



## Misoprostol for Safe Motherhood

### *One drug, two life-saving indications*

*Every 90 seconds a woman in the developing world dies from complications of pregnancy or childbirth<sup>1</sup>; every eight minutes, from complications of unsafe abortion.<sup>2</sup>*

A simple tablet—misoprostol—can address two of the leading causes of maternal death globally: excessive bleeding after childbirth, or postpartum hemorrhage (PPH), and incomplete abortion and miscarriage.

**A single dose of 600mcg misoprostol (three 200mcg tablets) is administered orally to prevent postpartum hemorrhage or treat incomplete abortion and miscarriage.**



### **Why Misoprostol?**

- **Excellent safety profile:**

Nearly 600 studies have been published on the use of misoprostol in obstetrics and gynecology that have involved well over 30,000 women.

- **Effective:**

Misoprostol is a prostaglandin-E<sub>1</sub> analogue and causes the uterus to contract; it stops PPH within minutes<sup>3,4</sup> and has been shown to be as effective as manual vacuum aspiration in treating incomplete abortion at uterine size < 12 weeks.<sup>5,6,7,8</sup>

- **Inexpensive:**

Misoprostol is an off-patent, generic drug—a single dose of 600mcg (three tablets) costs as little as \$0.30 USD.

- **Heat stable:**

Tablets can be stored at room temperature for up to three years.<sup>9</sup>

- **Ease of use:**

Misoprostol is a tablet taken orally, sublingually, vaginally or rectally. Its ease of administration allows its use by lower level providers and at peripheral levels of a health system.

- **An essential medicine:**

The World Health Organization includes misoprostol in its Model List of Essential Medicines for prevention of postpartum hemorrhage (2011)<sup>10</sup> and treatment of incomplete abortion and miscarriage (2009).

*Note: VSI facilitates the registration and distribution of misoprostol because of its tremendous potential to save lives, and makes no money from its sale.*

## **References**

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