Questions and Answers about Chemical Abortions

In January 2023, the FDA announced a new policy that permits a woman to obtain abortion drugs from any local pharmacy. CVS, Walgreens, and Rite-Aid, the dominant pharmacy chains, have already announced that they will begin to dispense abortion drugs. This alarming development has led to a lot of questions. Here are some answers:

What is a chemical abortion?

Chemical abortion is a two-drug process intended to kill and expel a developing child from the womb in the first trimester of pregnancy. The first drug is Mifepristone, which is the generic name for "Mifeprex," Its only purpose is to kill a baby in the womb by denying her nutrition and oxygen. The second drug, Misoprostol (brand name "Cytotec") was developed for legitimate purposes but is being used for chemical abortions as well.

Are chemical abortions dangerous?

This expansion of chemical abortion is very irresponsible. Not only is it fatal for the baby, it is very risky for the mother, particularly since the drugs are usually taken without direct medical supervision. The rate of emergency room visits related to chemical abortions has skyrocketed more than 500% in the last 15 years. The Charlotte Lozier Institute, a pro-life research organization, has put together extensive evidence about the dangers of chemical abortion: https://lozierinstitute.org/abortion-drug-facts/. The US Bishops also have information: https://www.usccb.org/chemical-abortion-fact-sheets.

What did the FDA do?

For years, the FDA only allowed doctors, clinics, and some mail-order pharmacies to dispense chemical abortion drugs subject to strict safety protocols. In January 2023, the FDA changed this to allow a woman to obtain the abortion drugs from any local pharmacy, without ever seeing a doctor in person and without any follow-up visits. A pharmacy can qualify to dispense the pill merely by filling out a form. **This dramatically increases the danger to women and potentially puts an abortion clinic in every neighborhood.**

What can we do about it?

- Check your prescription drug plan to see if it covers Mifepristone, which is also known as Mifeprex. If it does, contact your employer and ask them not to cover it.
- **Note that the prescription plan for Archdiocesan clergy and employees through CVS Caremark does not cover or dispense Mifepristone.**
- If you get medications from CVS, Walgreens, or Rite-Aid pharmacies, write and urge them to change their position and not dispense Mifepristone. A sample letter is on the other side.
- If you use a local pharmacy, talk to the pharmacist and urge them not to dispense Mifepristone. A sample letter is on the other side.
- Consider transferring your prescriptions to a pharmacy that does not dispense Mifepristone. See the instructions on the other side about how to do this.

Sample Letter

In January 2023, the FDA authorized retail pharmacies to dispense the abortion drug Mifeprex (mifepristone). The only purpose of this drug is to terminate a pregnancy -- to end a human life by a chemical abortion. This is a terrible injustice and is deeply morally offensive.

The FDA's decision is deeply irresponsible given the proven risks associated with chemical abortion -- not just to the unborn child but to the mother. Chemical abortion pills can lead to hemorrhage, infection, infertility, and death for women. They can also be used by abusers who force women to take them without their knowledge or consent.

I implore you not to allow your pharmacy to become involved with these abortion drugs that kill unborn children and endanger their mothers.

Alternatives to CVS/Walgreens/RiteAid

What happens if you have a CVS Caremark prescription plan?

- Even with the CVS Caremark plan, you can transfer prescriptions from a CVS/Walgreens/RiteAid retail pharmacy to a local pharmacy.
- Most local pharmacies participate in the CVS Caremark prescription plan, so insurance will still cover prescriptions you get there.
- In the unlikely situation that your local pharmacy does not participate, you may not be able to receive a plan discount for prescriptions. However, this does not necessarily mean that you will be required to pay the prescription price out of pocket. You would need to contact your local pharmacy for more details.
- We also recommend that you send a letter of protest to any pharmacy that agrees to cover the chemical abortion drugs. You can use the sample letter above.

How can you use a non-CVS/Walgreen/RiteAid pharmacy that still participates in the CVS Caremark prescription plan?

- Log into the CVS Caremark website, select the “Plan & Benefits” tab, and press on “Pharmacy locator.” Then, type in your zip code and view the list of pharmacies, including local pharmacies.
- After you have selected a non-CVS/Walgreen/RiteAid pharmacy, press “Set as primary” and the local pharmacy will now be considered your primary pharmacy.
- Once you have set a local pharmacy as your primary pharmacy online, be sure to call or email the local pharmacy. The local pharmacy will take care of the transfer of your prescriptions.
- It may also be helpful to update your pharmacy information with your doctor.
- We also recommend that you send a "thank you" letter if your pharmacy refuses to cover chemical abortion drugs.