

# Medics warn of dangers as 1,000 abortion pills seized this year

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Pro life marchers pass Pro Choice protestors on O'Connell Street during campaigning ahead of last year's abortion referendum

Abortion pills being bought online and on the black market are posing a serious health risk, doctors have warned.

More than 1,000 of the tablets have been seized in Ireland this year, mostly as they arrived into the country via mail order.

Medics say that our anti- abortion laws are forcing women to order high-risk pills on the internet in a bid to end unwanted pregnancies.

There is growing unease that teenagers, and women who are hard hit financially, are willing to risk their health without proper medical supervision.

"This phenomenon is happening," said Dr Peter Boylan, consultant obstetrician and former Master of the National Maternity Hospital. He has called for an overhaul of abortion laws.

The Dublin Well Woman Centre agreed the limitations of existing legislation is forcing some pregnant women to resort to extreme measures.

"A woman can find herself in crisis and isolated," said chief executive Alison Begas.

"There may be panic and worry about finance and support structures.

"It's very easy to understand how a woman might go online - and think there is an easy solution to her problems by ordering certain medication.

"The legal situation here is creating this situation. Ordering these pills online isn't safe or legal. There has to be a real worry about the risks to women," she warned.

Several elected representatives will join a group of women today as they travel from the capital to Northern Ireland to purchase abortion pills that are legal there.

Socialist Party TD Ruth Coppinger and pro-choice campaigners will make the journey to Belfast.

Ms Coppinger said the aim of the trip is to bring back "safe, non-surgical abortion pills banned by the Irish state".

"The aim is to highlight the ongoing ban on abortion in this country, and the affect that it has on women's health and lives. And we want to re-enact the contraceptive train of the 1970s," the Dublin-West representative said.

"The abortion pills that are widely used around the world are accessible in Belfast."

The Irish Family Planning Association (IFPA) has expressed concern about women trying to induce an abortion using pills without supervision.

"It's very dangerous because the women involved have no idea what they are buying," explained Dr Caitriona Henchion, medical director of the Association.

The 'abortion pill' is widely available in the UK, to be taken under strict medical supervision, but is not authorised for use in Ireland.

Women in this country who end up circumventing the law take the tablets in the first nine weeks of pregnancy.

The process involves taking two pills, approximately 48 hours apart, creating an effect similar to a miscarriage.

One pill is the drug 'mifepristone' and the other is 'misoprostol'.

Side-effects of taking misoprostol include haemorrhaging and uterine rupture - a tear in the uterus which can be catastrophic for the patient.

Medical experts acknowledge the extent of the problem here is difficult to quantify, because women only seek help when something goes wrong.

"When someone has taken this medication, and pregnancy continues because it hasn't worked, there's a high risk of foetal abnormalities," warned Dr Henchion.

Choice Ireland, which is in favour of liberalising our abortion laws, are concerned teenagers are purchasing the tablets from various online sources.

"It's likely to be somebody who doesn't have the financial means to travel abroad for a termination, " said

spokesperson Sinead Ahern.

"Teenagers are definitely less likely to be able to come up with the €1,500 required compared to an adult with a job."

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA), and the Department of Health, said they were aware of a "black market" operating in Ireland.

It is illegal for people to obtain medicines via mail order, and the HPRA in conjunction with customs officials, monitor packages coming into Ireland on an ongoing basis.

Most of the seized products were purchased via the internet and intercepted before reaching the intended recipient.

But despite these confiscations the authorities fear medicines are still getting in illegally.

Latest figures show the number of seizures of pills that can be used for abortions more than doubled during the first 10 months of this year.

Irish Independent

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livefyre 



**liffeylink**

14 hours ago

Back in the fifties they tried to stop rock n roll, at the dances in the local halls a priest was walking among the dancers, telling you you're dancing to close, itis time to rid ourselves of this medievil cult and its man made laws.

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**Becomm**

22 hours ago

I find this article bordering on the ridiculous... and it took two people to write it. The morning after pill is available in most pharmacies. Termination is available on demand just a short plane journey. Abortion pills are available - even if one has to purchase in the uk... Most women will have a follow up appointment with their local GP if necessary so it is not a health care crisis. There is not a shred of proof that medicine purchased on line is dangerous - if bought from a reliable source as is obvious. What is this article about. Pro choice/pro life or the fact that the medical profession are concerned with the amount of medicine purchased online

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**ElvisBowie**

20 hours ago

**@Becomm**

"The morning after pill is available in most pharmacies. Termination is available on demand just a short plane journey. Abortion pills are available - even if one has to purchase in the UK. Most women will have a follow up appointment with their local GP if necessary so it is not a health care crisis."

Exactly, the reality is already here, so just change the law to recognizance the fact. The current situation is as stupid as Ireland insisting it will not use nuclear power and buying electricity from the UK. Is there guarantee that the kilowatts coming down the interconnector are from hydro and wind only? PLEASE!

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**RRicky**

23 hours ago

The anti choice brigade are forcing women to make unsafe in the sense of regulated and observed use of the womb emptying pills. Shame on them

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**Brigid-11**

1 day ago

Abortion pills are not the only medication bought online but certainly the easiest for the journalist and pro life lobby to attack and get publicity for their agenda.

Viagra is probably the most bought medication bought online but you never hear about that.

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**Cynical**

1 day ago

Looking at the photo, I had to laugh looking at the guy with the poster shaped like a heart but do have to agree when you get to his age you would be pro life

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**James\_McGrath**

23 hours ago

**@Cynical**

Age has nothing to do with it. Except when people wise up over time....

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3 Like Reply



**herebychoice**

22 hours ago

**@Cynical** People older than that are murdering thousands of young living innocent children in Palestine

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**Cynical**

1 day ago

When laws exist which limited availability to a termination of pregnancy this is the result that can be expected. It really is about time that the hypocrisy stopped and a termination was made available in a far broader set of circumstances. Irish abortion laws achieve two things, they ensure good business for the airline and ferry companies taking people for the UK for a procedure and help the sale of these dangerous medications.

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**James\_McGrath**

1 day ago

"our anti- abortion laws are forcing women to order high-risk pills"

What an irrational thing to say.

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7 Like Reply



**Overhere**

1 day ago

**@James\_McGrath** What's irrational about it? If women can't obtain a termination in Ireland, they ARE being forced to order the

pills. Typical male statement.

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2   Like Reply



**Cynical**

1 day ago

James becomes very irrational when it comes to "Holy Mother Church".

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3    Like Reply



**James\_McGrath**

23 hours ago

**@Cynical**

What on earth has this got to do with "Holy Mother Church"? Or wherein did I even make such reference? Your comment is..... irrational.

Flag Share

3    Like Reply



**James\_McGrath**

23 hours ago

**@Overhere @James\_McGrath**

"Typical male statement"? Sexist.

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2   Like Reply



**BillydaWhizz**

1 day ago

**@James\_McGrath** No, it is a very rational thing to say unless you have your head buried in the sand.

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1  Like Reply



**James\_McGrath**

23 hours ago

**@BillydaWhizz @James\_McGrath**

Not at all Billy. Nobody is in fact "forced" to do.... anything. People "choose" to avoid the consequences of their own behavior.

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