

Knock knock! Can I Get an Abortion?

Shikhar's Tale on Accessing
Medical Abortion



youth coalition

working internationally for sexual
and reproductive rights



Shikhar is a young transgender man living in a middle-class neighborhood in Chennai, India.



He first moved out of his small town to Chennai around the same time he came out to his parents as transgender.



The new city came with a sense of anonymity and privacy which, through the years, allowed him to grow comfortable in his own skin.



Shikhar took his first dose of testosterone two years after moving to Chennai. Though he didn't have his parents' support, his friend, Yusuf, was by his side.

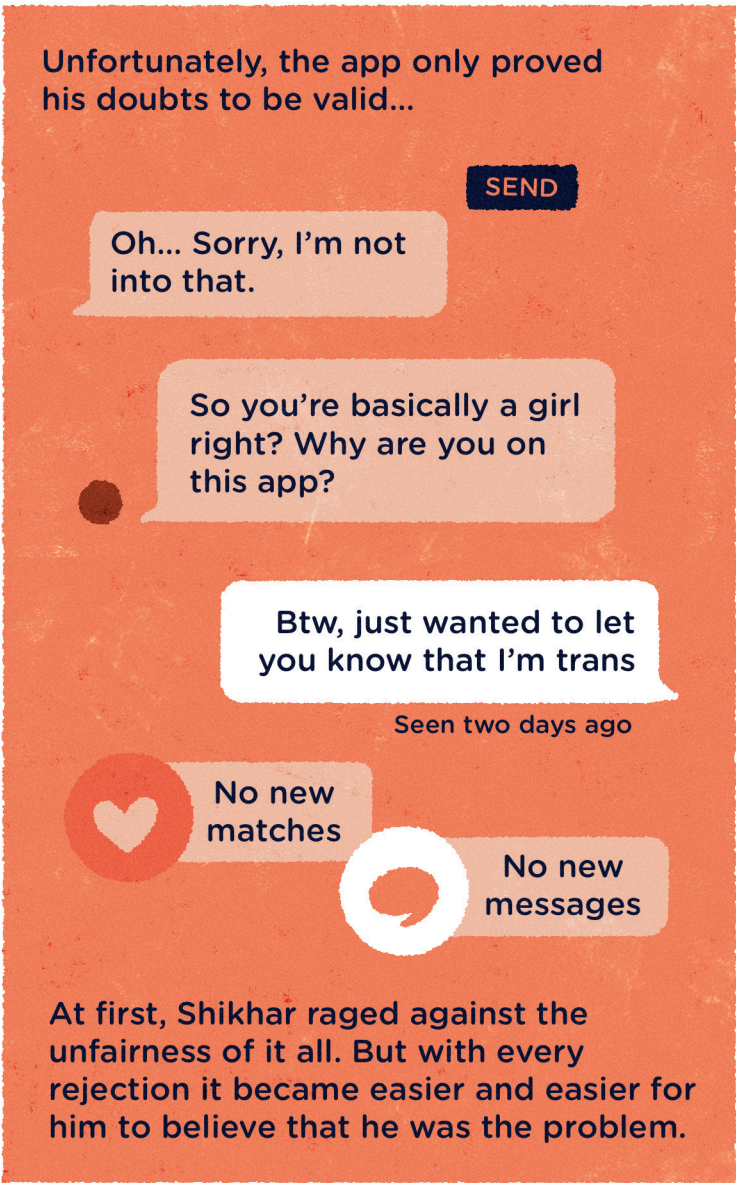


Feeling affirmed in his gender gave Shikhar the confidence to do something he always wanted to, sign up on the local gay dating app.

Shikhar was hesitant, afterall, he did not know a lot of other transgender men who hooked up with men.



Unfortunately, the app only proved his doubts to be valid...



At first, Shikhar raged against the unfairness of it all. But with every rejection it became easier and easier for him to believe that he was the problem.

Until one day, he finally got the message he'd been waiting for!



NEW MATCH!

Chirag, 24

He/him, looking for someone to share playlists with

Hey there!

A cute smile AND a sense of humour?? I need to judge these for myself on a date.

Haha, ask me out then!

Today, 8 PM at the Bear Bar?

Done! I'll see you soon...

That evening, with a new sense of adventure, Shikhar left caution at home and made his way to the local bar.



Any last orders, folks?

Oh wow, I can't believe it's already closing time!



Would you want to come home with me?



Haha yeah, I guess time really does fly when you're having fun?





Sorry, wait a sec. Did you carry any condoms by any chance? I just remembered I'm all out.

Oh.. no I didn't..



But it was Shikhar's first date in so, so long. And he felt so seen, heard and desired with Chirag. In the heat of the moment, Shikhar made a decision.

But it should be alright! Just this once.

Are you sure? We can stop.

Yes.

Shikhar knew he should have carried his own condoms, and that he shouldn't have sex without them. Surely, he was allowed one night of recklessness? He was taking testosterone after all!



The next morning Shikhar had a stupid grin on his face that he just couldn't shake off.



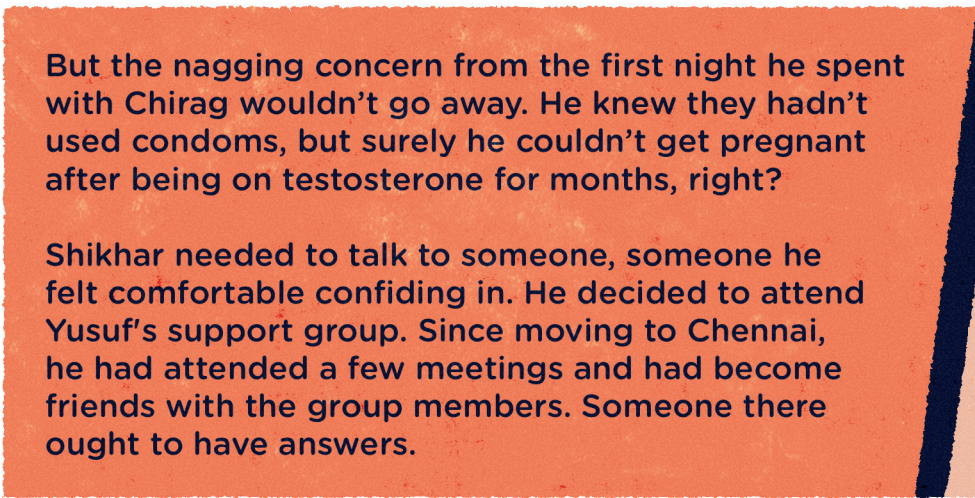
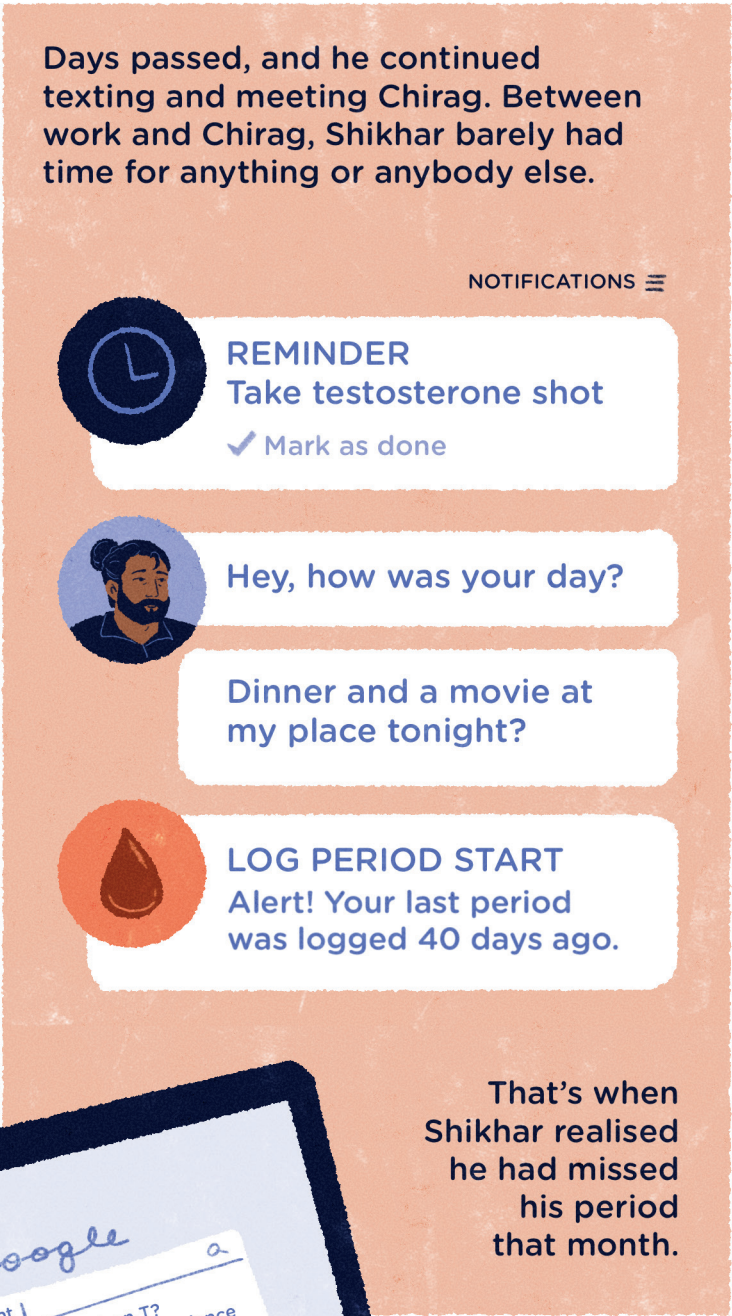
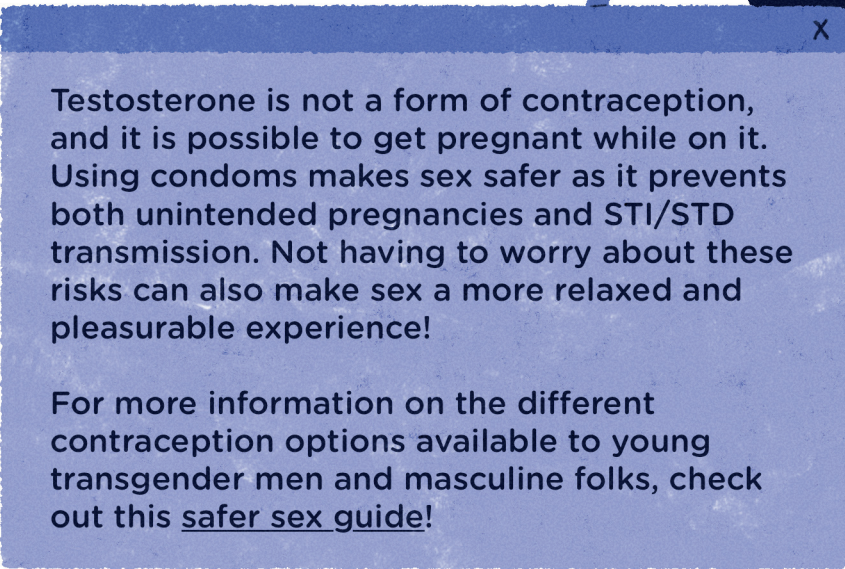
He went to work grinning, not even a Monday could dampen the joy he felt at being desired and wanted.

Hey, I had a really great time yesterday :.)

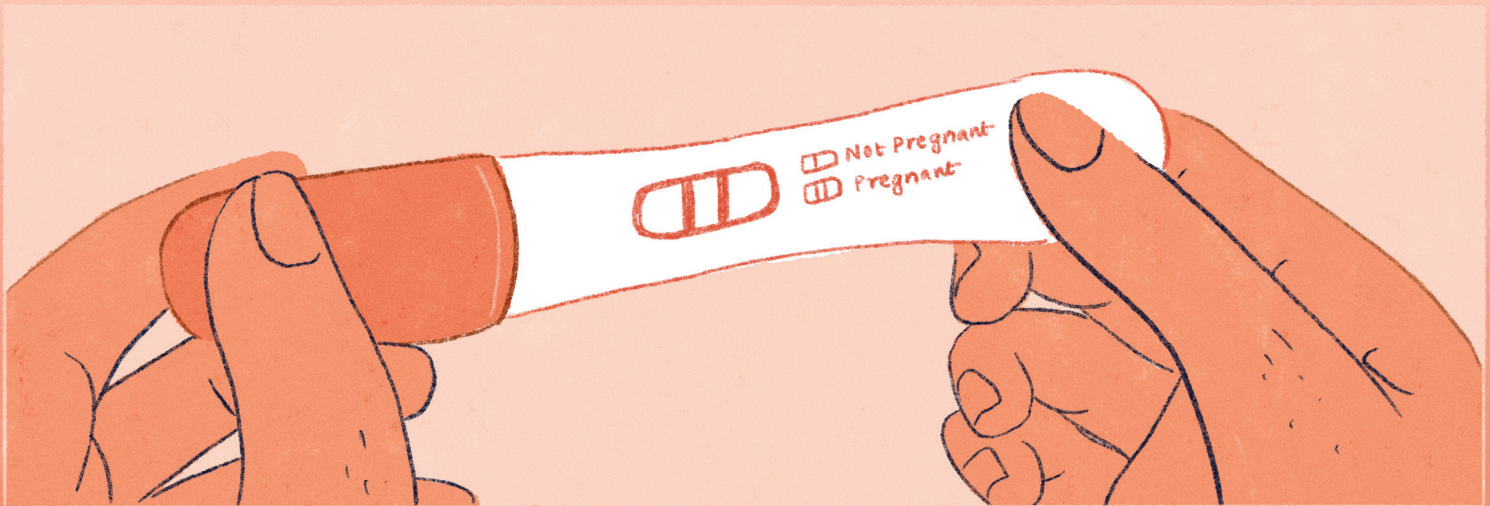
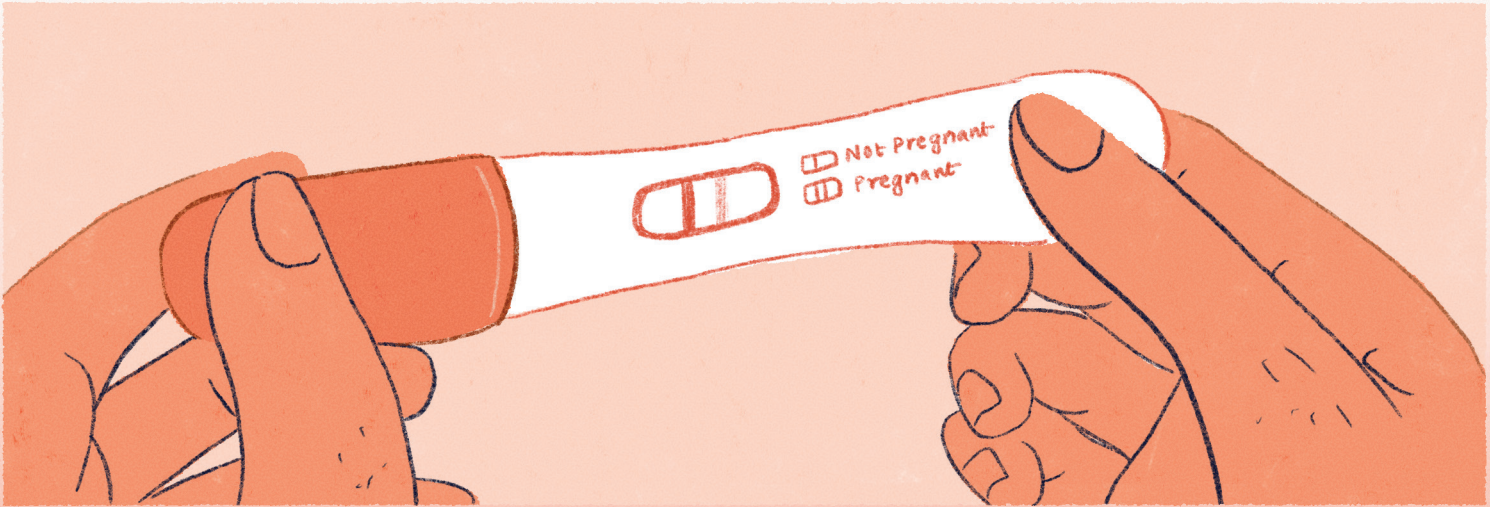
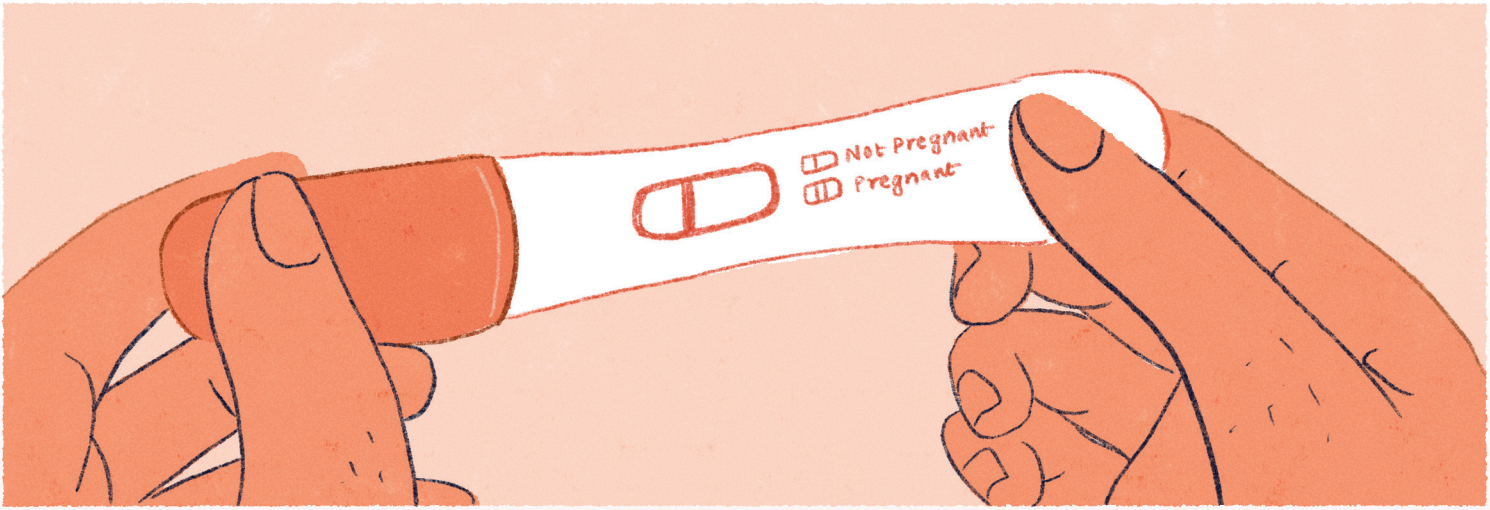
Me too! I'd love to take you out again sometime, if you be open to it :)

Yes! Absolutely

At first, he brushed his concerns aside. Google suggested that missing his period was a natural result of taking testosterone, which seemed like a convincing explanation.





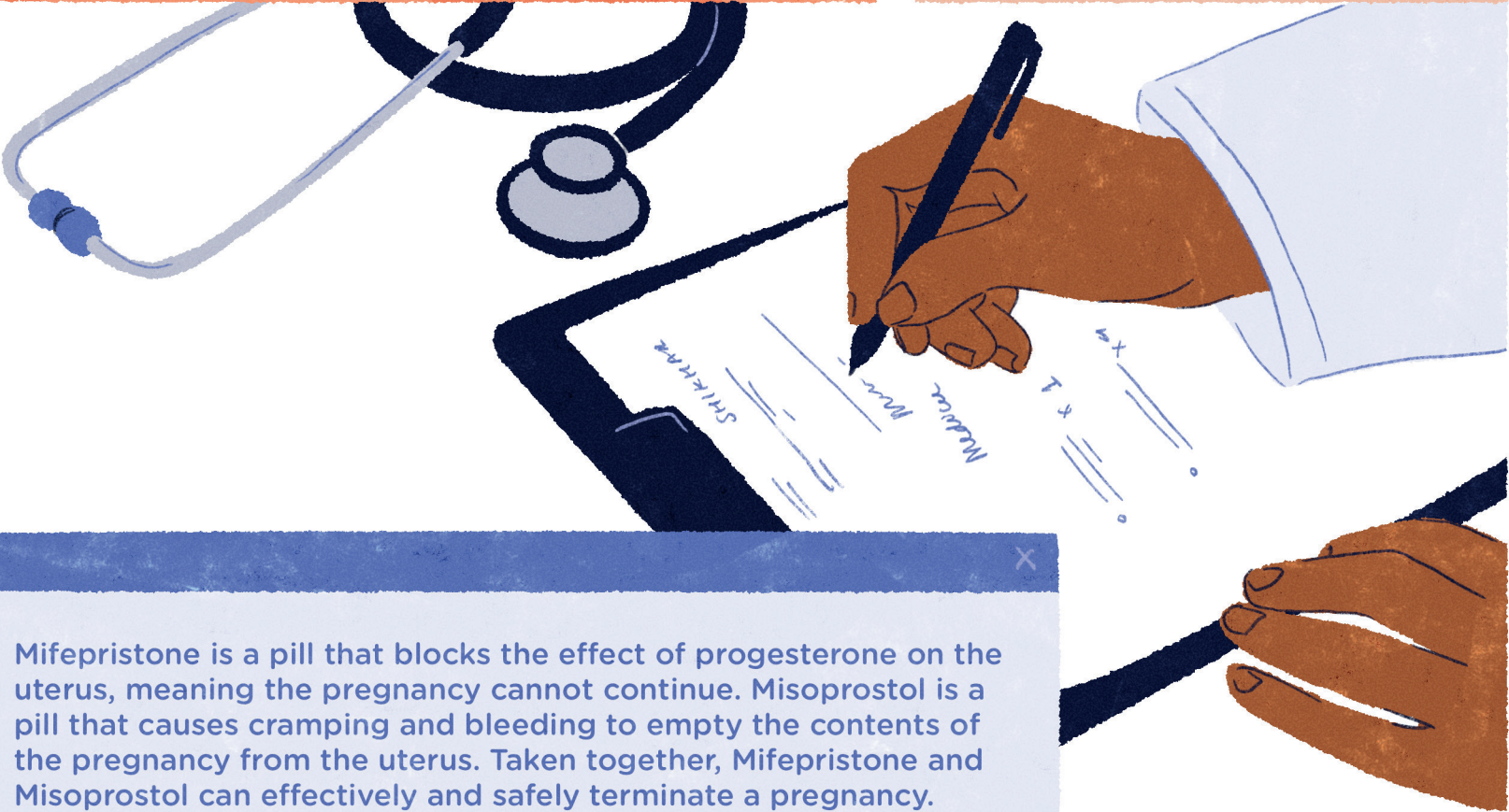




The coming week was filled with anxiety and dread. Shikhar knew he had to abort the pregnancy, but going to a clinic was not an option for him. Yusuf, the support group facilitator and his friend, also did not know what he should do...



But through his support group, he found and reached out to a registered medical practitioner, who wrote him a prescription for the abortion pills - Mifepristone and Misoprostol.

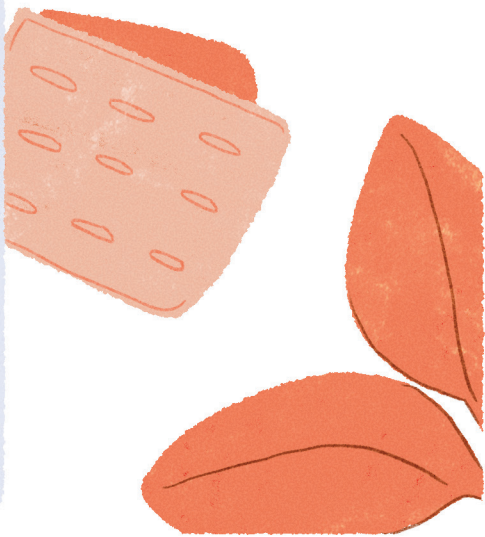


Mifepristone is a pill that blocks the effect of progesterone on the uterus, meaning the pregnancy cannot continue. Misoprostol is a pill that causes cramping and bleeding to empty the contents of the pregnancy from the uterus. Taken together, Mifepristone and Misoprostol can effectively and safely terminate a pregnancy.

In India, Mifepristone and Misoprostol are classified as Schedule H drugs, which means one needs a prescription from a medical practitioner registered with the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 to purchase the pills from a pharmacy.

Please note that the WHO recommends the use of medical abortion pills up to 12 weeks of gestation. However, the availability of the pills and medical recommendations depend on the laws and policies surrounding abortion in one's country. For more information on abortion laws in your country, [check this out!](#)

For more information, read our comic on surgical abortions [here!](#)





But it'll be all right to take these pills while I'm on T, right?

Hmph.

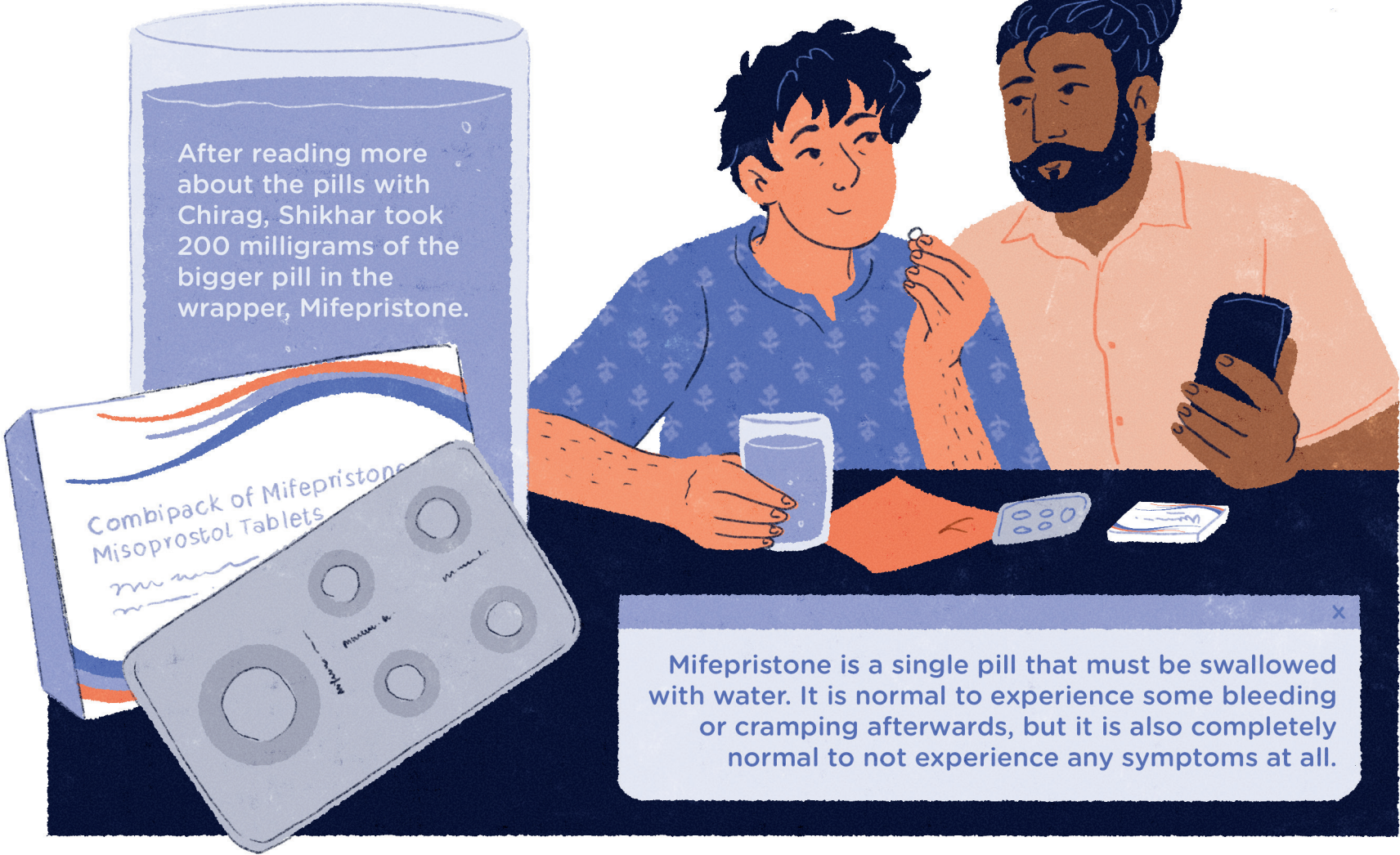
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Healthcare providers are often very apathetic to the needs of abortion seekers, especially if the abortion seeker belongs to a marginalised social group, like unmarried women, transgender folks, or people with disabilities. Advocacy on abortion rights for all is incomplete if the focus is merely on accurate information in service provision. It is equally important to train healthcare providers in extending care and support to vulnerable seekers so as to enhance the overall experience of accessing abortion services .

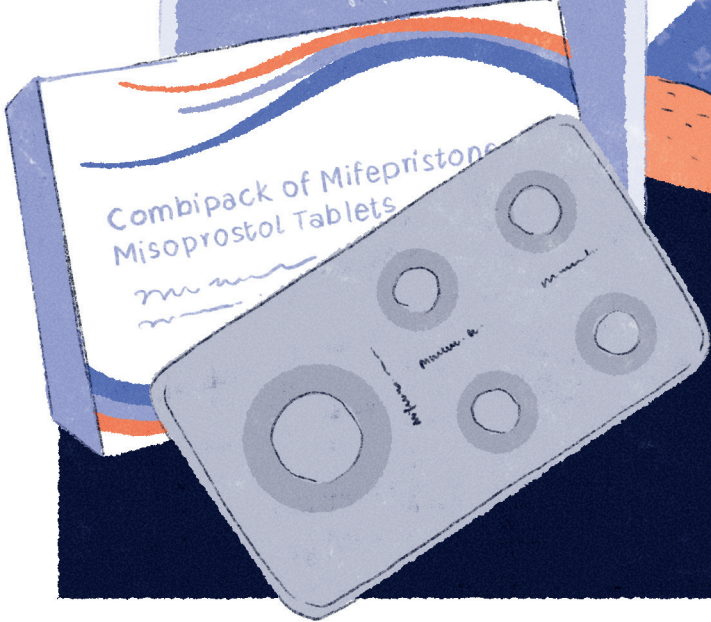
Being on testosterone is not a problem if you are considering a medication abortion using Mifepristone and Misoprostol. Medication abortions are generally very safe, statistically safer than childbirth!

Ready? Are you feeling alright?

Yup!



After reading more about the pills with Chirag, Shikhar took 200 milligrams of the bigger pill in the wrapper, Mifepristone.



Mifepristone is a single pill that must be swallowed with water. It is normal to experience some bleeding or cramping afterwards, but it is also completely normal to not experience any symptoms at all.

Chirag and Shikhar spent the rest of the night talking about things they had never shared before. Chirag spoke about his past, how he came to terms with his sexuality, and the freedom he found in friendships. Shikhar told Chirag about his childhood, his crushes growing up, and his fondness for cricket.



The next day, Shikhar took the other four pills in the wrapper: Misoprostol.



Four pills of Misoprostol are to be taken together 24-48 hours after taking Mifepristone. Misoprostol pills should be placed under the tongue or inside the cheek and left to dissolve on their own for up to 30 minutes. Misoprostol pills can also be taken vaginally, particularly if one is in an unsafe environment and wish to consume the pills discreetly. There is no increased risk of side effects or complications from inserting the pills vaginally.

If the pills have not completely dissolved after 30 minutes, the residue can be swallowed with a glass of water.

It is normal to experience heavy bleeding, nausea, mild fever, pain, and cramps for a couple of days after taking Misoprostol. These symptoms can be managed by keeping a painkiller handy. If there is no bleeding or cramping within 12 hours of taking Misoprostol, one may take the pills again. There is no need to re-take Mifepristone.

For the next couple of days, Shikhar stayed at home. After the bleeding and nausea subsided, he started feeling better physically. However, emotionally, he felt bogged down, and his dysphoria was at an all-time high.



I feel like I am carrying around a secret, like I have gone back into the closet.



Shikhar had heard other transgender men in the support group talk about masculinity. He knew he had never fit into that narrow definition, but after the abortion, he wondered if he ever would fit into it again.



For more information, check these out!

- [Medical Abortion Fact Sheet](#) by the Asia Safe Abortion Partnership
- [Abortion Comics](#) by We Testify
- The Easy-Peasy AOI x Ibis [Guide To Using Abortion Pills](#)
- [Dreams, Fears, and Friendship : A Story About Abortion and Love](#) by Agents of Ishq
- [What You Need to Know About Medication Abortions](#) by Folx Health

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About Youth Coalition

Youth Coalition is an international organization of young people committed to promoting adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive rights at the national, regional and international levels. We are students, researchers, lawyers, health care professionals, educators, development workers, and most importantly, we are all dedicated activists.

