



If you are pregnant...

Finding out that you are pregnant unexpectedly can be an anxious and confusing time, especially if you are faced with circumstances that seem challenging or scary. The first, most effective thing you can do at this point is not to panic.... take a deep breath... and know that there are options available to you... and people are available to support you.

There are lots of reasons why women feel upset or panicked when they find out they are pregnant. These can include:

- being young and scared to tell your parents
- not having a job or enough money
- feeling pressure from a partner, friend or family to not have a baby
- being single and feeling unsupported
- being older and already having enough children.

Your situation may be like one of these, or completely different. The most important thing to remember is that women in these and worse circumstances have faced your dilemma in the past and have got through it. They do so by taking the time to really explore all their circumstances and options, becoming fully informed and not rushing blindly into a promised 'quick fix'.

You have time to work out what you really want!

This is YOUR decision to make. It is YOUR life and the life of your child that will be most affected. Do not allow others to pressure you into making a rushed or regretted decision.

Identify the 'problem'

Many people treat being pregnant as the 'problem'. However, imagine if you were in different circumstances... married, with a supportive partner, enough money, family and friends around to support you etc. Would being pregnant be the problem it is now? This may indicate that being pregnant isn't the problem. The problem is the circumstances you are in, or the lack of support you are experiencing.

Ask yourself:

"If I had more money would this pregnancy be so scary?"

"If my partner/husband/friend emotionally supported me would this pregnancy be so bad?"

Whatever your 'problem' is... ask yourself the question... 'if this problem were fixed or didn't exist, would I still be so worried or anxious about being pregnant?'

If your answer to any of these questions is 'no', this give you a good basis for understanding what the real issue is and for understanding your own feelings toward your pregnancy. These and many other 'problems' can, and have been overcome by others, and can be overcome by you as well.

What are my options?

You have 3 options regarding the outcome of your pregnancy:

- continue with your pregnancy and parent the child
- continue with your pregnancy and adopt the child
- end your pregnancy through termination.

Each of these options has its challenges and short and long-term difficulties. You have to live with the consequences of each decision for the rest of your life. It is important that you have all the information you need to make an informed decision and that you know how and where to access support to help you.

The **Options Worksheet** on the website has been designed to help you clarify your thoughts about each option and is a good place to start. There is a list of questions to help you sort through your thoughts and feelings as well as some prompts to think about how each decision may affect you now and in the future.

The options

1. Continue your pregnancy and parent the child

Choosing to be a parent is a big decision and people often don't feel fully prepared for it no matter how well timed the pregnancy is. However, most people find the rewards of parenting far out weight the challenges.

There are many ways in which you can be assisted with parenting your child, whether alone or with a partner. Identifying what your needs may be, practically, and emotionally is the first step in determining how they might be met. It is important to understand the financial assistance for which you may be eligible as well as other supportive services particular to your community that may be available. These could include ante natal classes, new mum's support groups, pregnancy support services. The pregnancy support service closest to you will be able to put you in touch with your local support services.

There are links to the pregnancy support services available to support you. [*Please view the services area on the website.*] <http://www.pregnancysupport.com.au/index.php?page=services>

There is also links for general information and other supportive services are available. [*Please view the resources area on the website.*] <http://www.pregnancysupport.com.au/index.php?page=resources>

2. Continue your pregnancy and adopting the child

There are hundreds of people waiting to adopt children in Australia but very few children are relinquished for adoption. In 2004-2005, a total of 585 babies were adopted by families in Australia. 434 of these adoptions were of children from overseas, 86 by 'known' people – ie within families and only 65 were babies relinquished for adoption outside their own family. As can be seen by these figures, many people are forced to look overseas for children due to the very low numbers of relinquished children within Australia. People often wait many years before a child becomes available to them.

Adoption is quite a different prospect than it was years ago, with many people now choosing an open arrangement whereby they are able to keep in touch with adoptive parents, have access to information about their child and in some cases even see their child after adoption.

For adoption information in your state please view the fact sheet section on the website.

3. Ending your pregnancy

Abortion is a decision made by many women in Australia every year. Unfortunately a growing number of these women now say that this decisions was made 'because they felt they had no other choice'. There are also large numbers of women who feel their decision was not a fully informed one and that they wish they had had more information about how abortion would impact them.

It is important that you feel in control of such a major decision and do not allow anyone to push you into making a decision you may not truly want. We have a variety of resources and fact sheets available to help you be fully informed on what an abortion decision will mean for your life and that of your child. We also have a '**Questions to Ask**' Fact Sheet on the website that gives you a list of important questions to ask your abortion provider before you consent to any procedure.

Related information

- Options Worksheet
<http://www.pregnancysupport.com.au/index.php?page=fact-sheets>
- Questions to ask before having an abortion
<http://www.pregnancysupport.com.au/index.php?page=fact-sheets>
- Pregnancy support services available
<http://www.pregnancysupport.com.au/index.php?page=services>
- General information and other support services available
<http://www.pregnancysupport.com.au/index.php?page=resources>