

Pregnancy Choices: Raising the Baby, Adoption, and Abortion

Overview

What are my options if I find out I'm pregnant?

You can think about several options if you discover you are pregnant:

- Giving birth and raising the baby
- Giving birth and placing the baby for adoption
- Ending the pregnancy by having an abortion

What's the first thing I should do if I think I'm pregnant?

You should take a pregnancy test to confirm that you really are pregnant. If you took a home pregnancy test that shows you are pregnant, but you are not sure how far along your pregnancy is, you can see a health care professional. The health care professional can confirm you are pregnant and help you find out how far along you are in your pregnancy.

What factors should I consider when making a decision about pregnancy?

Your values, beliefs, age, health, current situation, and future goals all may play a role in your decision.

If you choose to have an abortion, where you live and how far along you are in your pregnancy may limit your options. Some states have laws that control whether, when, and how an abortion can be done.

Is there anything I need to do while I'm deciding about my pregnancy?

While you are deciding, start taking a prenatal vitamin with 600 micrograms of [folic acid](#). This vitamin helps to protect the [fetus](#) from certain [birth defects](#). Do not drink alcohol, smoke, or take drugs. Talk with your health care professional about any prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications you are taking to make sure they are safe for the fetus. If you choose to continue the pregnancy, it is best to begin [prenatal care](#) as soon as you can.

Why is prenatal care important?

Good prenatal care makes it more likely that you will give birth to a healthy baby. Prenatal care also includes learning about labor and delivery and [birth control](#) methods you can think about using after the baby is born.

Where can I get help making a decision about my pregnancy?

The decision whether to raise a child, place a baby for adoption, or seek abortion care may be hard to make. Make sure that you have all the facts and all your questions are answered before you decide. There are many organizations that can provide information. Start with the list of websites in the Resources section below.

What are crisis pregnancy centers and how can I avoid them?

Crisis pregnancy centers are organizations that try to persuade people to stay pregnant. They look like clinics that offer free pregnancy options counseling, but they share biased and misleading information. They may

- advertise online or on billboards with words like “pregnancy care center,” “pregnancy resource center,” “pregnancy options,” or “pregnant and afraid?”
- offer free pregnancy tests and [ultrasound exams](#)
- be run by people who are not trained medical professionals
- share false information about abortion and birth control

If you want to talk with someone about your options, it is best to use the websites in the Resources section below. These websites can help you find the health care you need and information you can trust.

Raising the Baby or Choosing Adoption

What should I think about if I'm considering raising the baby?

You may want to think about the following:

- How will you manage child care? Do you have anyone who can help you?
- Where will you and the baby live? Will you have to change your living arrangements?
- Do you have the income to support yourself and a new baby?
- If you have other children, how will raising this child affect them?

How does adoption work?

The general process is that shortly after you give birth, you sign papers that end your rights to the child and give your consent for the adoption. If the birth father is known and agrees with the adoption, he also signs consent forms.

Sometimes the baby leaves the hospital with the adoptive parents. Sometimes the baby is first placed in foster care and goes home with the adoptive parents after paperwork is completed.

What are the types of adoption?

There are three types of adoptions:

- Open—The birth parents and the adoptive parents may meet and share names and addresses.
- Semi-open—The adoption agency can provide the birth parents with information about the baby from the adoptive parents and vice versa, but there is no direct contact between the birth parents and the baby. Identities are usually kept hidden.
- Closed—The birth parents and the adoptive parents do not meet or know each other's names. The adoptive parents only get information about the medical history and

family history of the birth parents (nothing that would identify them).

If I choose adoption, is financial help available?

If you arrange an adoption through an agency, ask the agency what kind of financial help—both medical and legal—is offered. If you cannot afford a private lawyer to help you with the adoption, you may be able to find legal aid.

Abortion Care

What types of abortion laws should I know about?

Some states have banned all types of abortion care. Other states restrict when and how abortion care may be provided. State restrictions and rules may include these and more:

- **Timing**—Some states limit when during pregnancy an abortion can be done.
- **Waiting periods**—Some states require patients to have an ultrasound exam or complete a consent form first, and then wait a day or more before having an abortion.
- **Parental notification**—Some states require a minor’s parents or legal guardian to be involved before the minor can have an abortion. If a minor cannot or does not want to have their parents or guardian involved, court approval may be required before the abortion.
- **Misinformation**—Some states require health care professionals to present false information regarding the risks of abortion care. They may call this “counseling.” Remember, abortion does not increase the risk of breast cancer, depression, or infertility.
- **Telehealth**—Some states ban the use of telehealth for abortion care. Telehealth, also called telemedicine, lets you talk with a health care professional online or on the phone.

Abortion is safe and essential health care, but you should [understand the laws](#) in the state where you live. If you need to travel for an abortion, also learn about the laws in the state where you are receiving care.

What are the types of abortion care?

Some abortions happen as a procedure in a health care professional's office. Others happen in a surgical center or hospital. Abortion can also be completed at home by taking medications, sometimes called abortion pills.

The type of abortion you may have depends on many factors, including your health and how far along your pregnancy is. It may also depend on where in the country your abortion care is provided. Each abortion experience is different.

Read [Abortion Care](#) for detailed information on how abortion may be done.

What can I expect after an abortion?

Abortion is safe and effective. After an abortion, it's common to have side effects such as cramping and vaginal bleeding. You may be offered a prescription for pain medication, or you can take over-the-counter pain medication. Read [Abortion Care](#) to learn more.

If I'm considering abortion, when should I make my decision?

If you're thinking about having an abortion, seek medical advice as soon as you can. The cost and complexity of abortion care can increase as you get farther along in your pregnancy. And many states limit when during pregnancy an abortion can be done. (Read "What types of abortion laws should I know about?" above to learn more.)

Talk with a health care professional about all of your questions. You should receive respectful care and support for whatever decision you make. If you do not have support for your decision where you live, the websites in the Resources section below can help you find support.

Resources and Glossary

Resources

All-Options Counseling

www.all-options.org/find-support/talkline

Talkline: 888-493-0092

Hotline that provides conversations with peers about abortion, adoption, parenting, infertility, and pregnancy loss. Volunteer staff are not licensed health care professionals or mental health specialists.

Child Welfare Information Gateway

www.childwelfare.gov/topics/adoption

Website from the federal government that provides resources for birth parents and adoptive parents on a variety of topics.

National Council for Adoption

<https://adoptioncouncil.org>

Organization that provides education on adoption and resources for everyone connected by adoption, including birth parents, adoptive parents, adopted people, and adoption professionals.

Abortion Finder

www.abortionfinder.org

A directory of health care professionals who provide abortion care in the United States.

www.abortionfinder.org/abortion-guides-by-state

A state-by-state guide to abortion laws and resources.

National Abortion Federation

<https://prochoice.org/patients/naf-hotline>

Hotline: 800-772-9100

Referral line: 877-257-0012

Organization that offers confidential consultation, options counseling, and referrals to abortion providers. NAF also offers limited financial assistance to help pay for abortion care.

National Network of Abortion Funds

<https://abortionfunds.org/need-abortion>

Directory of organizations that can help you pay for abortion care.

Glossary

Birth Control: Devices or medications used to prevent pregnancy.

Birth Defects: Physical problems that are present at birth.

Fetus: The stage of human development beyond 8 completed weeks after fertilization.

Folic Acid: A vitamin that reduces the risk of certain birth defects when taken before and during pregnancy.

Prenatal Care: A program of care for a pregnant woman before the birth of her baby.

Ultrasound Exams: Tests in which sound waves are used to examine inner parts of the body. During pregnancy, ultrasound can be used to check the fetus.

If you have further questions, contact your ob-gyn.

Don't have an ob-gyn? [Learn how to find a doctor near you.](#)

FAQ168

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