



Clinical practice handbook for
Safe abortion



World Health
Organization

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Abbreviations

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
D&E	dilatation and evacuation
EVA	electric vacuum aspiration
Hb	haemoglobin
hCG	human chorionic gonadotrophin
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICD	<i>International statistical classification of diseases</i>
IM	intramuscular
IUD	intrauterine device
IV	intravenous
LMP	last menstrual period
MVA	manual vacuum aspiration
NSAID	non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug
POC	products of conception
Rh	Rhesus (blood group)
STI	sexually transmitted infection
VA	vacuum aspiration
WHO	World Health Organization

Duration or gestational age of pregnancy

The number of days or weeks since the first day of the woman's last normal menstrual period (LMP) in women with regular cycles (for women with irregular cycles, the gestational age may need to be determined by physical or ultrasound examination). The first trimester is generally considered to consist of the first 12 or, by some experts, as the first 14 weeks of pregnancy. Throughout this document, gestational age is defined in both weeks and days, reflecting its definition in the *International statistical classification of diseases* (ICD)*.

Medical methods of abortion (medical abortion)

Use of pharmacological drugs to terminate pregnancy. Sometimes the terms "non-surgical abortion" or "medication abortion" are also used.

Osmotic dilators

Short, thin rods made of seaweed (laminaria) or synthetic material. After placement in the cervical os, the dilators absorb moisture and expand, gradually dilating the cervix.

Surgical methods of abortion (surgical abortion)

Use of transcervical procedures for terminating pregnancy, including vacuum aspiration, and dilatation and evacuation (D&E).

* International statistical classification of diseases and health related problems, 10th revision – ICD-10, Vol. 2, 2008 edition. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2009.

Purpose of the handbook

The *Clinical practice handbook for safe abortion care* is intended to facilitate the practical application of the clinical recommendations from the second edition of *Safe abortion: technical and policy guidance for health systems* (World Health Organization [WHO] 2012). While legal, regulatory, policy and service-delivery contexts may vary from country to country, the recommendations and best practices described in both of these documents aim to enable evidence-based decision-making with respect to safe abortion care.

This handbook is oriented to providers who already have the requisite skills and training necessary to provide safe abortion and/or treat complications of unsafe abortion. It is neither a substitute for formal training, nor a training manual.

We hope this handbook will be useful to a range of providers in different settings and in varying legal and health service contexts.

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