

OPENING THE CERVIX WITH DILATORS AND/OR PILLS
Planned Parenthood Northern California 1-925-676-0300

How is the cervix opened?

Before an in-clinic abortion or suction procedure, the cervix needs to be opened. This can be done in 3 different ways.

1. **Pills** — There are 2 different kinds.
 - Misoprostol — taken 1 to 4 hours before. Your doctor or nurse may ask you to put the pills in your cheek or under your tongue, or they may put them in your vagina.
 - Mifepristone — swallowed the day of or day before.
2. **Dilators that expand over time** — These small objects, shaped like matchsticks, will slowly get bigger and open your cervix over time. A doctor or nurse will put them in the cervix the day of or day before. They may need to be put in more than once. They may also put gauze in your vagina.
3. **Dilating instruments** — These are made of metal or plastic. Your doctor or nurse may use them to gently open your cervix.

You may need both pills and dilators to open your cervix. Because each person is different, your doctor or nurse will tell you what you will need.

Before your cervix is opened, you need to know the most common benefits, risks, side effects, and other choices you have. We are happy to answer any questions you have.

What is the benefit of opening the cervix?

- Lowers the risk of injury to the uterus or cervix

What are the risks of opening the cervix?

- Infection of the uterus — Most infections can be treated with medicines.
- Injury to the uterus or cervix — This can happen when the dilators are put in or taken out.
- Dilators can get stuck or may break
- Allergic reaction — Some women may be allergic to the medicines or dilators used.
- Going into labor — Very rarely, the pills or dilators can cause labor before the in-clinic abortion.

What are the side effects?

Side effects usually do not last long. They usually need little or no treatment.

Common side effects of misoprostol include

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| ▪ Fluid leaking from the vagina | ▪ Diarrhea |
| ▪ Nausea | ▪ Headache |
| ▪ Vomiting | ▪ Dizziness |
| ▪ Fever | ▪ Back pain |
| ▪ Chills | ▪ Tiredness |

Bleeding and cramping are expected.

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What else do I need to know if dilators are used to open the cervix?

- **DO NOT** put anything in your vagina (like douche, tampons, or vaginal sex).
- **DO NOT** take anything out of your vagina. If anything falls out of your vagina, tell us when you come back in.
- Call us if you are worried or if fluid is leaking from your vagina.
- If you have cramps, you may take ibuprofen.
- **DO NOT** take aspirin. It can make you bleed more during your abortion.

Call us right away at 1-800-454-9125 if you

- Have signs of labor — regular, strong contractions or severe cramping
- Have a fever of 100.4° F or more
- Have rupture of membranes — fluid leaking from the vagina
- Have belly pain or cramps that don't get better with pain medicine
- Soak 2 maxi pads an hour for more than 2 hours