

HEALTH

A Dutch Organization Is Providing Free Abortions For Women In Zika-Affected Regions

“We want to make sure that every woman who wants to have an abortion can have one safely.”

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Caroline Kee
BuzzFeed Staff

The Dutch nonprofit [Women on Web](#) will provide free medical abortions to women in countries affected by the [Zika](#) epidemic where access to abortion is restricted.



John Vizcaino / Reuters / Via pictures.reuters.com

Women on Web is a reproductive health group founded 10 years ago that provides health information, consultations with doctors, contraceptives, and safe medical abortions at little to no cost.

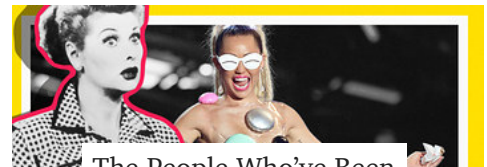
A [medical abortion](#) is a non-surgical option for terminating a pregnancy in the first trimester. It involves the use of medications mifepristone and misoprostol and has been shown to be effective in pregnancies [up to nine weeks](#).

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by Ariane Lange

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The Zika epidemic in South and Central America was recently declared a **global health emergency** as it coincides with a rise in babies born with microcephaly.



Leo Correa / AP / Via buzzfeed.com

Microcephaly is a condition where a fetus' brain stops growing so the baby is born with brain damage and an abnormally small head.

Scientists believe that infection with Zika at some point during a pregnancy may be to blame for the birth defects, and in response, the CDC issued an **alert** warning pregnant women traveling to 28 countries.

Health officials in some countries are even urging women to **avoid pregnancy** altogether for up to two years.



Nyvitart / Getty Images / Via thinkstockphotos.com

However, many women in Zika-affected countries have little access to family planning and abortion services to prevent unwanted pregnancies due to legal or financial barriers.

As a result, Women On Web plans to mail free medical abortions to women who are less than nine weeks into



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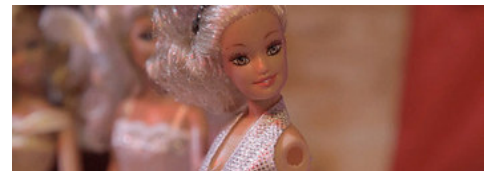


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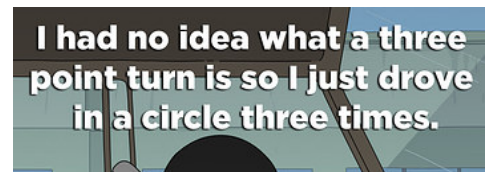
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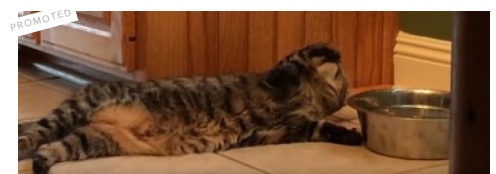
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a pregnancy and have a Zika infection.



Salvador Melendez / AP / Via apimages.com

“After the news about Zika and the connection with microcephaly, we noticed there were increased consultations from affected countries,” director and founder of Women on Web, [Dr. Rebecca Gomperts](#), told BuzzFeed Health. However, many of the women affected by Zika [do not have the money](#) to cover the usual 70 to 90 euro suggested donation.

“It’s a public health emergency and finances should never be an obstacle to prevent an unwanted, risky pregnancy,” Gomperts said.

In a statement, Women on the Web said it would offer free medical abortions to pregnant women who send in their laboratory result indicating Zika infection.

If a woman is eligible for a medical abortion, Women on Web’s partner pharmacy will send a package from the Netherlands to the woman’s home, containing the pills [mifepristone and misoprostol](#).



Women on Web / Via womenonweb.org

First, the women will fill out a detailed questionnaire about their pregnancy and have an online consultation with a doctor. The questions are aimed to cross-reference dates so the doctor can confirm how many weeks along the woman is in her pregnancy.

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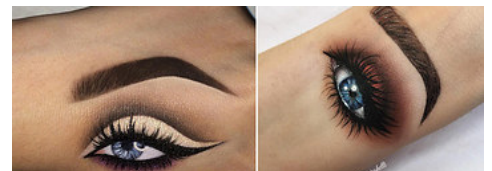
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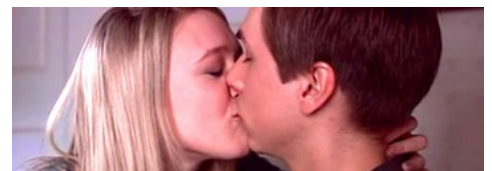
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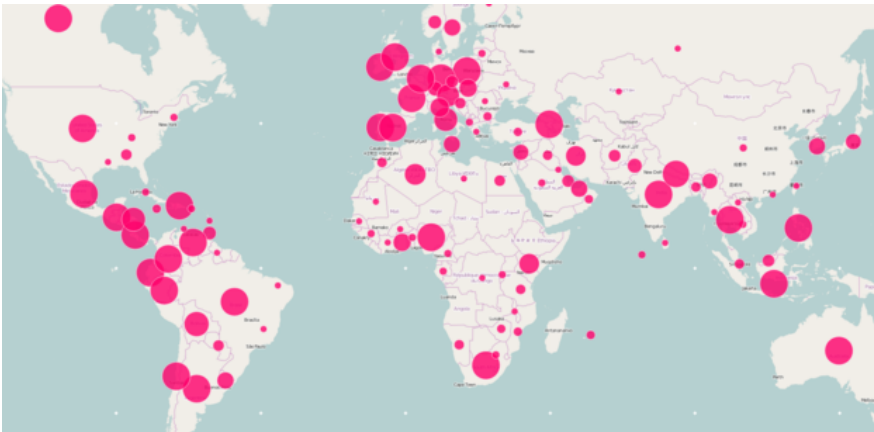
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Gomperts said the woman can also send proof of a positive pregnancy test if they have it, and about 8% have sent in results from a previous ultrasound.

Since the packages can take up to five weeks to ship, the women need to seek out a consultation as soon as possible. According to [ACOG](#), the efficacy of medical abortions decreases significantly after nine weeks of gestation, and later surgical intervention could be necessary.

According to Gomperts, Women on Web informs women of the potential risks and follows up with them to ensure that they're getting the care they need.

Mailing the packages is legal because they are only sent to countries where access to medical abortion is restricted, but not illegal..



Women on Web / Via [womenonweb.org](#)

The packages containing medical abortion pills are only sent to countries where abortion is restricted – either legally, financially, or culturally — but not *illegal*, such as in Brazil (which they cannot ship to). Often times the law in these countries is that abortion is only legal if it is intended to save a mother's life.

The organization can currently ship to these countries in Latin America with current Zika outbreaks [where abortion is restricted](#): Colombia, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador, Guadeloupe, Paraguay, Venezuela, Argentina, Surinam, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Panama, Haiti, Dominican Republic. However, Women on Web will also send free packages to affected countries where abortion is legal but cost might be a barrier, such as Mexico, Barbados, French and English Guyana, and other Caribbean Islands.

A major goal of the campaign is to prevent women from resorting to unsafe methods to terminate unwanted pregnancies, which is common in countries with abortion restrictions.



Jorge Saenz / AP / Via apimages.com

Many women in Zika-affected countries don't have access to medical abortions because they are too expensive or require a prescription. If women can't afford the pills, they may resort to unsafe alternatives.

According to the [WHO](#), an estimated 68,000 women die each year from unsafe abortions, and the majority of these procedures occur in South America. "When abortion is made legal, safe, and easily accessible, women's health rapidly improves," the WHO reports.

"We want to make sure that every woman who wants to have an abortion can have one safely," says Gomperts.



Inti Ocon / AP / Via apimages.com

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Tagged:zika, abortion, medical abortion, microcephaly, pregnancy, women on web

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Heather McCarthy Correa · Works at Teaching Fellows

And let the anti-abortion comments begin!! Point blank, it's non of your god damn business as to why a woman wants an abortion. Why can't everyone just worry about themselves and stop trying to push their beliefs on others. If yall are so high and mighty, there are a lot of children born with the effects of this virus in orphanages. Why not go and adopt one!! O wait, just like most anti-abortionist protect the fetus the hell with the child! GTF outta here


Like · Reply ·  13 · Feb 9, 2016 11:36am**Mary Pearson**

Simply untrue. Stop lying.

Like · Reply · Feb 9, 2016 2:11pm

**Kenna Balducci** · Morgantown, West Virginia

Thank you for providing a desperately needed service to women who would otherwise have no other option than to have a sick and/or unwanted baby, or resort to dangerous back alley abortions.

Like · Reply ·  10 · Feb 9, 2016 3:09pm · Edited**Jacquelynn Maresh** · Works at Youngkin & Doss PLLC

I agree with your statement about not wanting a "sick" baby, but "unwanted" is just cruel. Aborting a life simply because you don't want the burden is selfish and considered murder.

Like · Reply · Feb 9, 2016 5:06pm

**Kenna Balducci** · Morgantown, West Virginia


Your opinion is different than my opinion. I believe both reasons are valid, especially considering some of these regions have little to no access to birth control either. And the meaning of unwanted is simply not "oh I don't want the burden," but could also be that they are emotionally, physically, or financially incapable of raising a child.

Like · Reply ·  8 · 7 hrs · Edited**Mary Pearson**

This makes me sad. 1- it is not even yet proven that the virus causes birth defects. I would hate to think of a woman being pressured and/or scared into this "quick fix" amid all of the hysteria, only to carry deep regret for years to come. 2- I hate the idea of women being sent pills to abort their babies with no counseling or other medical or psychological care. Abortion is NOT a quick fix; this gives the impression that it is. Not to mention, we are effectively saying babies born with birth defects are not worthy of life.

Like · Reply ·  13 · Feb 9, 2016 3:05am**Rosetta Hayes**

It's more for when the ultrasound shows that the fetus has microcephaly. And yeah, a baby born with microcephaly is not going to have any kind of life. If you don't know what microcephaly entails, you should wiki it. All that said, abortion should be made available to all women, regardless of the reason the women want it. Women don't need psychological care for a simple medical treatment. Don't be silly.

Like · Reply ·  40 · Feb 9, 2016 3:25am**Mary Pearson**

Rosetta Hayes - Blanket statements like that are dangerous. There are always exceptions and yes, people have been born even with microcephaly and gone onto live well into adulthood. People like the woman in this story, for example: <https://www.lifesitenews.com/.../brazilian-journalist...>

Of course the chances of this are not fantastic, but they do happen. My point is: Who are we to decide what "kind of life" is worth protecting or not? A life is a life. Suffering and defects do not diminish a person's value, and that is exactly what this new debate surrounding abortion is arguing. I will not stand for it.

Also, there is nothing silly about believing that counseling should absolutely be available to a woman considering abortion as well as to post-abortive women.

Like · Reply ·  2 · Feb 9, 2016 3:39am**Rosetta Hayes**

Mary Pearson Blanket statements? Women don't have mental breakdowns after having an abortion, contrary to whatever lala land you live in. If a woman makes the choice to terminate a pregnancy after learning the fetus has microcephaly, that's her choice, and it's a well informed, responsible choice to make. If you would choose to continue a pregnancy under these circumstances, that's your choice. But don't you push your agenda on others who don't share your perspective.

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 [Хостинг фото](#)
about 3 hours ago


thx for work)

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 [KateMCElveen](#)
about a day ago


This is so sad that some people have to kill their children because of this virus:(

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 [lauren40da11035](#)
about 21 hours ago


Fetus does not equal baby

RESPOND 5 2 SHARE

 [olivias4b8783e98](#)
about 18 hours ago


What is the difference ?

RESPOND 0 3 SHARE

 [iamnotababymakingmachine](#)
about 14 hours ago

Four weeks or less is a collection of tissue no different than any fertilized egg rejected by a womens body naturally every month. She just happens to have a blood test/urine test available to see if her body has begun sending the cells and tissue for maybe, potentially, l'd it lasts...a "baby" forming weeks and weeks later. That's why there is a legal, safe time frame for abortion. It's factually nothing yet, anatomically similar to a scab or cyst. All emotional, religious arguments aside, that's why it's a zygote, embryo. Not a child of she doesn't want a child. Before the legal and scientific limit on abortion being reached, it's only the women's opinion if she wants to say "my baby." If one wants to, have at it. But that doesn't make it fact.

RESPOND 2 0 SHARE

 [sakura0101](#)
about a day ago

For the people who don't think this should be allowed, l'd like to know what your solution is. Are you going to donate money to charities to help them raise these profoundly disabled kids? Are you going to adopt some of them? This isn't a common disability; these babies are missing parts of their brains, do not have normal brain function, suffer seizures, and have severely impaired intellectual development. Why should anyone be forced to have a baby they know is going to be profoundly disabled, with little to no hope for treatment and great capacity for suffering?

RESPOND 17 1 SHARE


 [MMR](#)
about 21 hours ago

Yeah, they want to block abortion, but they won't do a damned thing to help.

"But... but... but... allowing women bodily autonomy and killing the itty bitty widdle baybeez gives me the feels. Won't somebody think of what this means to me? I'm sitting here in America, in my cushy chair in an air-conditioned environment, and drinking filtered water. But since I get a little squeamish about the idea about letting the slootz have access to safe abortion, I vote for representatives that will fight it. That way I can sleep a little bit cozier every night, just knowing that every woman whose ovum is fertilized is forced to either give birth or face the danger of an unsafe abortion."


—Every Republican who can't tell the difference between a fetus and a baby.

RESPOND 8 0 SHARE

 iamnotababymakingmachine
about 14 hours ago


Well put. No woman should be forced or coerced by her income, religion, family or anyone else regardless of resources available or promised to give birth to deformed, impaired, or disabled children knowingly and unwillingly. No one, in any community. Safe, free or affordable access to medical abortion for all women. They shouldn't die in their bathroom with a self performed abortion trying to prevent the birth of a potential drain on their household, their mental health, and future. She is allowed to choose. That's a human right.

RESPOND 2 0 SHARE

 jasongallant85
about a day ago

I am very happy to read this and support this program immensely! However, as important as having this option available is the education component behind this initiative. If they are making this decision based on medical and scientific reasons, it is crucial that they be given all the applicable information required to make a responsible and informed decision. It is this company's responsibility to ensure that that education piece is given and that all women impacted understand the risks associated with the procedure as well as the risks associated with not undergoing the procedure and exposing their fetus to the zika virus. I suspect that a foundation designed to provide this option has procedures in place to ensure that proper and complete information is given, but it is an important call out to make.

RESPOND 4 0 SHARE

 ally2332
about a day ago


this Zika thing is so sad :(

RESPOND 6 1 SHARE

 Jade Alvarez
about a day ago


Yay :D

RESPOND 18 4 SHARE

 jaquelinep
about a day ago


This is great news. Everyone should have the option.

RESPOND 38 5 SHARE

 KristyNCGal
about a day ago

Her body, her choice!

RESPOND 49 6 SHARE

 olivias4b8783e98
about 18 hours ago

Why is it your body ?

RESPOND 0 4 SHARE