



Terms & Definitions

A

Abortifacient

a drug, herb, or device that can cause an abortion (end a pregnancy)

Abortion

ending a pregnancy

Anti-choice

opposed to the belief that people have the right to make their own choices about whether and when to have a child.

Aspiration abortion

a procedure that ends a pregnancy by emptying the uterus with the gentle suction of a manual syringe or with machine-operated suction. Also called “in-clinic abortion.”

C

Complete miscarriage

a miscarriage (when a pregnancy ends on its own) in which all the pregnancy tissue is passed without medical treatment.

Conception

the moment when the pre-embryo attaches to the lining of the uterus.

Curette

a small, metal loop used to scrape tissue. Used in dilation and curettage (D&C).

D

D & C (dilation and curettage)

The use of a curette — a metal medical instrument with a narrow loop — to gently scrape away the uterine lining, and the use of suction to remove tissue from the uterus. Can be used for abortion care or for treatment of a miscarriage.

D & E (dilation and evacuation)

The use of suction and medical tools to remove tissue from the uterus during an abortion.

E

Ectopic pregnancy

A life-threatening pregnancy that develops outside the uterus, often in a fallopian tube. See “tubal pregnancy.”



Emergency contraception

A safe and effective way to prevent pregnancy after unprotected sex. Emergency contraception pills made from hormones and copper IUDs are the two methods of emergency contraception.

F

Fetus

Develops from the embryo at 10 weeks of pregnancy and receives nourishment through the placenta.

First trimester

The first 3 months of pregnancy.

G

Gestation

The period of time when a fetus is developing in the womb.

Gestational age

The length of a pregnancy. Measured from the first day of the last menstrual period.

I

Implantation

When a pre-embryo attaches to the lining of the uterus. This is when pregnancy begins. Usually starts about 6 days after fertilization (when egg and sperm meet) and takes 3 to 4 days to complete.

In-clinic abortion

A procedure done in a health center, doctor's office, or hospital that ends a pregnancy.

Incomplete abortion

A kind of miscarriage or abortion in which some pregnancy tissue passes out of the uterus but some stays inside. Sometimes treatment is needed to remove the remaining tissue.

Induced abortion

The intentional termination of pregnancy.

Inevitable miscarriage

Miscarriage that's medically certain to happen in the near future.



J

Judicial Bypass

A procedure that allows a minor to receive court approval for an abortion without her parents' knowledge or consent. Some states require judges to use specific criteria when determining whether to grant a waiver of parental involvement.

M

Manual vacuum aspiration (MVA)

An early abortion procedure in which a small, hand-held suction device or suction machine gently takes the pregnancy tissue out of the uterus.

Medication abortion / medical abortion

The use of a combination of drugs to end a pregnancy. Also called the "abortion pill."

Mifepristone

One of two drugs (the other is misoprostol) used for a medication abortion. Commonly known as "the abortion pill." The brand name in the U.S is Mifeprex.

Miscarriage

When an embryo or fetus dies before the 20th week of pregnancy.

Misoprostol

A medication that can be used to complete a medication abortion that's been induced with mifepristone. This process is commonly known as the abortion pill. Although less effective than mifepristone, misoprostol is used alone for abortion in some countries.

Missed abortion / missed miscarriage

When a pregnancy ends, but the tissue remains in the uterus. Sometimes this can lead to a person continuing to experience pregnancy symptoms for a time. Treatment is sometimes needed to remove the tissue from the uterus.

Morning-after pill

Emergency contraception that can be used within 120 hours (5 days) of unprotected vaginal sex to decrease the chance of pregnancy.

P

Parental consent

A requirement that 1 or both parents give permission for a minor (someone under the age of 18) to do something. Many states have mandatory parental consent laws regarding abortion services for minors. Most states don't require parental consent for services like birth control or STD testing.

**Parental notification**

A requirement that 1 or both parents are notified before a minor can obtain an abortion, usually through a phone and/or certified mail.

Placenta

The organ formed on the wall of the uterus that provides oxygen and other nourishment to a fetus during pregnancy, and through which waste products are eliminated from a fetus.

Plan B

A brand of emergency contraception pill made from levonorgestrel, the same kind of hormone found in birth control pills. Available over the counter to anyone of any age or gender in the US.

Pre-embryo

The organism that starts developing at fertilization when the zygote is formed by the joining of an egg and a sperm. It attaches to the lining of the uterus after about 7 days. It continues to develop until it forms an embryo, 9 to 11 days later. Up to 50 percent of all pre-embryos end up passing out of the uterus without ever becoming an embryo.

Pregnancy

When someone is carrying a developing fetus in their uterus. It begins with the implantation of the pre-embryo and progresses through the embryonic and fetal stages until birth, unless it's ended by miscarriage or abortion. It lasts about 40 weeks from implantation to birth.

Pro-choice

Supporting the right to a safe, legal abortion.

R**Rh factor**

The presence of certain proteins on the surface of red blood cells. People with Rh factor are "Rh positive," and people without it are "Rh negative." Commonly known as a positive or negative blood type. Pregnant people and their fetuses may be tested for Rh factor, because if the pregnant person is negative and the fetus is positive, it can be dangerous.

RU-486

The laboratory research code number that was used during clinical trials for a medication to cause abortion. (Outdated and inaccurate. Correct term is mifepristone.)

S**Second trimester**

The second 3 months of pregnancy.



T

Therapeutic abortion

Ending a pregnancy because of a fetal abnormality or to protect the pregnant person's physical or mental health or life.

Third trimester

The last 3 months of pregnancy.

Threatened miscarriage

A condition in which a pregnant person bleeds, with or without mild cramps, but the cervix hasn't begun to open. Half of threatened miscarriages end in pregnancy loss. In the other half, the bleeding stops, and the pregnancy goes on normally.

Trimester

One-third of the 9 months of pregnancy.

U

Ultrasound

A medical test that creates an image of internal organs by bouncing sound waves off the internal organs. Frequently used to find or monitor a pregnancy, but has a variety of medical uses.

V

Vacuum aspiration abortion

A surgical procedure in which a pregnancy is removed from the uterus with a gentle suction device.

Viability

The ability of a fetus to survive outside the uterus.

Z

Zygote

The single-celled organism that results from the joining of the egg and sperm (fertilization).