



I Was Told Abortion Drugs Wouldn't Hurt Me. It Was a Lie.

Women receiving abortion drugs without any safety standards in place to protect them are at risk for so many devastating consequences.



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Editor's note: Elizabeth Gillette survived a chemical abortion when she was 24 years old. She currently resides in Salem, Oregon.



When I was 24 years old, I became pregnant unexpectedly. I turned to my boyfriend for support, but he insisted that he wasn't ready to be a father. He urged me to end my pregnancy, telling me over and over that this was the worst possible thing that could happen in his life.

He told me to make an appointment at the local abortion facility. I made an appointment, hoping that they might be able to offer me the help I was searching for, and the information and support I needed to carry my baby despite an unsupportive partner.

At the facility, staff gave me a couple of pieces of paper to sign. There was no time to read the papers. They offered me no counseling. There were no private conversations or guidance as to any sort of side effects that the drugs would have on my body or emotional and psychological health.

I consider myself at least lucky enough to have had an office visit with an ultrasound before receiving the abortion drugs, a safeguard the FDA doesn't think women should have anymore. Even still, the doctor who performed my ultrasound was very hesitant to show me the screen.

The doctor knew that I didn't want to take the abortion drug. I was stalling and crying for over half an hour. Rather than truthfully discussing with me what the drugs might do, she minimized the procedure. She kept telling me that I would feel relieved. She said

"Women feel a great sense of relief after taking the medication. You will be able to move on."

I finally ended up taking the first abortion drug, mifepristone, in front of the doctor. She handed me a brown paper bag with the second drug I was supposed to take at home, and an antibiotic. "In case you get an infection. But don't worry, that almost never happens. It's completely safe."

There was no talk of a follow-up visit with the doctor—not even a phone appointment. After I was given the drugs, and they got my money, my case was closed.

Nobody warned me of the drugs' side effects. Nobody mentioned that there was danger. They promised it was safe.

Staff at the abortion facility told me that I would experience something like a heavy period. They said I might experience some light cramping, but nothing that a heating pad and some Tylenol wouldn't take care of, and that I would be back to work on Monday.

I experienced nothing like that. What I experienced was the most intense cramping I'd ever experienced. I've had four children since then and what I was left to experience all alone on my bathroom floor were labor pains. These drugs put me into labor—piercing pain from my head to my toes.

And I was completely alone. I didn't have a nurse. I didn't have a doctor. I had to shut my boyfriend out of the bathroom because there was so much blood.

When my body was experiencing that amount of pain, I had no idea what was normal for this drug regimen. I felt like I had a fever. I felt nauseated. I couldn't stand. My body was shaking and sweating. It lasted for hours. A heating pad, a heating blanket, Tylenol, Advil, nothing stopped the pain.

I was so scared—I thought I was going to die.

But that wasn't even the worst part. The worst part was that nobody told me that I would actually pass the entire amniotic sac whole—that I would hold my dead baby. That I would see his eyes and his fingers.

They told me that I would just see clotting and heavy period blood.
They lied to me.

When I close my eyes, I can still see my baby, floating in his little sac,
dead. You don't unsee something like that. You can't.

Abortion Drugs are High-Risk. We must hold the FDA Accountable for...



I deserved a doctor to inform me of the risks. To check on me and
provide ongoing care. I deserved an extra appointment. I deserved a
phone call. I deserved the truth. But I wasn't given that opportunity.

Those who professed to care about my health and well-being showed
a grossly callous disregard for my life.

When I first heard that the FDA was removing safety standards around
abortion drugs, I was shocked. Without safeguards, women are going
to face even more harm, emotional pain, and life-threatening
complications. As traumatic and painful as the experience was for me,
with the severe lack of care I received, the FDA is leaving women to
suffer *even more* now. And that's tragic.

Women taking these drugs without a single in-person doctor visit are
at risk for so many devastating consequences. Who's going to protect
them from an [ectopic pregnancy](#)? Who's going to protect them from
bleeding and sepsis? Who's going to protect them from abusive
partners who want to slip them this drug and terminate their

pregnancy? Who's going to counsel them about the reality of chemical abortion and the physical, emotional, and psychological risks?

The U.S. Supreme Court needs to [hold the FDA accountable](#). When the FDA took away its original safeguards, it betrayed every woman—not just me. The Supreme Court needs to see that for the truth that it is. It's time for the Court to say enough.

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