does not cover general anesthetic agents. Both anxiolytics and narcotics may cause respiratory depression, especially when they are used together. Accordingly, lower doses should be used when they are together than when they are separate. When medications are given intravenously immediately before a procedure they should be given slowly and intermittently by a specially trained provider. Problematic side effects can be avoided by repeated small intravenous doses that are titrated to a woman's level of pain and sedation. The peak analgesic effect should occur during the procedure to avoid excessive post-procedure sedation.

Even clinicians using lighter sedation analgesia must be able to manage respiratory arrest, in the unlikely event that an unintentional overdose should occur. Providers should be trained in airway management and cardiopulmonary resuscitation, and resuscitative equipment and appropriate antagonist drugs (naloxone and flumazenil) should be available.

Drug Type	Generic Drug Name	Dose and Timing	Half-life	Side Effects	Comments
<b>Local anesthetic</b>	Xylocaine	15-20ml of 0.5%-1% solution in a paracervical block not to exceed 4.5mg/kg	60-90 minutes	Buzzing in ears, dizziness, numbness in lips, mouth and tongue, metallic taste, seizures (rare)	<p>Pull back plunger before injecting to avoid intravascular injection. Wait three minutes for medication to take effect.</p> <p>Mild reaction (itching, rash, hives) can be treated with 25-50mg diphenhydramine IM or IV.</p> <p>For intense reaction or respiratory distress obtain IV access immediately. Give epinephrine 0.4mg subcutaneously and diazepam 5mg slow IV push. Support respiration. If wheezing is present, inhaler may be helpful.</p> <p>Allergic reaction is very rare. Reactions that do occur may be due to preservatives in multi-dose vials. Preservative-free lidocaine allergy is extremely rare.</p>

(continued on next page)

## Appendix A: Pharmacologic approaches to pain management during MVA

Drug Type	Generic Drug Name	Dose and Timing	Half-life	Side Effects	Comments
<b>NSAID</b>	Ibuprofen	oral: 400 to 800mg one hour before the procedure	4-6 hours	Possible gastrointestinal upset	Do not use in women with active peptic ulcer disease or renal failure
	Naproxen	oral: 550mg one hour before the procedure	4-6 hours	Possible gastrointestinal upset	Do not use in women with active peptic ulcer disease or renal failure
	Ketorolac	oral: 20mg one hour before procedure IV: 30 mg over at least 15 seconds 30 to 60 minutes before procedure IM: 60 mg 30 to 60 minutes before procedure For women less than 50kg, all doses should be halved	4-6 hours		Single dose IM ketorolac prior to surgery may reduce opioid use and post-operative pain (de Oliveira 2012, Roche 2012) Do not use in women with active peptic ulcer disease, renal failure, breastfeeding or sensitivity to other NSAIDs. Breakthrough pain should be managed with narcotics rather than increasing ketorolac beyond the recommended doses.
<b>Analgesic</b>	Acetaminophen	oral: 500 to 1000mg 30 to 60 minutes before procedure	3-6 hours		Not a first-line pain medication for vacuum aspiration or medical abortion. May be used as an antipyretic. Liver toxicity from overdose (maximum dose = 4000mg/day) is a risk.
<b>Narcotic/analgesic combination</b>	Acetaminophen 300mg + codeine 30mg	oral: 1-2 tablets one hour before procedure	3-6 hours	Drowsiness, light-headedness, nausea and vomiting, CNS and respiratory depression	If respiration is compromised, assist with breathing (airway management, oxygen and ambu bag) and reverse with naloxone (see below). Be aware of combining with other acetaminophen containing products. Liver toxicity from overdose of acetaminophen (maximum dose = 4000mg/day)

## Appendix A: Pharmacologic approaches to pain management during MVA

Drug Type	Generic Drug Name	Dose and Timing	Half-life	Side Effects	Comments
<b>Narcotic/analgesic combination</b>	Acetaminophen 500mg + hydrocodone 5mg	oral: 1-2 tablets one hour before procedure	4-6 hours	Drowsiness, light-headedness, nausea and vomiting, CNS and respiratory depression	If respiration is compromised, assist with breathing (airway management, oxygen and ambu bag) and reverse with naloxone (see below).  Be aware of combining with other acetaminophen containing products. Liver toxicity from overdose of acetaminophen (maximum dose = 4000mg/day)
<b>Narcotic</b>	Meperidine	oral: 100-150mg 30 to 60 minutes before procedure IV: 25-50mg 5-15 minutes prior to procedure IM/SC: 50-100mg 30 to 90 minutes prior to procedure	4-6 hours	Drowsiness, light-headedness, nausea and vomiting, CNS and respiratory depression, hypotension, seizures	If respiration is compromised, assist with breathing (airway management, oxygen and ambu bag) and reverse with naloxone (see below).  More rapid onset and shorter duration of action than morphine.  Meperidine 60-80mg = morphine 10mg
	Fentanyl	IV: 50-100mcg immediately before procedure (may repeat every 10-15 minutes, not to exceed 250mcg) IM: 50-100mcg 30 to 60 minutes before procedure	30-60 minutes	Drowsiness, light-headedness, weakness, bradycardia, CNS and respiratory depression, hypotension, seizures	If respiration is compromised, assist with breathing (airway management, oxygen and ambu bag) and reverse with naloxone (see below).  More rapid onset and shorter duration of action than meperidine  Fentanyl 100mcg = meperidine 75mg = morphine 10mg  Onset of action is 2-7 minutes when given IV
	Tramadol	IV/IM: 50-100mg 15-30 minutes prior to procedure. Oral/suppository: 50-100mg 60-90 minutes prior to procedure.	4-6 hours	Drowsiness, light-headedness, weakness, sweating, fatigue, seizures	If respiration is compromised, assist with breathing (airway management, oxygen and ambu bag) and reverse with naloxone (see below).  Less respiratory depression than morphine or meperidine  Tramadol 100mg = morphine 10mg

(continued on next page)

## Appendix A: Pharmacologic approaches to pain management during MVA

Drug Type	Generic Drug Name	Dose and Timing	Half-life	Side Effects	Comments
<b>Anxiolytic (Benzodiazepine)</b>	Diazepam	oral: 10mg one hour before procedure IV: 2-5mg IV 20 minutes before procedure	21-37 hours	Blurred vision, dizziness, disorientation, pain and redness on injection, CNS and respiratory depression	If respiration is compromised, assist with breathing (airway management, oxygen and ambu bag) and reverse with flumazenil (see below). Has a mild amnestic effect. Onset of action is 2-10 minutes when given IV.
	Midazolam	IV: 1-2mg immediately before the procedure then 0.5-1mg IV every five minutes as needed, not to exceed 5 mg  IM: 0.07-0.08mg/kg or about 5mg up to one hour before procedure	1-4 hours	Blurred vision, dizziness, disorientation, CNS and respiratory depression	If respiration is compromised, assist with breathing (airway management, oxygen and ambu bag) and reverse with flumazenil (see below). Midazolam 2.5mg = diazepam 10mg Stronger amnestic effect than diazepam. Onset of action is 1-5 minutes when given IV and 15-30 minutes when given IM.
	Lorazepam	oral: 1-2mg 30-60 minutes before procedure  IV: 2mg given over one minute before the procedure  IM: 0.05mg/kg up to a maximum of 4mg within 2 hours before the procedure	14 hours	Blurred vision, dizziness, disorientation, CNS and respiratory depression	If respiration is compromised, assist with breathing (airway management, oxygen and ambu bag) and reverse with flumazenil (see below). Amnestic effect. Occasionally may increase patient anxiety.
<b>Reversal agent for narcotic</b>	Naloxone	IV: 0.4mg vial mixed in 10mL saline. Give 1mL (40mcg/mL) every two minutes until reversal is seen			Naloxone's duration of action is one hour and may wear off before the narcotic. Therefore, patients treated with naloxone must be monitored closely for several hours.  Maintain airway and respirations while giving naloxone.

## Appendix A: Pharmacologic approaches to pain management during MVA

Drug Type	Generic Drug Name	Dose and Timing	Half-life	Side Effects	Comments
<b>Reversal agent for benzodiazepine</b>	Flumazenil	IV: 0.2mg every minute until respirations return. Do not exceed 1mg			<p>Flumazenil's duration of action is one hour and may wear off before the benzodiazepine. Therefore, patients treated with flumazenil must be monitored closely for several hours. In the event of overdose with narcotic and benzodiazepine, reverse the narcotic first with naloxone and use flumazenil subsequently if needed.</p> <p>Maintain airway and respirations while giving Flumazenil.</p>

### References:

- De Oliveira, G. S., Agarwal, D., & Benzon, H. T. (2012). Perioperative single dose ketorolac to prevent postoperative pain: a meta-analysis of randomized trials. *Anesthesia & Analgesia*, 114(2), 424-433.
- Roche, N. E., Li, D., James, D., Fechner, A., & Tilak, V. (2011). The effect of perioperative ketorolac on pain control in pregnancy termination. *Contraception*.

## Appendix B: Equipment and supplies for uterine evacuation procedure with Ipas MVA Plus

- ☐ Personal protective barriers such as gloves, face protection
- ☐ Examination table with stirrups
- ☐ Strong light
- ☐ Ipas MVA Plus aspirator
- ☐ Lubricant for aspirator
- ☐ Selection of IpasEasyGrip cannulae
- ☐ Speculum
- ☐ Tenaculum
- ☐ Small cup with sponge clamp and gauze
- ☐ Tapered mechanical dilators (Pratt or Denniston) or cannulae of increasing sizes
- ☐ 10 - 20cc syringe
- ☐ #20 - 23 gauge spinal or hypodermic needle or needle from IV insertion set
- ☐ Sponge stick with gauze
- ☐ Medium basin
- ☐ Smooth forceps
- ☐ Strainer
- ☐ Clear basin
- ☐ Betadine® or other non-alcohol based antiseptic
- ☐ Xylocaine 0.5% without epinephrine (for paracervical block)

## Appendix C: Cervical preparation before first-trimester vacuum aspiration

Cervical preparation is recommended before vacuum aspiration for all women over 12-14 weeks. Providers may offer cervical preparation before 12-14 weeks but do not need to use it routinely. In the first-trimester, women with cervical preparation have decreased procedure time and a decreased risk of incomplete abortion compared to women without cervical preparation. However, because first-trimester vacuum aspiration is so safe, it is not known whether cervical preparation decreases the risk of serious complications like injuries to the cervix and uterus.

Women experience side-effects from the medicine or dilators including increased pain, bleeding and nausea. Cervical preparation increases the complexity, cost and time needed to perform an abortion. These disadvantages must be weighed against the benefits of cervical preparation. For women at higher risk of complications (young women, nulliparous women, women with cervical abnormalities, or women at later gestational ages) or inexperienced providers, there may be a benefit from cervical preparation even before 12-14 weeks gestation.

The following table shows choices for cervical preparation. The choice depends on availability, expense, convenience and preference. If misoprostol is used, vaginal misoprostol has fewer systemic side-effects than sublingual misoprostol. Misoprostol should not be given more than three hours before an abortion as it increases the risk that a woman will expel her pregnancy before the procedure can occur.

Dose	Route	Timing
Misoprostol	400mcg vaginally	three hours before the procedure
Misoprostol	400mcg sublingually	two to three hours before the procedure
Mifepristone	200mg orally	24 to 48 hours before the procedure
Osmotic dilators	placed in the cervix	6 to 24 hours before the procedure

## Appendix D: Sample clinical referral form

### *Referrals:*

The following form or one similar should be completed for any woman who is referred for care to another health-care facility. Because the form describes the woman's confidential medical information, including her history, the provider should ask her if she feels comfortable taking the form with her. If so, the woman should bring the form to the referral facility; if not, the provider should find an alternate means of ensuring that the referral facility receives the information.

Name and contact information of referral center or provider:

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### *Client Information*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reason for referral (include only pertinent medical history in "History" section below)**

☐ Contraceptive services   ☐ Counseling   ☐ Screening/treatment for sexually transmitted infection

☐ Screening for cancer   ☐ Violence support services

☐ Other health or social services (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Treatment (**include all pertinent information below**)

Diagnosis: \_\_\_\_\_

History (reproductive history including number of pregnancies, births, etc):

Clinical condition (vital signs, findings of physical/pelvic examinations):

Initial treatment (fluids, drugs, procedures, any other medical steps taken):

Assessment of woman's condition/other information:

---

Health professional (print name)

---

Location (hospital, clinic)

---

Signature

---

Date



## Appendix E: Discharge information sheet

### *How to Take Care of Yourself*

- Resume normal activities only when you feel comfortable doing so.
- Eat according to your normal customs and diet.
- Showering, tub bathing and swimming are permitted.
- Correctly and completely take the medications that you have been given:

\_\_\_\_\_ is for pain and discomfort.

Take \_\_\_\_ pill(s) every \_\_\_\_ hour(s), as needed.

Other medications: \_\_\_\_\_

- Call the clinic (telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_) or come in before then if you have concerns.
- If you have received a contraceptive method, start using it *right away*. It is possible to become pregnant almost immediately after an abortion. If you did not receive a contraceptive method but would like to use one, see your provider as soon as possible. In the meantime, abstain from sexual intercourse or use condoms to prevent pregnancy.

### *What to Avoid*

- Do not have sex until your contraceptive method has had a chance to take effect, if you wish to avoid becoming pregnant. Avoid using a vaginal sponge, diaphragm or cervical cap until all bleeding has stopped.
- Do not douche for one week after the procedure. Routine douching is not recommended unless prescribed by your clinician.

### *What Is Normal*

- Bleeding and cramping similar to a normal period for up to one week; spotting may occur for up to several weeks.
- Mild fatigue for a few days.
- There is no “normal” emotional reaction to an abortion procedure. Some women feel a sense of relief, while other women feel sad. If you experience strong emotions, it may help to talk with a trusted friend, relative or provider about these feelings.

***Seek care immediately if you experience any of these abnormal symptoms.***

#### What is abnormal

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| • Fever  | • Abdominal pain                    |
| • Nausea, vomiting                                   | • Vaginal discharge that smells bad |
| • Dizziness, lightheadedness or fainting             | • Severe cramping                   |
| • Bleeding that is much heavier than a normal period |                                     |

*(Adapted from EngenderHealth, 2002b and Policar et al., 1999)*

## Appendix F: Sample Follow-up visit medical form (if indicated)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Contact information \_\_\_\_\_

### *Abortion using vacuum aspiration:*

Date of procedure \_\_\_\_\_ Name of provider and facility \_\_\_\_\_

### *Medical abortion:*

Date of administration: mifepristone \_\_\_\_\_ misoprostol \_\_\_\_\_

### *Interview*

Current bleeding? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Amount \_\_\_\_\_ Duration \_\_\_\_\_

Clots? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Size \_\_\_\_\_ Bright blood \_\_\_\_\_

Current pain/cramps? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Location \_\_\_\_\_ Mild \_\_\_\_\_ Moderate \_\_\_\_\_ Severe \_\_\_\_\_  
Duration \_\_\_\_\_

Pain medication? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ When \_\_\_\_\_ Relief \_\_\_\_\_

Fever? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ When \_\_\_\_\_ How long \_\_\_\_\_

Highest temperature \_\_\_\_\_

Antibiotic prescribed? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
If so, antibiotic prescription completed?  
Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ If no, why not \_\_\_\_\_

Current contraception? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
If yes, what type \_\_\_\_\_  
If so, satisfied with method? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

### *Emotional status:*

How does the woman say she feels at this point? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F: Sample Follow-up visit medical form *(continued)*

Uterus:

size \_\_\_ weeks \_\_\_ tenderness \_\_\_

Cervix:

motion tenderness? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Abdomen:

soft/not tender? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Adnexa:

tenderness? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Mass?

Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Speculum exam done? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Pulse: \_\_\_\_\_ Temperature: \_\_\_\_\_ Blood pressure: \_\_\_\_\_

Hgb/Hct: \_\_\_\_\_ Other lab results: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Plan: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Re-evacuation procedure (if applicable)*

Re-evacuation procedure notes: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Follow-up*

Medication ordered: \_\_\_\_\_

### *Referrals (if applicable)*

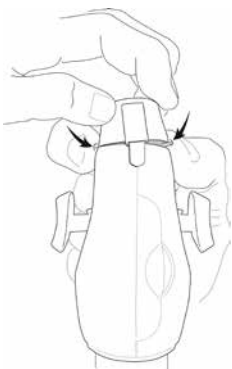
Reason and referring facility: \_\_\_\_\_

*(Adapted from Hern, 1984 and Paul, 1999)*

## Appendix G: Tips for using the Ipas MVA Plus

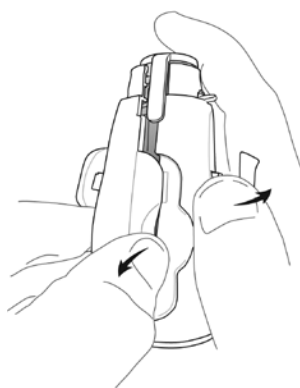
### Cap removal

With one hand, press down on the cap release tabs; with the other hand, pull the cap off.



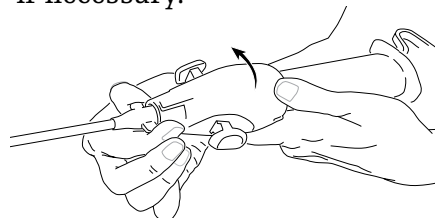
### Opening the valve body

Remove valve body from the cylinder. Place right thumb along side the right valve button and left thumb on the valve latch. With the left thumb, pull up and to the left on the valve latch while pushing down and out on the valve body with the right thumb.



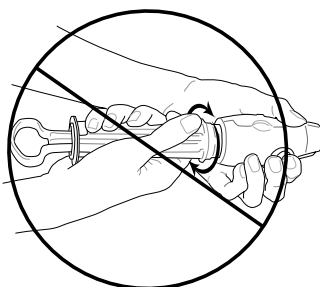
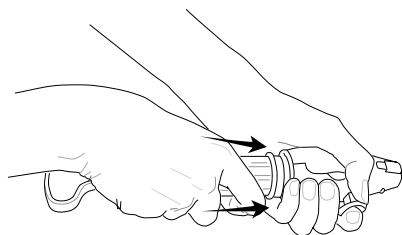
### Removal and insertion of Ipas EasyGrip cannula

If cannula removal is necessary during the procedure: Stabilize the cannula by grasping it at the base with one hand and holding it steady; with the other hand, hold the aspirator by the valve body, rotate the aspirator and gently separate it from the cannula. To insert the cannula, hold the aspirator by the valve body (not the cylinder), push cannula base in firmly, twisting slightly if necessary.



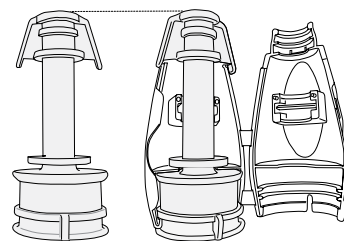
### Aspirator assembly

When assembling the aspirator, push the cylinder straight into the valve. Do not twist the barrel or valve when assembling as this will cause the liner to dislodge and may lead to device failure.



### Reassembly of Ipas aspirators

Place the valve liner in position inside the valve by aligning the internal ridges. Close the valve until it snaps in place. Snap the cap into place on the end of the valve.



### Processing tips

- When processing the aspirator with liquid agents, make sure the parts are rinsed thoroughly in boiled/sterile water. When processing agents are allowed to dry on the devices, the plunger does not move easily in the cylinder. When chlorine is not rinsed sufficiently, it may also cause the valve hinges to wear prematurely.
- When the cylinder becomes cloudy or pitted due to processing, soak the cylinder for a few minutes in vinegar, then clean the inside with a soft brush. Rinse in clean water.
- Devices must be completely disassembled prior to cleaning. It is important to remove the O-ring from the plunger prior to cleaning and make sure lubricants are removed during cleaning.

## Appendix G: Tips for using the Ipas MVA Plus (*continued*)

### *Solving technical problems during the MVA procedure*

The most common technical problem seen with MVA instruments is loss of vacuum. In most MVA procedures, the aspirator vacuum remains constant until the aspirator is approximately 80 percent, or 50mL, full. However, a decrease in vacuum may occur before the aspiration is complete for the following reasons:

- The aspirator is full.
- The cannula is withdrawn past the external os.
- The cannula becomes clogged.
- Incorrect assembly.

If the aspirator fills up so that suction stops:

- Depress the buttons.
- Disconnect the aspirator from the cannula, leaving the cannula in place inside the uterus.
- Either empty the aspirator into a container by pressing the buttons and pushing the plunger into the cylinder or replace the aspirator.
- Re-establish vacuum in the aspirator, reattach it to the cannula and resume the aspiration.

*Note:* Many clinicians keep a second prepared aspirator on hand during the procedure and switch aspirators if one becomes full.

If the cannula becomes clogged, a lack of tissue or bubbles flowing into the aspirator will be noted:

- Ease the cannula back toward, but not through, the cervical os. This movement will often unclog the cannula.

If this does not unclog the cannula:

- Depress the valve buttons and remove the cannula from the uterus, taking care to prevent contamination.
- Remove tissue from the opening in the cannula using sterile or HLD forceps.
- Reinsert the cannula using no-touch technique.
- Reattach the aspirator and continue the procedure.

*Caution:* Never try to unclog the cannula by pushing the plunger back into the cylinder.

## Appendix G: Tips for using the Ipas MVA Plus (*continued*)

If the aperture of the cannula is accidentally withdrawn from the uterus beyond the external os, remove the cannula, taking care not to contaminate it through contact with the vaginal walls or other non-sterile surfaces:

- Detach the aspirator from the cannula, empty the aspirator, then re-establish vacuum.
- Reinsert the cannula if it has not been contaminated.
  - If contamination has occurred, insert another sterile or HLD cannula.
- Reconnect the aspirator, release the vacuum and continue aspiration.

Other reasons why the aspirator might not hold a vacuum are:

- incorrect assembly
- a defective aspirator
- the need for a larger cannula to create a tighter seal in the cervix

# Uterine Evacuation with Medical Methods

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## Key topics in this module:

- Eligibility requirements and contraindications
- Essential information for clients
- Regimens using mifepristone plus misoprostol and misoprostol only
- Expected effects, side effects and potential complications
- Pain-management approaches and medication regimens
- Post-procedure care and follow-up visit

## 1.0 Introduction

Mifepristone and misoprostol can be used for uterine evacuation. For a more complete discussion of the provision of medical abortion (MA), please see Ipas's *Medical Abortion Study Guide*,

Second Edition. For use of misoprostol for postabortion care see Section 11.0: Considerations for postabortion care.

There are two main regimens for medical abortion:

1. *Mifepristone and misoprostol* used in combination. Can be used up to thirteen weeks since the last menstrual period (LMP). This regimen has been widely studied and safely used by women in many countries, and studies report success rates of over 95 percent.
2. *Misoprostol only*. Can be used up to thirteen weeks since the last menstrual period (LMP). This regimen is less effective than the combination of mifepristone plus misoprostol, but may be useful where mifepristone is not available. When the recommended regimen is used, misoprostol only results in successful abortion in approximately 85 percent of cases.

Misoprostol can also be used in the provision of postabortion care up to 13 weeks uterine size. The efficacy rate of misoprostol for postabortion care (PAC) is over 90 percent.

Mifepristone was developed in France and originally known as RU-486. It blocks progesterone activity in the uterus, leading to detachment of the pregnancy. Mifepristone also causes the cervix to soften and the uterus to contract.

Misoprostol stimulates uterine contractions and cause expulsion of the pregnancy. Misoprostol is inexpensive, stable at room temperature and available in many countries for the prevention and treatment of gastric ulcers. It is readily absorbed when used vaginally, sublingually or buccally.

Other medications are also sometimes used for abortion. Methotrexate, a cytotoxic drug used to treat cancer, rheumatoid arthritis and other conditions has been used in combination with misoprostol for early medical abortion, but a 1997 Toxicology Panel recommended against its use for abortion due to an increased risk of teratogenicity in continuing pregnancies following MA with methotrexate. This module will focus on mifepristone and misoprostol or misoprostol only for induced abortion, and misoprostol for incomplete abortion.

## 2.0 Preparation

Before administering any medications:

- Provide counseling to the woman and obtain informed consent (Please see the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module.)
- Perform a clinical assessment, including physical examination (Please see the Clinical Assessment module.)
- Discuss the woman's contraceptive needs (Please see the Contraceptive Services module.)



## 2.1 Explaining the MA process to women

Before taking any medications, the woman should receive instructions about what she may experience, what pills to take, when and how to take them, when to follow up, and when and where to seek medical help in case of a problem. Because some words are probably unfamiliar to her (such as sublingual or buccal), providers should use simple language (such as “under the tongue” and “inside the cheek” and can even provide drawings to visually aid her in understanding how medications should be taken either at home or in the facility.

Thorough information about what the woman might expect helps her to be prepared. Reassurance and support during the abortion process, either by clinic staff or a person at home, can also be helpful. (Please see the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module.)

When taking mifepristone for abortion with mifepristone and misoprostol, most women feel no change after taking the pills. Approximately 8-25 percent of women will have some spotting or bleeding after mifepristone, prior to taking misoprostol.

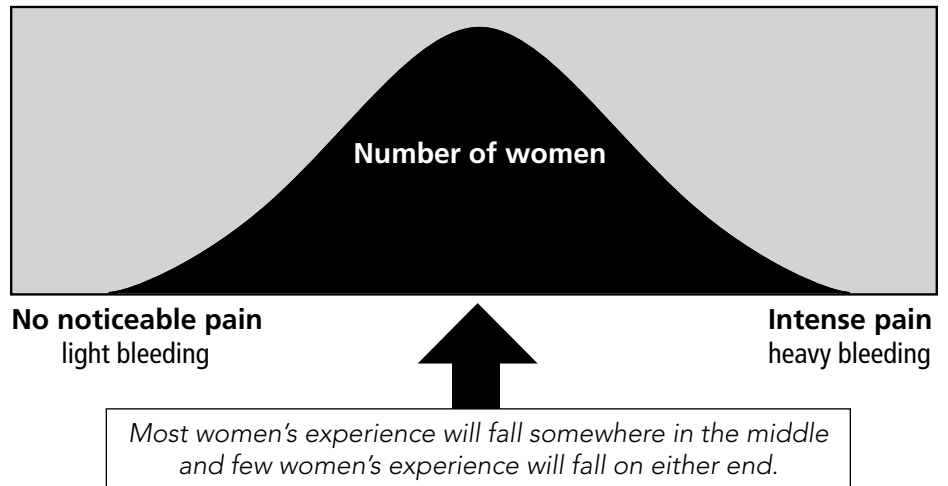
### *Bleeding and cramping*

- Clinicians new to medical methods as well as women themselves will have questions about how to tell the difference between normal and abnormal bleeding and pain. All women should be given information about the bleeding and pain they might experience, keeping in mind factors that might put her at higher or lower risk of experiencing these symptoms.
- Accurately describing the sensations a woman might feel can alleviate fear and anxiety that may make pain worse. Figure 1: The bell curve may be helpful for both providers and patients to understand a range of symptoms women might experience. Providers may use the bell curve to explain that most women fall in the middle part under the curve, experiencing symptoms that are of an average duration or intensity. However, some women will be at either ends of the curve and will experience less or more symptoms than most women. Not all women will understand the picture of the bell curve, but they all should be told about the range of symptoms they might experience in a way that makes sense to them.

Although some women do not feel any pain and others experience intense pain, the majority of women fall somewhere in the middle. Most women having MA bleed for around two weeks but some will have more and others less. See Section 5.0: Expected effects in this module for more information on bleeding and cramping.

A woman may have concerns about where she may begin

Figure 1: The Bell curve



bleeding and how to maintain privacy and obtain support during the process. Her provider should be prepared to support her in thinking through and deciding on the most private and comfortable location to undergo the process and who in her family or social network might be the most supportive and trustworthy person to support her.

### *Timing of expulsion for MA*

With the mifepristone and misoprostol regimen before 9 weeks gestation, the median time from misoprostol use to expulsion has been found to be three hours for women who used sublingual misoprostol and four hours for women who used vaginal misoprostol. The buccal route shows timing similar to that of the vaginal route.

For misoprostol only abortion, the average expulsion time is seven to eight hours after the first misoprostol dose. Of the expulsions that occur, 80 percent take place within 24 hours and 95 percent take place within 48 hours. Expulsion is faster if the dosing interval is shorter (every three hours).

Normally, women continue to feel better after the day they use misoprostol. Women can resume their usual routines within a few days of taking misoprostol. Nausea and vomiting, which are associated both with misoprostol use and pregnancy symptoms, usually resolve within one to two days of using misoprostol, as does cramping, which is part of the MA process, not a pregnancy symptom.

### *What the woman might see*

Most women will see only blood and clots, some of which may be large. With MA, women with pregnancies between 8-9 weeks may see a recognizable embryo though it is usually not visible.

If a woman is concerned about what she might see, especially after eight weeks of pregnancy, providers may show her a drawing of an 8-9 week embryo may help prepare her. An embryo

at nine weeks is about 2.3cm in length, or less than one inch. Women undergoing MA from 10-13 weeks are more likely to see a recognizable fetus, although it may be wrapped in a blood clot or tissue and they may not see it unless they actually look. A fetus at 12 weeks is about 7.5cm long, or almost three inches.

Please see Appendix A for an illustration of an 8-9 week embryo.

### *Disposal*

Women may simply flush expelled products down the toilet or dispose of sanitary pads as they would after a menstrual period.

## 2.2 Clinical assessment: Physical examination

Clinical assessment prior to uterine evacuation with medical methods includes gestational dating, assessment of uterine size, assessment of the woman's general health and any contraindications or precautions. See the Clinical Assessment module for more information.

### *Diagnose and accurately date the pregnancy*

For MA, confirm that the gestational age is thirteen weeks since the LMP or less. The MA regimens described here are only for use up to thirteen weeks since the LMP.

### *Contraindications and precautions to medical abortion*

The contraindications to medical abortion are:

- Previous allergic reaction to one of the drugs involved
- Known or suspected ectopic pregnancy
- Inherited porphyria (applies only to mifepristone with misoprostol regimen)
- Chronic adrenal failure (applies only to mifepristone with misoprostol regimen)

Precautions:

- *IUD in place.* Evaluate for the presence of ectopic pregnancy. If none, remove the IUD.
- *Severe/unstable health problems.* No evidence exists on the use of medical methods for uterine evacuation in women with hemorrhagic disorder, heart disease, severe anemia or severe/unstable health problems. Whether to provide uterine evacuation with medical methods to women with these conditions will depend on the available options for safe abortion care, referrals, and clinical judgment. If mifepristone or misoprostol are given, they should be given under close observation.

- *Severe uncontrolled asthma or long-term corticosteroid therapy* (applies only to mifepristone with misoprostol regimen). No evidence exists regarding use of mifepristone in steroid-dependent women. Providers must use clinical judgment if no other alternatives to safe abortion exist. Increase steroid dose for 3-4 days and monitor the woman very closely. Conditions such as poorly controlled asthma may still be worsened.

## 2.3 Contraceptive needs

After MA, a woman may have vaginal intercourse when she feels comfortable doing so. Because ovulation can occur almost immediately after a uterine evacuation, contraception should be provided immediately to women who want to prevent or delay pregnancy. If a woman desires long acting contraception or sterilization but it cannot be provided, an interim method should be given and referral made to the appropriate facility. In general, all modern contraceptive methods can be used immediately following first-trimester MA provided that there are no contraindications.

Contraception may be started with the first pill of a medical abortion. This recommendation is based on expert opinion. A woman's immediate need for reliable contraception after MA, coupled with the risk that delayed contraceptive provision may reduce uptake, supports the recommendation to start these methods immediately.

IUDs may be inserted as soon as it is reasonably certain that the woman is no longer pregnant. Delaying IUD insertion puts women at risk of unintended pregnancy, as rates of return visits are low. Fertility awareness-based methods should only be used after a woman has had at least one postabortion menses and only if she had regular menstrual cycles prior to the abortion. (Please see the Contraceptive Services module.)

## 3.0 Recommended mifepristone plus misoprostol regimens

A range of regimens using mifepristone and misoprostol for medical abortion are used around the world. The following instructions on are based on regimens used in clinical trials and evidence-based practice.

The provider should administer mifepristone only after the woman has received the following information:

- When and how to take the medications
- What she should expect to feel and see in the abortion process
- Warning signs and what to monitor as potential problems
- Who to contact in case of questions or an emergency
- Which pain-management drugs to take

Table 12-1: Mifepristone and misoprostol regimens for medical abortion up to 13 weeks

Gestational age	Mifepristone dose	Misoprostol dose, route and timing
Up to 9 weeks (Kulier 2011)	200mg orally	After 24-48 hours, 800mcg buccally, sublingually or vaginally for one dose
9-10 weeks (Winikoff 2012)	200mg orally	After 24-48 hours, 800mcg buccally for one dose
10-13 weeks (Hamoda 2005a, Hamoda 2005b)	200mg orally	After 36-48 hours, 800mcg vaginally followed by 400mcg vaginally or sublingually every 3 hours for a maximum of 5 doses of misoprostol

MA has been shown to be safe and effective between 9-13 weeks, although this is based on fewer studies compared to earlier in pregnancy. Recommendations for 11-13 weeks are based on even smaller numbers of women.

### 3.1 Administration of mifepristone

- For women up to thirteen weeks since the LMP or less, the provider should administer 200mg mifepristone orally. Usually, mifepristone is given in the clinic. A recent study showed that women can safely take mifepristone at home if they choose with no change in safety or effectiveness. Whether women take mifepristone in the clinic or at home, they should be instructed to take misoprostol 24 to 48 hours later.

### 3.2 Administration of misoprostol

There are a range of options for the route, dosage and timing of misoprostol administration. Buccal, sublingual or vaginal are recommended routes during the first trimester. See Table 12-1 above for proper timing and number of doses, depending on LMP.

For women under 10 weeks, misoprostol may be taken at home or in a clinic according to her preference. For MA between 10 and 13 weeks, women should return to the health facility to take misoprostol and stay there until the abortion is complete.

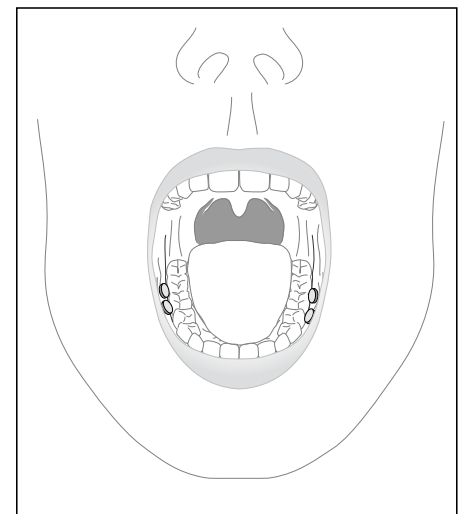
#### 3.2.1 Routes of administration

##### *Buccal use of misoprostol*

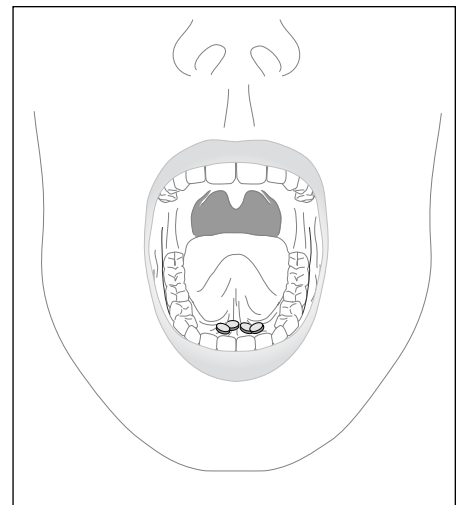
- Place two pills between each cheek and gums (four total).
- After 30 minutes, swallow any remaining pill fragments.

##### *Sublingual use of misoprostol*

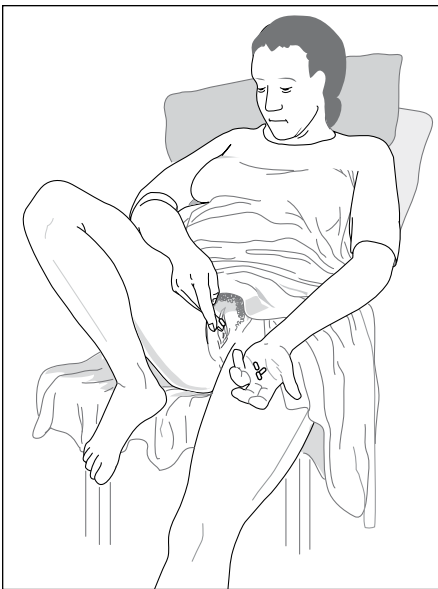
- Place four pills under the tongue.
- After 30 minutes, swallow and remaining pill fragments.



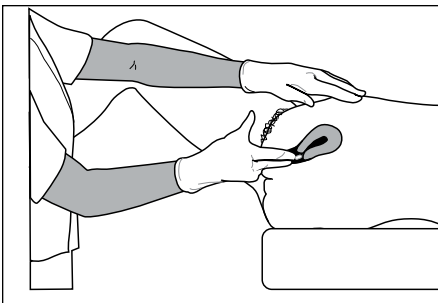
Buccal use of misoprostol



Sublingual use of misoprostol



Vaginal use of misoprostol



Vaginal use of misoprostol

### *Vaginal use of misoprostol*

- The woman empties her bladder and lies down.
- If a provider is inserting pills, the provider washes hands and puts on clean exam gloves.
- All the misoprostol pills are inserted.
- The pills need to be pushed as far into the vagina as possible; they do not need to be in any special place in the vagina.
- Often the pills will not dissolve but the medication is still absorbed.
- Fragments of the pills may remain visible for many hours.
- After lying down for 30 minutes, if pills fall out when a woman stands up or goes to the bathroom, the pills do not need to be reinserted; the active medicine has been absorbed by that time.

### 3.2.2 Home administration of misoprostol

Multiple studies from different countries have shown that taking misoprostol at home as part of a mifepristone and misoprostol regimen is safe, effective and highly acceptable to women undergoing MA up to 10 weeks LMP. Although studies have not specifically evaluated safety, efficacy and acceptability of home use of misoprostol with misoprostol only regimens, the option of home use has been included in studies of this regimen.

Many women prefer taking misoprostol at home with familiar surroundings, people and personal belongings. Doing this also can save them money in transportation costs as well as time. In turn, it saves the facility staff resources as well.

Staff should give all women aborting at home the following:

- Misoprostol pills or a prescription for them;
- Detailed information on how to take the misoprostol;
- Pain medicine, such as ibuprofen and/or mild narcotics with instructions about how to take it;
- Written and pictorial information on the MA process, side effects and warning signs, what signs indicate that the abortion is successful, and information for follow-up contact, if desired;
- Information on whom to contact (including a telephone number where possible) in case of questions, problems or complications, or the possibility of an unsuccessful MA, and where to go in the case of an emergency;

- Other optional items: Sanitary pads, cotton wool, contraceptive information and supplies.

Many clinics give this information and supplies in a take-home packet. It is also helpful to talk with each woman about her specific situation. For example, does she have a partner or support person who can be with her when she takes the misoprostol and after, when she is likely to begin bleeding? If she has children, has she arranged childcare in case she needs to rest? Does she have concerns about seeing and disposing of the embryo after it expels?

A conversation about what to consider can help women to be most prepared for their at-home medical abortion.

### 3.2.3 Clinic administration of misoprostol

Whenever possible, women should be offered a choice of taking the misoprostol at home or in the clinic, as different women have different needs and desires. For some women, home may be a more private place but for others, the clinic may afford a greater degree of privacy. If the woman chooses to take misoprostol vaginally in the clinic, she should be offered the choice of inserting the misoprostol herself or to have it inserted by a provider. She may also take the misoprostol buccally or sublingually.

After taking misoprostol, the woman may wait at the clinic for approximately 4-6 hours, depending on how long it takes the pregnancy to expel. A woman who has not expelled the pregnancy within that time may remain longer waiting for expulsion, or she may return to her home if she has transportation and can seek follow-up care if necessary.

Clinics may have rooms with beds or curtained cubicles or, more commonly, a room that has several cots or reclining chairs and a toilet nearby. There should be enough toilet facilities to accommodate the maximum number of women receiving misoprostol at a given time. Women do not need to be restricted to beds but can move around the clinic if they prefer. Depending on space and the ability to ensure the confidentiality of all the women receiving services, facilities should also consider allowing each woman to have her partner or a support person with her during this time. A clinician or counselor should be available to answer questions and to address any medical concerns.

Staff should provide pain medication and hot-water bottles or warm cloths (if possible) to relieve discomfort from cramping.

Expelled tissue should be observed by a clinician to confirm a complete abortion.

If the woman leaves the clinic before she aborts, providers should:

- Give her instructions and supplies relevant to aborting at home.

- Provide her with pain medication to take home.
- Review instructions and provide information on signs of a successful MA, as well as warning signs of complications or an unsuccessful MA. Give her emergency contact information for the clinic.
- Provide a contraceptive method if desired.
- Inform her that she can return to the clinic anytime if she desires follow-up care. If she wants reassurance that the abortion was successful, she should return after two weeks.

## 4.0 Recommended misoprostol-only regimens

Medical abortion using misoprostol only is an important option in settings where mifepristone is not available. In the first trimester, the rate of successful abortion with misoprostol only without need for further intervention is approximately 85 percent. The rate of ongoing pregnancy after misoprostol only abortion is approximately 5 percent. Abortions performed with misoprostol only usually take longer and have a lower success rate than those performed with the combined mifepristone and misoprostol regimen. If mifepristone is available, the combined regimen is recommended.

Table 12-2: Misoprostol-only regimens up to 13 weeks  
(Carbonell 1998, 1999 & 2001)

Misoprostol 800mcg (four 200mcg pills)	Vaginal	Every 3 -12 hours for a maximum of 3 doses
Misoprostol 800mcg (four 200mcg pills)	Sublingual	Every 3 hours for a maximum of 3 doses

Under 9 weeks, complete abortion rates are equivalent when misoprostol is given vaginally every three to twelve hours or sublingually every three hours for three doses. Sublingual dosing had a higher incidence of side effects than vaginal dosing.

There have been relatively few studies that have looked at misoprostol only abortion between 9-13 weeks. As yet there is no data to support home use of misoprostol from 9 to 13 weeks. Misoprostol should be given in the clinic for MA between 9 and 13 weeks and women should remain in the facility until the abortion is complete. The provider should inspect the products of conception to confirm that the abortion was successful.

Misoprostol-only regimens can also be used to treat incomplete abortion. For more information, please see Section 11.0 Considerations for postabortion care and Ipas's *Woman-Centered Postabortion care: Reference Manual*, Second Edition.



## 4.1 Administration of misoprostol only

- For women who are thirteen weeks since the LMP or less, the provider or the woman should administer 800micrograms of misoprostol sublingually or vaginally. (Please see Table 12-2 above for proper timing and number of doses.)

### 4.1.1 Protocol for administration of misoprostol only

Ipas recommends the sublingual or vaginal misoprostol routes throughout the first trimester.

#### *Sublingual use of misoprostol*

- Place four pills under the tongue.
- After 30 minutes, swallow anything remaining of the pills.

#### *Vaginal use of misoprostol*

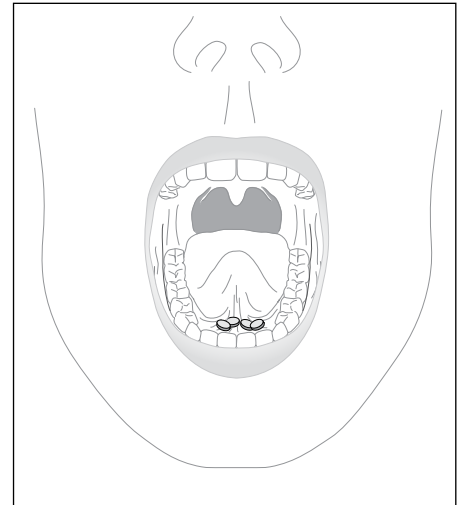
- The woman empties her bladder and lies down.
- If a provider is inserting pills, the provider washes hands and puts on clean exam gloves.
- All the misoprostol pills are inserted.
- The pills need to be pushed as far into the vagina as possible; they do not need to be in any special place in the vagina.
- Often the pills will not dissolve but the medication is still absorbed.
- Fragments of the pills may remain visible for many hours.
- After lying down for 30 minutes, if pills fall out when a woman stands up or goes to the bathroom, the pills do not need to be reinserted; the active medicine has absorbed by that time.

## 5.0 Expected effects

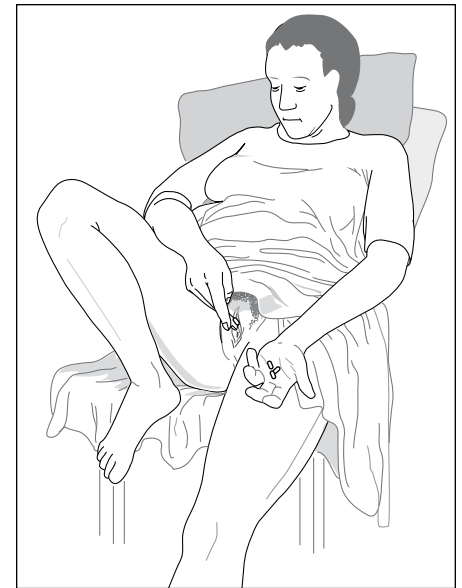
Once a woman takes misoprostol, the process may feel like an intense menstrual period or similar to a spontaneous miscarriage. The normal, expected effects — vaginal bleeding and cramping —should be distinguished from side effects of the medications or warning signs of true complications.

### 5.1 Pain and cramping

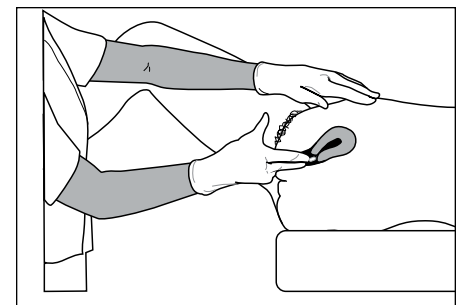
Most women will experience lower abdominal pain and cramping during a uterine evacuation with medical methods, which may be stronger than that typically experience during a menstrual period



Sublingual use of misoprostol



Vaginal use of misoprostol



Vaginal use of misoprostol

because contractions are needed to expel the uterine contents. Cramping usually begins within the first few hours after taking misoprostol. As the uterus contracts and its contents are expelled through the cervix, women generally feel some degree of cramping, which will soon diminish. Women's experience of pain is highly individual, which makes it impossible to predict how much pain a particular woman will experience.

However, there are some predictors of pain associated with medical methods. Older age, having given birth before, and a higher number of previous births are associated with reduced pain with medical abortion. Young women and women who have never been pregnant tend to experience increased pain. Women with painful periods may also experience increased pain with medical abortion independent of other factors such as age or reproductive history.

## 5.2 Pain management

Most women find pain related to uterine evacuation with medical methods to be manageable, especially if they are prepared for the range of pain they might experience and take pain medicines as advised. Women should be provided with pain medication or a prescription at their first clinic visit.

The best regimen for pain control for MA has not been established. NSAIDs such as ibuprofen are more effective than acetaminophen. However, acetaminophen may reduce the dose of narcotics that a woman uses during MA. The dose of acetaminophen must not exceed four grams in a 24-hour period to avoid liver toxicity. Ibuprofen can be given with misoprostol or once cramping starts. Ibuprofen does not reduce the effectiveness of medical abortion. Narcotic analgesics are another option for pain control although the optimal drug, dose and timing is not known. One potential strategy is to provide women with NSAIDs and narcotic analgesics and advise them to begin with NSAIDs either with misoprostol or once cramping starts and alternate the two medications they continue to experience pain.

In addition to medical management, other methods that may help women manage pain during the process are counseling, a supportive environment and applying a heating pad or hot water bottle to the lower abdomen. Music is effective for pain management during vacuum aspiration and may be helpful for medical methods as well. These methods are complementary but not adequate substitutes for pain management with medications.

Research indicates that young women's experiences with medical abortion are similar to those of older women. However, pain perception appears to be related to age. The perception of pain and use of analgesia has been found to be higher in younger women than older women. Lower parity has also been associated with increased perceived pain and/or analgesia needed. Providers

should be aware that young women may be more susceptible to pain and take necessary measures to reduce pain and improve a young women's experience.

(Please see Appendix A: Pharmacologic approaches to pain management during MVA in the Uterine Evacuation Procedure with Ipas MVA Plus® module.)

## 5.3 Vaginal bleeding

Vaginal bleeding, often accompanied by passage of clots, is usually heavier than a menstrual period but sometimes may be lighter. With a combined MA regimen, bleeding most often starts within three hours after taking misoprostol and tends to decrease after the pregnancy tissue has been expelled.

In one of the few large studies to follow the bleeding patterns of women choosing MA or aspiration, the duration of heavy bleeding, menstrual-type bleeding and spotting was significantly longer in women undergoing MA. Despite the longer duration of bleeding, women who had MA did not have a clinically significant drop in hemoglobin (>2g/dL) when compared to women who had an aspiration. Most importantly in this study, women who had the proper expectations about duration and level of bleeding were satisfied with their experience with MA.

After MA with mifepristone and misoprostol, the average duration of bleeding is approximately 14 days. Approximately 20 percent of women undergoing MA continued to bleed or spot for 35-42 days, which may include start of the first post-abortion menses.

There is less data about the duration of bleeding after MA with misoprostol only, though it appears to be similar to MA with mifepristone and misoprostol. In the largest study of misoprostol-only abortion, the mean duration of bleeding was around 11.5 days, which is similar to combined regimens.

## 6.0 Potential side effects

The following side effects are associated with misoprostol use and apply to women undergoing uterine evacuation with either mifepristone and misoprostol or misoprostol only:

- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Fever, warmth or chills
- Headache
- Weakness
- Dizziness

Some of these symptoms may be caused by the pregnancy itself rather than the medications. These pregnancy symptoms can actually decrease after the process begins. Those symptoms that increase after taking misoprostol include temporary fever and diarrhea as well as nausea and vomiting. Over half of women in clinical trials of mifepristone and misoprostol or misoprostol only experience gastrointestinal side effects including nausea, vomiting and diarrhea. Fever and chills are also commonly seen with misoprostol but they are usually short lived and should resolve with antipyretics. Headache, weakness and dizziness are also common. Most of these side effects are mild and self-limited and can be treated at home. However, women who complain of prolonged or severe side effects that continue to occur 24 hours after the last dose of medications should be evaluated. (Please see the Complications module.)

## 7.0 Complications

Side effects and complications often happen on a continuum. For example, all women will experience bleeding, some women will experience prolonged bleeding that is an annoyance but is not harmful and very few women will experience heavy bleeding that requires further medical or surgical intervention. Actual complications are rare. For medical abortion, these include ongoing pregnancy, hemorrhage, and infection; for misoprostol for incomplete abortion, these include unsuccessful treatment, hemorrhage and infection.

When counseling women before uterine evacuation with medical methods, it is important to give them information about how to tell the difference between a side effect that can be taken care of at home with supportive care and a complication that needs medical attention. Women should contact their provider immediately if they experience:

- *Excessive bleeding:* Soaking more than two sanitary pads per hour for two consecutive hours, especially if accompanied by prolonged dizziness, lightheadedness and increasing fatigue
- *Fever of 38°C (100.4°F):* A temperature that occurs any day after the day misoprostol is taken
- *Unusual or bad-smelling vaginal discharge:* Especially if accompanied by severe cramps or abdominal pain
- *Severe abdominal pain:* Pain that occurs any day after the day misoprostol is taken
- *Feeling very sick:* With or without fever, and persistent severe nausea or vomiting after the day misoprostol is used

Women should return to the clinic before their follow-up visit (if one is scheduled) if they experience little to no bleeding one to two days following misoprostol. This is not an emergency, but rather

cause for seeking early follow-up care. Very light bleeding with MA suggests that there may be a continuing pregnancy, or that the treatment is working, but the pregnancy was at a very early gestation.

Women who experience complications of MA need clear, evidence-based explanations of the situation and should be included in decision making about their treatment options. Fears about complications, perhaps compounded by pain, can add to the emotional stress that may accompany the abortion process. Most women cope better with their situation when they receive accurate, thorough information and have the opportunity to ask questions and express their feelings.

Although persistent side effects and serious complications are rare, clinic staff must be able to provide timely treatment or make appropriate referrals. If ultrasound is not routinely used in clinics that offer medical abortion, a referral system for ultrasound services should be established to evaluate any questionable or troublesome cases that may occur. An alternative method, preferably vacuum aspiration, should be available on-site or through referral as back-up for failed medical abortions.

(Please see the Complications module, Appendix E: Discharge information sheet and Appendix D: Sample clinical referral form in the Uterine Evacuation Procedure with Ipas MVA Plus® module.)



Provide instructions for medications

## 8.0 Instructions prior to leaving the clinic

Before leaving the clinic, the woman should receive instructions about the normal MA experience, what pills to take, when and how to take them, when to follow up, and when and where to seek medical help in case of a problem. Because some words are probably unfamiliar to her (such as sublingual or buccal), providers should use simple language (such as “under the tongue” and “inside the cheek” and can provide drawings to visually aid her in understanding how medications should be taken.

A pamphlet, card, or handout summarizing these points is often useful. A woman who is unable to read may still find it useful to take written instructions with her; she may have someone read it to her if she has questions. Pictorial resources for women who cannot read, such as illustrated guides outlining the MA regimen, side effects, and possible complications, may be very helpful. For MA-related images, please see the information, education and communication (IEC) materials and job aids in Additional resources, Uterine Evacuation with Ipas MVA Plus®.

MA information for women should include:

- Regimen and effectiveness
- What she will experience

- How long the process typically takes
- The signs of a successful abortion
- Expected effects, potential side effects and complications
- Warning signs to seek help
- Ensuring access to emergency care
- Contraceptive needs
- When and where to obtain follow-up care if necessary

In settings with telephones, contact information should be provided so the woman can call any time with questions or concerns. In some locations, a return to the health facility may be the only way for the woman to access a clinician to assess her situation. Local referrals closer to a woman's home may be given in advance if the woman lives far from the clinic. Utilizing community health nurses or other community-based health workers or organizations can be a good source of local support and information for women, as long as they are well informed about MA information and care.

(Please see the Complications and the Community Linkages modules. A sample discharge information sheet is available in the Uterine Evacuation Procedure with Ipas MVA Plus® module as Appendix E: Discharge information sheet.)

## 9.0 Follow-up care

A routine follow-up visit after medical abortion with mifepristone followed by misoprostol is not necessary; however, because of lower efficacy, routine follow-up after medical abortion with misoprostol only is recommended. A woman who takes medication at home should be given an explanation of how to recognize the signs of expulsion (bleeding and cramping) that occur with a successful medical abortion. In general, women who feel they have had a successful medical abortion do not need further care. However, if a woman takes the medication and has minimal or no bleeding or still feels pregnant, she should return to the provider to check whether she has had a successful abortion or if she needs a procedure to complete her abortion. If a woman is concerned about ongoing bleeding or other problems, she may return at any time. If a woman desires reassurance after the abortion, she may return in approximately two weeks to confirm that she has had a successful abortion, or to receive additional desired services.

If the woman returns for follow-up care, the provider should:

1. Inquire about the woman's experience with the medical abortion process.
2. Confirm success of the abortion:

### Success checklist (based on Perriera 2010)

Ask the woman each question below and put a tick in the appropriate box.

	Yes	No
1. Did you have cramping after you took all of the medical abortion tablets?		
2. Did you have bleeding at least as heavy as your usual period after you took all of the medical abortion tablets?		
3. Did you pass blood clots or tissue after you took all of the medical abortion tablets?		
4. Have your pregnancy symptoms gone away?		
5. Do you think you are still pregnant?		
6. Are you having heavy bleeding today?		
7. Do you have a fever today?		
8. Are you having bad cramping or pain today?		

**If there is at least one tick in the shaded area**, she should see a health-care provider. She may still be pregnant or need additional medical care.

**If there are no ticks in the shaded area**, there is a high likelihood that her medical abortion was successful. She should use contraception to prevent an unwanted pregnancy.

- Take a history of the abortion process, amount and duration of bleeding, cramping and passage of clots.
  - Conduct a physical examination.
  - If there is any doubt, the provider can conduct or refer for an ultrasound to look for a gestational sac or an ongoing pregnancy.
- Perform vacuum aspiration to complete the process in the case of a continuing pregnancy.
  - Inform the woman of what to expect following completion or continued treatment.
  - Review any laboratory tests results.
  - Provide a contraceptive method, if desired and not already provided.
  - Refer for other medical, gynecologic or counseling services where indicated.

(Please see the Clinical Assessment module; the Complications

module; the Contraceptive Services module and the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module. For sample documentation, see Appendix F: Sample follow-up visit medical form in the Uterine Evacuation Procedure with Ipas MVA Plus® module.)

## 10.0 Special considerations: Young women

Most aspects of providing abortion care for young women are the same as for adult women, but there are some special considerations.

This is likely a young woman's first pelvic exam, and she may be nervous or afraid. Therefore, providers should take special care to:

- Ensure that there is at least visual and preferably auditory privacy.
- Explain what you are doing at each step.
- Perform the examination as gently and smoothly as possible. If a range of specula sizes are available, use the size appropriate to the woman and conducive to the exam or procedure.

Although women of all ages need pain management, the perception of pain and use of analgesia has been found to be higher on average in younger women than in older women.

## 11.0 Considerations for postabortion care

- Eligibility criteria are: open cervical os, vaginal bleeding or a history of vaginal bleeding during the pregnancy and uterine size less than 13 weeks.
- Contraindications for misoprostol for incomplete abortion include:
  - Previous allergic reaction to misoprostol or other prostaglandin
  - Known or suspected ectopic pregnancy
  - Signs of pelvic infection and/or sepsis
  - Hemodynamic instability or shock
- Following misoprostol for incomplete abortion, fertility returns quickly. Therefore if a woman wants to avoid pregnancy, contraception should be provided when she initially presents for postabortion care.
- Women receiving misoprostol for incomplete abortion are likely to experience pain, cramping and bleeding. They may experience side effects from misoprostol such as nausea or fever and chills. Providers should offer pain management to women using misoprostol for PAC.



- After misoprostol for incomplete abortion, bleeding will be similar to a woman's period and may continue for days.
- The dose of misoprostol for incomplete abortion is a single dose of 400 mcg sublingually *or* 600 mcg orally.
- If the initial dose fails and the woman is clinically stable, the misoprostol dose may be repeated. Other options include expectant management or provision of vacuum aspiration.

For more information and materials on misoprostol for treatment of incomplete or missed abortion, see *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual*, Second Edition.

## 12.0 Summary

- Studies indicate that the combination of mifepristone and misoprostol has a somewhat higher success rate than misoprostol only.
- Although misoprostol only for medical abortion is not as effective as the combination of mifepristone and misoprostol, it may be a useful option where mifepristone is not available.
- Vaginal, buccal or sublingual administration of misoprostol is recommended for pregnancies after seven weeks rather than oral administration due to higher efficacy.
- Abortion completion, preferably with vacuum aspiration, is recommended for continuing pregnancies.
- Counseling includes the discussion of: basic information about medical abortion, risks and benefits, and possible side effects and complications.
- Before taking any medications, the woman should receive instructions about what she may experience, what pills to take, when and how to take them, when to follow up, and when and where to seek medical help in case of a problem.
- Preparation prior to administering mifepristone includes: counseling and obtaining informed consent; performing a client assessment, including physical examination; confirming that the woman knows what to do if there is an emergency; and discussing her contraceptive needs.
- Misoprostol may be administered at home for gestations up to 10 weeks LMP. Appropriate facilities and staff support should be available to women who remain in the clinic during the medical abortion process.
- Vaginal bleeding and cramping are expected and normal components of medical abortion. Other side effects include nausea, diarrhea, vomiting, fever, warmth or chills, headache and dizziness.

- All women should be offered pain medications. Both non-narcotic and narcotic analgesics can be used to treat pain associated with medical abortion. NSAIDs have been shown to be significantly more effective than acetaminophen.
- Although serious complications from medical abortion are rare, complications that can occur are continuing pregnancy, hemorrhage and infection.
- Before leaving the clinic, the woman should know the expected side effects of the medication she has taken or will take at home; the warning signs for potential complications; and when and where to seek medical help.
- A routine follow-up visit after medical abortion with mifepristone followed by misoprostol is not necessary; however, because of lower efficacy, routine follow-up after medical abortion with misoprostol only is recommended.

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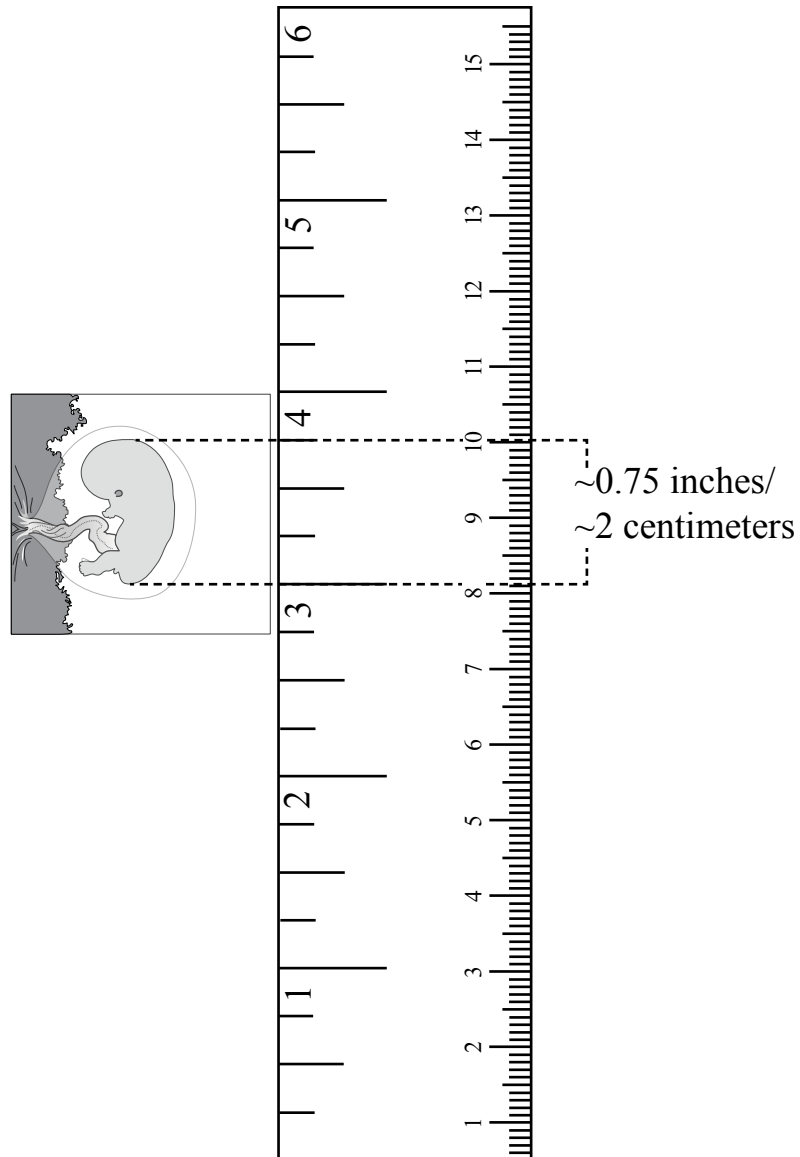
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## Appendix A: Illustration of 8-9 week embryo to scale





# Complications

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## Key topics in this module:

- Signs and symptoms of presenting, procedural and pregnancy-related complications
- Steps to diagnose, manage or refer complications
- Learning from adverse events

## 1.0 Introduction

Complications are rare during or after uterine evacuation but they do occur. Women who access services for postabortion care may have presenting complications that need treatment. Safe abortion does not cause future infertility, breast cancer or severe psychological reactions.

This module gives information on the most common complications that women may experience during the course of abortion or postabortion care, their signs and symptoms and basic management.

## 2.0 Presenting complications

Typically, women presenting for postabortion care are ambulatory and complaining of vaginal bleeding and pain and fever or chills and need treatment for incomplete abortion. Women who have suffered more severe complications may present with shock, hemorrhage, sepsis and intra-abdominal injury. Severe complications are more likely in settings where unsafe abortion is common. In this module we will discuss the more severe complications briefly. More information can be found in Ipas's *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual*, Second Edition.

Women may also present with pregnancy-related complications; please see Section 4.0 for more information.

## 3.0 Procedural complications

When uterine evacuation is performed by a trained provider, procedural complications are infrequent. However, even in the most skilled hands complications will occur. It is important to be prepared to diagnose complications and provide treatment quickly and safely. Complications can occur during uterine evacuation, during the recovery period or later, and facilities must have an established protocol to address this possibility. Complications may occur with vacuum aspiration and medical abortion. In most cases, complications can be managed successfully if treatment is initiated promptly. Serious complications are rare, and can usually be treated by a trained clinician providing general emergency medical and surgical care. If emergency facilities are not available on site, complications should be managed through the timely transfer of the woman to an acute-care facility.

## 4.0 Pregnancy-related complications

Some women may have pregnancy-related or gynecologic complications such as molar pregnancy, ectopic pregnancy or uterine abnormalities that require specific clinical consideration and management. These conditions are often discovered during the clinical assessment and can be addressed before the procedure is performed. Some may not become evident until during or after the uterine evacuation. (Please see the Clinical Assessment module and the Uterine Evacuation with Medical Methods module.)

## 5.0 Complications of vacuum aspiration or medical abortion

Several types of complications may infrequently occur with either vacuum aspiration or medical abortion. These include: incomplete abortion; infection; continuing pregnancy; hemorrhage; and ectopic pregnancy.

### 5.1 Incomplete abortion

After uterine evacuation, some tissue may remain in the uterus.

Large amounts of retained tissue can result in heavy bleeding and infection if untreated. If a woman has heavy bleeding or signs and symptoms of infection, the recommended treatment is immediate repeat vacuum aspiration.

Small amounts of retained tissue may pass spontaneously without requiring further intervention. Close monitoring until the retained products are expelled may be sufficient or a woman may be offered misoprostol for postabortion care. Otherwise, treatment involves evacuation of the uterus, preferably using vacuum aspiration. (Please see *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual*, Second Edition for more information.)

## 5.2 Infection

The rate of infection after a safe first-trimester abortion is low, occurring in less than one in 100 women. Routine use of prophylactic antibiotics with vacuum aspiration can decrease the rate even further. Infection is more likely to occur if a woman has had an incomplete abortion. If the woman has retained tissue in the uterus, it should be evacuated immediately. All women with infection should be started on broad spectrum antibiotics with the route of administration dependent on the severity of the infection.

## 5.3 Continuing pregnancy

Continuing pregnancy after vacuum aspiration is rare, occurring in approximately two per thousand procedures. Risk factors include:

- Early gestational age (<six weeks)
- Operator inexperience
- Uterine anomalies such as bicornuate uterus
- Extrauterine pregnancy

Examining the aspirate immediately after abortion can decrease the risk of failed vacuum aspiration. If a woman presents a week or more after the abortion and still has pregnancy symptoms, she should be evaluated for continuing pregnancy and offered repeat uterine evacuation.

After medical abortion (MA), a continuing pregnancy occurs in less than one percent of women who take mifepristone and misoprostol and approximately 4-6 percent of women who use misoprostol alone for gestations up to nine weeks. A continuing pregnancy is suggested by a lack of vaginal bleeding, persistent pregnancy symptoms and/or increasing uterine size.

Treatment of continuing pregnancy after medical abortion:

### *MA up to nine weeks since last menstrual period (LMP)*

- Mifepristone and misoprostol

### Signs and symptoms of uterine infection after vacuum aspiration or medical abortion

- Lower pelvic or abdominal pain
- Bleeding
- Fever and chills
- Uterine or lower abdominal tenderness on exam
- Cervical motion tenderness

The standard treatment for ongoing pregnancy is vacuum aspiration. Taking a repeat dose of misoprostol for an ongoing pregnancy is a less studied option. In one trial, only a third of women with gestations under nine weeks who had an ongoing pregnancy after mifepristone and misoprostol and took a second dose of misoprostol had a successful abortion. Although it is not a first-line recommendation, in areas where access to safe services for uterine evacuation is limited, a second dose of misoprostol with close follow-up can be considered.

- Misoprostol only

When pregnancy continues after taking misoprostol only for abortion, vacuum aspiration is recommended.

### *MA from 9-13 weeks*

Vacuum aspiration is recommended for pregnancies continuing after MA from 9-13 weeks.

## 5.4 Hemorrhage

Hemorrhage requiring transfusion is rare after safe abortion, occurring in less than 1 in 1,000 women after a medical abortion with mifepristone and misoprostol and vacuum aspiration. Hemorrhage may occur because of incomplete abortion, infection or uterine atony.

Indications that bleeding requires immediate attention are:

- Abundant gushing bleeding
- Bleeding like a heavy period that persists for weeks leading to significant anemia and hypovolemia
- Pale appearance accompanied by weakness, agitation or disorientation
- Blood pressure drop or woman feels faint when she stands up
- Rapid pulse especially when associated with low blood pressure

Other concerning signs and symptoms include paleness around the inner eyelids, mouth, palms or fingertips; dizziness and fainting; and decreased urine output.

Severe hemorrhage and prolonged heavy bleeding require immediate attention. Supportive therapy including intravenous fluid and blood replacement and oxygen administration should be started. Vacuum aspiration is the first option treatment for hemorrhage; this enables the uterus to contract and decrease bleeding. Uterotonics may also be used (see text box).

## Uterine atony

Uterine atony is a condition in which the uterus loses muscle tone and does not stop bleeding. It is a potentially serious complication due to the risk of hemorrhage. This complication is most common in women who have had several children and those with later pregnancies. Uterine atony can usually be treated with uterine massage and uterotonics. Signs and symptoms of uterine atony include:

- Copious vaginal bleeding
- Large, soft, boggy uterus

Management should be done step by step to control bleeding. Providers should move quickly to the next step if bleeding is not controlled. Hysterectomy should be done only as a last resort.

- Conduct bimanual massage
- Give uterotonics therapies (Please see Uterotonics sidebar)
- Proceed with uterine aspiration
- Perform intrauterine tamponade
- Perform hysterectomy if bleeding cannot be stopped by other measures

## 5.5 Ectopic pregnancy

All women should be evaluated for the possibility of ectopic pregnancy prior to receiving MA or VA. (Please see the Clinical Assessment module.) Neither vacuum aspiration nor medical abortion will end an ectopic pregnancy.

After a vacuum aspiration procedure, ectopic pregnancy should be suspected and the woman treated immediately if no villi or decidua are seen when POC are examined.

If a woman has used medical abortion and presents with the following symptoms, ectopic pregnancy should be suspected and the woman should be treated immediately:

- Minimal vaginal bleeding after taking medications for abortion
- Uterine size that is smaller than expected
- Sudden, intense and persistent lower abdominal pain or cramping, initially one-sided then generalized, that may be accompanied by irregular vaginal bleeding or spotting and / or a palpable adnexal mass
- Fainting, shoulder pain, rapid heartbeat or lightheadedness (from internal bleeding). Internal bleeding is not necessarily accompanied by vaginal bleeding

### Uterotonics

*Therapies that may be given for bleeding or to stabilize a patient for transfer that have been used after vacuum aspiration or postpartum hemorrhage include:*

- Methylergonovine 0.2mg intramuscularly or intracervically, repeat after 15 minutes for a maximum of 5 doses
- Oxytocin 20 units in 1L IV at a rate of 60 drops per minute, maximum of 3L of fluid
- Misoprostol 200-800mcg orally, rectally or sublingually
- Intrauterine tamponade with sterile gauze packing, 30-75ml Foley balloon or inflated condom

*These therapies may also be effective after a medical abortion.*

A ruptured ectopic pregnancy is a gynecologic emergency that can be life threatening and requires immediate surgical intervention. A woman with suspected ectopic pregnancy should be treated or transferred as soon as possible to a facility that can confirm diagnosis and begin treatment. Early diagnosis and treatment of ectopic pregnancy save women's lives and help preserve their fertility.

## 6.0 Complications of vacuum aspiration

Vacuum aspiration is an extremely safe procedure with only rare complications. Those complications that do occasionally occur which are specific to vacuum aspiration are: cervical, uterine, and abdominal injuries; medication-related complications; hematometra; vasovagal reaction; and Asherman syndrome.

### 6.1 Cervical, uterine and abdominal injuries

Minor cervical lacerations can occur from movement of the tenaculum or dilatation. Applying pressure by clamping a ring forceps over the tear will usually stop the bleeding. It can also be repaired by suturing or applying silver nitrate. Uterine perforations that occur during vacuum aspiration are usually very small and undetected, and may resolve without the need for surgical intervention. However, some perforations may result in injury to other organs or intra-abdominal bleeding. Depending on experience, availability and the extent of the injuries, laparoscopy or laparotomy can be used to investigate the perforation, diagnose any abdominal injuries and perform repairs.

#### *Signs and symptoms*

During the procedure

- Excessive vaginal bleeding
- Sudden, excessive pain
- Instruments pass further than expected
- Aspirator vacuum decreases
- Fat or bowel in aspirate

Postprocedure

- Persistent abdominal pain
- Rapid heart rate
- Falling blood pressure
- Pelvic tenderness
- Fever and/or elevated white blood cell count

## 6.2 Medication-related complications

Medications are widely used in a safe and effective manner for abortion care, but there are some potential complications associated with their use. Complications can be caused by:

- Overdose
- Intravascular injection of local anesthesia
- Hypersensitivity reaction

General anesthesia increases the rate of abortion complications and is not recommended for routine vacuum aspiration. Treatment for anesthesia- and other medicine-related complications may include using reversal agents, treating respiratory and cardiac depression and stabilizing convulsions.

### *Signs and symptoms*

- Dizziness
- Muscular twitching or seizures
- Loss of consciousness
- Drop in blood pressure and/or pulse
- Respiratory depression

## 6.3 Hematometra

Hematometra refers to the accumulation of blood clots in the uterine cavity. In such cases, the uterus cannot properly contract. Re-evacuation with vacuum aspiration will usually resolve the condition.

### *Signs and symptoms*

- Enlarged, firm, tender uterus
- Pelvic pressure
- Intense cramps and pain
- Lightheadedness
- Mild fever
- Scant vaginal bleeding

## 6.4 Vasovagal reaction

Vasovagal reaction is fainting as a result of vagal-nerve stimulation during a vacuum-aspiration procedure. In most cases, women will recover within less than a minute and will not require further treatment. Occasionally, smelling salts will be needed to

revive the woman. In very rare cases, atropine injection will be necessary if the reaction is prolonged.

### *Signs and Symptoms*

- Fainting/loss of consciousness
- Cold or damp skin
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Moderate drop in blood pressure
- Drop in pulse

## 6.5 Asherman syndrome

Asherman syndrome is a rare complication that can occur after vacuum aspiration in which the inside of the uterus can become scarred. Asherman syndrome is rare after an uncomplicated vacuum aspiration and is more commonly associated with postpartum curettage. Signs and symptoms include amenorrhea, cyclical cramping and infertility.

Providers may also encounter Asherman syndrome when it appears as a pre-existing condition from a woman's previous procedure. However, Asherman syndrome is linked to decreased fertility, thus reducing the chance that women with this condition would experience unwanted pregnancy and seek abortion care.

## 7.0 Complications of medical abortion

The majority of women undergoing MA do not have any problems or complications. Problems following MA, if they occur, can range from minor to true emergencies. Major complications are rare, but can sometimes be avoided by intervening at the right time with the proper treatment. Problems can be reduced if women know what to expect, when to seek care and appropriate care is provided in a timely manner.

Those that do occasionally occur and are specific to medical methods are failure of medical abortion, persistent pain and allergic reactions.

### 7.1 Failure of medical abortion

Failure of MA is defined as situations requiring an intervention to empty the uterus due to a continuing pregnancy or unacceptable symptoms such as hemorrhage. Unsuccessful MA may present as a medical emergency with significant hemorrhage. Alternatively, a woman may desire treatment to end persistent bleeding. Both situations should be evaluated and treated quickly. A woman's



request is sufficient to offer repeat uterine evacuation.

A continuing pregnancy occurs in less than one percent of women who take mifepristone and misoprostol and approximately 4-6 percent of women who use misoprostol alone for gestations up to nine weeks. A continuing pregnancy is suggested by a lack of vaginal bleeding, persistent pregnancy symptoms and/or increasing uterine size.

## 7.2 Persistent pain

If a woman has intense pain that persists for longer than 4-6 hours after taking misoprostol, or if she reports intense pain unrelieved with ibuprofen and mild narcotics, consider the possibilities of:

- Pregnancy tissue trapped in the os: If this is the case, it can sometimes be grasped with an instrument such as ring forceps and gently removed
- Ectopic pregnancy
- Upper reproductive tract infection
- Low pain tolerance

A woman who has intense or ongoing pain warrants further examination to ensure that she does not have one of these conditions. She should have a careful history taken along with a complete physical and bimanual exam, and management or referral as necessary.

## 7.3 Allergic reactions

Allergic reactions to mifepristone and misoprostol are rare, but have been reported occasionally. These reactions have been accompanied by swelling of the hands or feet, rashes or wheezing. Allergic reactions can be managed conventionally, for example with an antihistamine.

A severe allergic reaction is very rare but can occur with any medicine, food or substance. Women who experience sudden shortness of breath or swelling of the airway or any other severe or unusual reaction should receive emergency treatment.

## 8.0 Complications in women who present for postabortion care

Women may present for postabortion care after spontaneous, safe, unsafe or self-induced abortion. When a woman presents with light to moderate bleeding and no complications, treatment may be limited to uterine evacuation. However, complications are more frequent and severe when women have unsafe abortions compared

to safe abortions. Complications may be due to injury from the abortion procedure, incomplete uterine evacuation or infection. Often, because of healthcare barriers or stigma, women will delay seeking care after an unsafe abortion which makes their condition worse.

When a woman presents with a life-threatening emergency, complete clinical assessment and voluntary informed consent may be deferred until actions have been taken to save the woman's life. Once the woman is stabilized, the provider should make a complete clinical assessment and obtain her consent for continuing treatment.

- Before treating complications, perform a rapid initial assessment and obtain voluntary informed consent if possible. Conduct a clinical assessment while beginning to treat complications. In cases of shock or other life-threatening emergency conditions, a complete clinical assessment and voluntary informed consent may be deferred until after the woman is stabilized.
- Severe complications may include shock, hemorrhage, sepsis and intra-abdominal injury.
- Shock can develop in any patient at any time during PAC treatment, especially if significant injuries were not initially detected. Shock is a life-threatening complication and rapid action is needed.
- Facility staff should be well-trained on the treatment of complications, including shock, and all necessary supplies and medications should be available, as well as a referral system and transport in case referral to a higher-level facility is necessary.
- For women presenting with signs and symptoms of pelvic infection or sepsis or hemorrhage due to incomplete abortion, prompt uterine evacuation is a part of the emergency management and stabilization.

For more detailed information about the treatment of complications, please see Ipas's *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual*, Second Edition.

## 9.0 Emergency response

In rare situations, using existing emergency response systems may be necessary. In an emergency, sometimes women need to be transferred to a higher-resource center for care. Having plans for such a situation in advance saves time, prevents confusion and facilitates appropriate care in extremely urgent scenarios.

Emergency response plans may include:

### *On-call provider*

Ensure that a clinically-knowledgeable person is available to answer women's questions and provide or refer for care 24 hours a day. This provider can triage those women who need reassurance or instructions versus those who need clinical assessment or emergency care. In the case of MA, most women will take misoprostol at home and they may need reassurance that the process is normal and should be over in a few hours, or they may have a problem that requires immediate medical attention.

## *Referral*

It is important to put in place referral agreements (such as a memorandum of understanding) about transferring a woman to the referral center if necessary; it is preferable to refer women to the most accessible site.

If possible, providers can establish a relationship with emergency room staff and gynecologists at their referral hospital. It can be helpful to provide an information session for the staff that serve as emergency referrals for women. The session could include an overview of both MA and VA, the continuum of expected effects and side effects, the types of complications that may be seen, and how to triage a woman having a postabortion emergency. Invite hospital staff to the clinic providing abortion. (Please see Appendix D: Sample Clinical Referral Form in the Uterine Evacuation with Ipas MVA Plus® module.)

## *Information sharing*

If a woman will be transferred to a referral hospital, providers will need to call the hospital to notify them that the woman is being transported, why she is being referred for care, her history, what measures have been taken in the clinic and her current condition.

Develop a mechanism to receive records or verbal reports of a woman who received emergency care at the hospital so that the clinic can stay informed of such cases and their outcome and provide appropriate follow-up care.

## *Practicing for emergencies*

On a routine basis, facility staff should review and practice how they will handle emergencies so that everyone knows their roles and protocols. Staff need to practice how to treat hemorrhage, shock, starting intravenous fluids, giving oxygen (if available), and cardiopulmonary resuscitation.

## *Supplies*

Have an emergency cart or container with all the medicines and supplies that may be useful in an emergency. Have a regular monthly checklist of the contents of the cart to be sure it is stocked and that supplies and medications are not expired.

## Links to communities

Providers can work with community leaders and organizations, particularly women's and youth groups, to educate them about signs and symptoms of abortion complications that require prompt medical attention, as well as how and where women can receive emergency care. Communities can prevent delays in getting women with emergencies to health services such as through community-based emergency transportation systems. Health-facility staff can train community health workers or local health volunteers to refer women in emergency situations to health-care services, to follow up with women after care and to link women to contraceptive and other reproductive health services.

## 10.0 Post-procedure care

During post-procedure care following abortion complications, the woman must be:

- Physically monitored and emotionally supported
- Advised about her condition, use of medications, contraceptive methods, and follow-up care
- Counseled about any long-term changes resulting from the complications—for example, post-hysterectomy or bowel-perforation repair
- Told what to expect and what to do in emergency situations
- Given written or illustrated materials about her condition

(Please see the Informed Consent, Information and Counseling module and the Contraceptive Services module.)

## 11.0 Serious adverse event monitoring

Adverse events are complications that a patient suffers during treatment that are not a result of her presenting condition. Adverse events are rare in routine abortion and contraceptive care, but they do occur. Some adverse events cannot be anticipated (such as an allergic reaction to a medication) while others may be preventable (such as an error in deciding dose of a medication). Some complications are minor and self-limiting; for example, a cervical laceration that resolves after applying pressure. Others may be severe, resulting in life-threatening injury, such as bleeding that requires transfusion or surgical intervention or death.

### 11.1 Types of adverse events

*An adverse event (AE) / complication* is a problem requiring intervention or management beyond what is normally necessary that is related to a procedure or anesthesia.

A *serious adverse event (SAE)* results in death, life threatening injury, permanent impairment, or necessitates medical or surgical intervention to prevent permanent impairment.

A *near miss* is an event that has potential to harm a patient but does not because chance, prevention or mitigation.

Some examples of adverse events and serious adverse events are listed below.

Table 13-1: Examples of complications/serious adverse events (SAEs)

Vacuum Aspiration	Medical Methods
Perforation treated conservatively or requiring surgery	Unplanned aspiration (for example, for heavy bleeding or pain)
Anesthesia related complication requiring hospitalization or causing seizures	Reactions to medications requiring emergency treatment
Bleeding requiring a blood transfusion	Bleeding requiring a blood transfusion
Infection requiring intravenous antibiotics and/or hospital admission	Infection requiring intravenous antibiotics and/or hospital admission
Unintended intra-abdominal surgery	Unintended intra-abdominal surgery
Ongoing pregnancy	Ongoing pregnancy
Ectopic pregnancy unrecognized at time of procedure	Ectopic pregnancy unrecognized when medical abortion given
Death	Death

## 11.2 Frequency of adverse events

It is estimated that one in every 10 patients in the hospital for any reason suffers some adverse event. Adverse events may be even more frequent in the developing world. Although abortion is extremely safe, even in the safest settings, adverse events can and will occur. The risk of death from safe abortion is extremely rare.

## 11.3 Why adverse events occur

Adverse events occur for many reasons. Adverse events are rarely the result of a single person or event, but usually result from a combination of multiple factors coming together during a single event. The factors leading to an adverse event include the following:

### *Client factors*

The client may not be able to communicate information or disclose other relevant medical problems or have high-risk medical conditions. In abortion care, we know that increasing gestational age increases the risk of adverse events. Therefore, a woman at 18 weeks is at higher risk than a woman at 10 weeks. Other factors that may make adverse events more likely are complex medical problems, obesity or altered uterine anatomy.

### *Human error*

Human error comes in two forms: slips and lapses & mistakes. Slips & lapses are when a plan of care is adequate but does not go as intended because of improper actions. This may be related to inattention, fatigue, or failure of memory. Mistakes are when the plan of care is improper for a certain situation. Most mistakes are due to problems with training, experience or knowledge.

### *Institutional errors*

These errors occur when institutions do not adequately protect patient safety. For example, to save money an institution may not order the appropriate medications and supplies needed for treatment. A clinical setting that is not supportive may turn a minor complication into a serious life-threatening event.

## 11.4 How to approach adverse events

After an adverse event has occurred and the patient has been cared for, there are two ways that events can be evaluated. The first way is in a culture of blame.

In a **blame culture**, a hospital or clinic might look to see which person caused the error so that they can be made to take responsibility or be punished. The goal is not necessarily to improve care, but to focus on individual responsibility.

In a **safety culture**, open dialogue is encouraged by all the people involved in the adverse event including the providers, assistants, administrators, the patients and their family (if appropriate). When adverse events occur, facility staff can hold discussions with family and community members to prevent misunderstandings and even potential threats, while respecting the woman's privacy. In a safety culture, the goal is to see where the system failed and to improve the system so that in future, the same adverse event does not happen again.

## 11.5 Adverse event reporting

Once an adverse event has been identified, and the woman has been cared for, it is important that the event is documented, reported and analyzed so that information learned can be used to improve care.



*Record* all information required on the woman's chart and the facility abortion logbook.

*Report* the AE to local authorities according to established guidelines.

## 11.6 Learning from adverse events

Learning from the adverse event is best accomplished through a team discussion with all relevant staff members. Conduct the meeting in the "spirit of learning," that is, non-punitive and everyone is allowed and encouraged to speak.

As a team, discuss and answer these questions:

1. What happened?
2. Why did it happen?
3. What can be changed to prevent similar events in the future?

Determine what could be changed to help prevent the adverse event from happening again and implement that change.

## 12.0 Considerations for postabortion care

Women present for postabortion care because of complications resulting from spontaneous, safe, unsafe or self-induced abortion. Please see Section 8.0 of this module and Ipas's *Woman-Centered Postabortion Care: Reference Manual*, Second Edition for more information.

## 13.0 Summary

- Uterine evacuation rarely results in immediate or long-term complications when performed by well-trained providers.

### Root cause analysis

*Root cause analysis is one of the ways of digging deeper into a problem to see where changes can be made to prevent an adverse event from happening in the future. One technique of doing root cause analysis is called "The Multiple Whys." With the multiple whys, you keep asking why an event occurred until you arrive at a problem where action can be taken. (Please see Additional resources, Complications.)*

- Women presenting for postabortion care may have existing complications that need treatment.
- Health-care staff must recognize and be able to treat—or make the appropriate referral for—complications that might occur during postabortion care, during an abortion, in the recovery period or later. Complications may be presenting, procedural, or pregnancy-related.
- Possible complications related to both vacuum aspiration and medical methods include: incomplete abortion, infection, continuing pregnancy, and hemorrhage. The possibility of ectopic pregnancy should be evaluated, for women receiving both MA and VA, and should also be suspected after the abortion if no POC are found (after VA) or the symptom profile is met (after MA).
- Possible complications related to vacuum aspiration include: cervical, uterine and abdominal injuries, medication-related complications, hematometra, vasovagal reaction, and Asherman syndrome.
- Possible complications related to medical methods include: failure of MA, persistent pain, and allergic reactions to the medications.
- Women presenting for postabortion care need a rapid initial assessment and immediate treatment for life-threatening conditions
- It may be necessary to refer women to another facility if life-threatening complications or pre-existing conditions require additional resources.
- Health systems should partner closely with communities to help ensure that women, including young women, with abortion-related emergencies can recognize signs and symptoms and access care in a timely manner.
- Women with abortion complications must be closely monitored, informed about necessary follow-up care and counseled on any medical and emotional consequences.
- Although abortion is extremely safe, like with any medical procedure, adverse events can and will occur.
- Adverse events should be documented, reported and analyzed so that information learned can be used to improve care and client safety.



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For more info on community involvement and processes and linkages with abortion service delivery,

please contact Ipas Community Access at [cx@ipas.org](mailto:cx@ipas.org)

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# Woman-Centered Abortion Care: Glossary

**0.5% chlorine solution:** A chlorine (sodium hypochlorite) bleach solution that is used as a disinfectant for clinical equipment and instruments and for cleaning the environment; it inactivates some, but not all, microorganisms.

**Aseptic technique:** The combination of efforts made to prevent entry of microorganisms into any area of the body where they are likely to cause infection. Examples of aseptic technique are using antimicrobial cleansers on the skin or mucous membranes before a procedure and using a no-touch technique when handling instruments that will enter the uterus.

**Back-up method of contraception:** Any method of contraception that is used with another method of contraception in case the first method fails.

**Barrier methods:** Methods of contraception that prevent pregnancy by preventing the sperm from passing beyond the cervix. Some of these methods can also provide protection against certain sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Typical barrier methods include male and female condoms, diaphragms and dental dams.

**Coercive sex:** includes all forms of sexual behavior that are engaged in through force, deception, cultural expectation, economic circumstances, and so on, and which the person was forced to perform against his or her will.

**Cognitive disabilities:** Cognitive disabilities include mental retardation and other developmental disabilities such as autism, severe and persistent mental illness, traumatic brain injury (TBI), stroke and Alzheimer's disease. Cognitive disability entails sub-average intellectual performance and limitations in adaptive behavior and can originate at any time.

**Complete clinical assessment:** Information taken by the health-care provider which includes physical examination of the client, review of the client's medical and surgical history, and laboratory and other diagnostic testing such as ultrasound, if needed.

**Contraceptive counseling:** Listening to a woman's needs and desires regarding pregnancy, and, if she wishes to delay or prevent pregnancy, explaining the proper use, risks and benefits of the available methods and helping her choose the methods that are best for her. Also known as family-planning counseling.

**Contraceptive services:** Contraceptive counseling and method provision. Also known as family-planning services.

**Contraindication:** If a woman has these specific conditions, under no circumstances should she be offered the contraindicated service or method. Alternatives should be considered or she should be referred to a facility where she can be offered alternate care.

**Emotional support:** Gentle, caring assistance to allay a person's fears or negative feelings. Emotional support can be physical, such as holding a person's hand, or verbal, such as using reassuring or encouraging words.

**Endospores:** Bacteria with a hard outer coating which are difficult to destroy.

**Environmental cleanliness:** Keeping the surroundings clean. Everything in a clinical setting, including patients, instruments and equipment, should be kept clean and dry; workers will be touching clinic surfaces and clients, which can spread infection.

**Family-planning services:** See contraceptive services

**Female genital cutting (FGC):** A term used to refer to any practice that includes the removal or the alteration of the female genitalia for cultural and other non-therapeutic reasons. Also known as female genital mutilation, female circumcision and, in some forms, infibulation.

**GATHER technique:** Used widely in family-planning counseling, this acronym stands for Greet, Ask, Tell, Help, Explain and Refer.

**Gender:** The socially constructed expectations, appearances, behaviors, roles, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women. These ideas and expectations often vary from culture to culture, over time and are largely shaped by and indicative of societal values.

**Hematometra:** An accumulation of blood in the uterine cavity that occasionally occurs after a uterine evacuation procedure.

**High-level disinfection (HLD):** A process that inactivates most, but not all, disease-causing microorganisms on inanimate objects. High-level disinfection through boiling or the use of some chemicals inactivates all microorganisms except some bacterial endospores.

**Human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG):** A hormone produced early in pregnancy by the placenta. Its detection in urine is the basis for one kind of pregnancy test.

**Human right:** Any basic right or freedom to which all human beings are entitled and in whose exercise a government may not interfere.

**Indicator:** A quantitative measure for monitoring or evaluating performance or achievement or to determine accountability. Indicators are also used to provide information about the quality of an activity, project or program.

**Infertility:** The diminished ability or the inability for a couple to conceive or bear children.

**Instrument processing:** The removal of microorganisms from instruments to make them safe for use on clients.

**Intrauterine device (IUD):** A contraceptive device that is inserted through the vagina into the uterus. Intrauterine devices are long acting, reversible and highly effective at preventing pregnancy.

**Intrauterine system (IUS):** An intrauterine device (IUD) that also releases hormones.

**Laparotomy:** An operation to open the abdomen.

**Lithotomy position:** The posture assumed by the client lying supine with the hips and the knees flexed and the thighs abducted and rotated externally; also called dorsosacral position.

**Male contraceptive methods:** Methods that men can use to prevent impregnating a woman such as condoms or sterilization.

**Microorganism:** An organism of microscopic or submicroscopic size, especially a bacterium or protozoan.

**Modern methods of contraception:** Contraceptive methods that are scientifically developed and proven to be sound and effective.

**Monitoring:** The routine tracking of health-care services in order to provide feedback for ongoing quality improvement.

**No-touch technique:** Aseptic technique used during a medical procedure that involves keeping processed instruments that will enter the body from touching any contaminated surface. In uterine evac-

uation, it means avoiding the vaginal walls when handling the intrauterine instruments used for the procedure.

**Nulliparous:** A woman who has never given birth.

**Pain management:** Using medicine, psychological support and other means to decrease a pain.

**Parity:** The classification of a woman by the number of live-born children as well as the number of stillbirths she has delivered at more than 20 weeks of gestation.

**Pathogen:** An agent that causes disease, especially a living microorganism such as a bacterium or fungus.

**Peer counseling:** Counseling performed by those who are considered equal to the person who is being counseled. For example, an adolescent who is seeking contraception may be counseled by another adolescent.

**Perineum:** In a woman, the area between the vulva and the anus.

**Personal protective barriers:** Gowns, gloves and face protection used to protect a health care provider from germs and pathogens.

**Postabortion care (PAC):** A continuum of care to treat potentially life-threatening complications from incomplete and unsafe abortion and therefore reduce abortion-related morbidity and mortality. The five essential elements of PAC include: community and service provider partnerships, counseling, uterine evacuation treatment, contraceptive and family planning services and reproductive and other health services.

**Precaution** If a woman has these specific conditions, the method has higher risks than normal. The risks, benefits and alternatives must be considered. Provision of the method may require a higher degree of clinical judgment, skill and monitoring. Referral to a higher level facility may be appropriate.

**Quality of care:** Healthcare services that are effective, efficient, accessible, acceptable, client-centered, equitable, safe and conform with accepted local standards, guidelines and practices.

**Reproductive goals:** The number of children one would like to have and the spacing of those children.

**Sexual health:** The health of one's physical reproductive system, as well as the ability to express sexuality in psychologically healthy ways.

**Sharps container:** Container that is specially designed to hold used sharps until they can be permanently discarded.

**Sharps:** Medical slang for needles or similar pointed objects that can penetrate skin.

**Standard precautions:** Infection-control measures, such as hand washing, use of personal protective barriers, environmental cleanliness, respiratory hygiene, preventing injury with sharps and correct instrument processing that are designed to block transmission of potential infection. Standard precautions are an expansion of universal precautions to include practices that reduce the risk of infection in both health care workers and among clients and visitors to health facilities.

**Steam sterilize/autoclave:** A chamber for sterilizing with steam under pressure. The original autoclave was essentially a pressure cooker.

**Sterilize:** To make free from live bacteria or other microorganisms.

**Teratogenic:** Able to disturb the growth or development of the fetus or embryo. Teratogens may lead to pregnancy loss (miscarriage) or birth defects in the child.

**Tools:** Materials, forms or other items that are utilized in conveying or collecting Information or assessing or evaluating services.

**Unsafe abortion** is defined by the World Health Organization as a procedure for terminating an unintended pregnancy, carried out either by persons lacking the necessary skills or in an environment that does not conform to minimal medical standards, or both.

**Vagal reaction:** Also known as vasovagal syncope, it is a transient reaction marked by a drop in blood pressure and heart rate. Signs of a vagal reaction are pallor, nausea, sweating and loss of consciousness. A vagal reaction is often evoked by stress associated with fear or pain.

**Verbal support:** Caring, spoken encouragement to ease a person's fears or negative feelings.

**Violence against women:** Any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.



