

fact sheet

making the decision -

keeping, abortion, adoption...



www.younglove.org.au

mentoring and workshops for teenagers facing profound challenges

It's a life changing decision, and it's really tough. Whether to bring a baby into your life or not is something that requires a lot of serious thought and consideration, and it is not something you can do lightly. It is also a decision which is often made easier by talking it through with someone you trust, so think about who might be the best person to work this through with, and get in touch with them as soon as possible.

The first step is to confirm that you are definitely pregnant, and the best way to do this is to see a doctor to do a pregnancy test. The doctor is also someone who can explain all the options to you, so they are a good place to start. Your other option is to visit a Family Planning Clinic as they are also equipped to do pregnancy testing, as well as explaining all the options available to you.

Some of you will feel happy and excited about having a baby, some of you will be scared and anxious, and some of you will feel all of that. This is all completely normal. Trying to decide whether to have the baby or not is a time of emotional and physical stress, and it is really important to try and work through all your options calmly. It is hard to think straight, and you are often not feeling well with the symptoms of pregnancy like nausea and tiredness, so this can all pile up and make the situation more challenging.

If you can make some time and space to think the situation through and really consider each of your choices clearly and calmly, you will be able to work out the best solution for you because that is exactly what you are trying to do – work out the best solution for *you*. There are lots of people in society and in the community who have their own personal views about pregnancy and having babies, so remember that this decision has to be yours.

Think about what advice is given to you and who is giving you that advice, and take that into account when you are making your own decision.

Realistically, there are three main choices you have when you find out that you are expecting a baby:

- you can decide to have an abortion and terminate the pregnancy
- you can decide to have the baby and give it up for adoption
- you can decide to keep the baby (either with a partner or on your own)

Abortion

Unplanned pregnancies happen to women at all different ages and stages of their lives. Abortion is the ending of a pregnancy by a procedure that empties the contents of the womb, and it is done at specialist clinics or hospitals. The most common type of abortion is a surgical procedure called a suction curette, which involves the removal of the contents of the womb by applying gentle suction to the inside of the uterus with a small plastic tube. This is a safe, simple and low risk procedure when done between 7-12 weeks of pregnancy. Abortion is allowed in all states of Australia under certain circumstances and when done by a registered Doctor, and remains confidential. The procedure takes about 15 minutes, but you will need to be at the clinic or hospital for about four hours. Medicare will cover some of the cost, but you should check with the doctor or clinic beforehand. You can get your own Medicare card from the age of 15, and you should take someone close to you to support you through this procedure.

Adoption

This is a legal process where the rights and responsibilities of parenting a child are transferred from the birth parent to other parents. There are lots of people waiting to adopt children in Australia, but not many women give their babies up for adoption anymore. The process of adoption is very different now than it was years ago, as lots of people choose an open arrangement where they can keep in touch with the parents who adopt their child. More info can be found about adoption through [NSW Community Services](http://www.nswcommunityservices.gov.au).

Keeping

Becoming a parent and having a baby is a massive change in your life. Even when everything is going well (job, money, home, education, partner, health) it is still a very big change to have a baby around you all day and all night, and that brings lots of challenges with it. However, most parents feel that the rewards of having a baby are much greater than the challenges and that all the sacrifices they make to build their family are worth it. You can get help with bringing up a child from people like your partner, your parents, and your friends, and there are many community service organisations that can provide support for you. When you decide to keep your baby, it is important to look after your own health, so make sure you eat well, get regular exercise, and cut back on activities that can affect your baby's health such as caffeine, smoking and alcohol. Once you decide which hospital to have your baby at, go and visit them because there is a lot of support available there. The hospital will put you in touch with midwives and social workers and will help you organise your antenatal care which will set you up well to ensure that you and your baby are happy and healthy during your pregnancy, at the birth and throughout your child's life.

Really take into account what you want your life to look like when you are choosing what to do about your pregnancy. Think about what you want to do, where you want to go and who you want to be, and then ask yourself if and when a baby fits into that picture. You can sit down with three pieces of paper and write down two columns on each saying "reasons why I should" and "reasons why I shouldn't", then brainstorm all the thoughts you have about each option under those headings. This will help you to see clearly what you think about each of the options you have, and make it easier to talk it through with someone you trust. The following websites and helplines also have great information to help you with this important decision.

www.pregnancysupport.com.au

<http://au.reachout.com>

<http://www.community.nsw.gov.au>

www.childrenbychoice.org.au

www.fpnsw.org.au

Family Planning NSW Healthline 1300 658 886