Pregnant and don’t know what to do?

A guide to your options
Are you pregnant but not sure you want to have the baby?

Do you need more information about the options available to you?

This leaflet will tell you about the options you have, and where to go for help.

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Make sure

Am I definitely pregnant?

If you think you could be pregnant you should do a pregnancy test as soon as possible. You can do a pregnancy test from the first day of a missed period. If you do a test before this time the level of pregnancy hormone, human chorionic gonadotrophin (hCG), may be too low to show up on the test and you may get a negative result even though you are pregnant. If you don’t know when your next period is due, the earliest time to do a test is three weeks (21 days) after unprotected sex.

You can buy a pregnancy test to do yourself, or you can ask for a test to be done at:

- your general practice
- a contraception (family planning) or sexual health service
- a young people’s service (there will be an upper age limit)
- a pharmacy (there may be a charge)
- most NHS walk-in centres (England only). There may be a charge and an upper age limit
- some genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics.

For details on how to find one of these services see How do I find out about services? on page 15.

The test is positive – what do I do now?

If the pregnancy test is positive, this means you are pregnant. All tests, including tests you do yourself, are very reliable.

It’s normal to feel a range of different emotions when you find out you are pregnant. You may feel some, all or none of the following:
• happiness that you are able to get pregnant
• shock that you are actually pregnant
• worry that you aren’t ready, or can’t afford, to have a baby
• anger that you are pregnant when you didn’t choose to be
• anxiety about what other people will think
• excitement about such a big change in your life
• concern that you might make the wrong decision
• fear about the process of pregnancy and childbirth.

When do I have to make a decision about what to do?

Whatever you feel, you now need to think about what to do. It is important to take time to make the decision that’s right for you, but it’s also important not to delay making your decision.

Don’t let anyone else pressure you into doing something you don’t want to do. The decision is yours. For some women it can be very difficult working out what to do, but there is support available to help you think through all your options.

You can choose to:
• continue with the pregnancy and keep the baby
• end the pregnancy by having an abortion
• continue with the pregnancy and have the baby adopted.

How can I make up my mind?

Talking to people you trust, and getting accurate information about all your options, can help you make up your mind.

You may want to talk to your partner, family or friends, or you may feel more comfortable speaking to someone who isn’t so close to you. The following services can talk confidentially with you, free of charge, about how you feel
about the pregnancy and what options you have:
• your general practice (talk to your GP or nurse)
• a contraception or sexual health service
• a young people’s service (these will have an upper age limit)
• fpa (Helpline: 0845 122 8690).

Northern Ireland
If you are faced with an unplanned pregnancy and you live in Northern Ireland, fpa in Northern Ireland (Tel: 028 90 325 488) can offer:
• pregnancy testing
• non-judgmental and non-directive counselling
• information on all your options to help you decide what to do.

Wherever you live, for a fee, you can discuss your options with organisations such as Marie Stopes (Helpline: 0845 300 8090, www.mariestopes.org.uk) and bpas (Helpline: 08457 304 030, www.bpas.org.uk). There is useful information on their websites which can help you explore your feelings, including how you feel about having a baby or having an abortion.

Young people under 25 can get support, information and advice about all options, including abortion, from the Brook helpline on 0800 0185 023.

It is essential that you are given accurate information and time to explore how you feel, so that you can make the decision that is right for you. Be aware that some other organisations offer pregnancy counselling but believe that abortion is morally wrong, and will counsel you against abortion.
Some things to think about

When you're making your decision, it may be helpful to consider the following things:

- **Your life now.** What is most important to you in your life at the moment? This might involve many things, such as family, friends, work and education.

- **Your future.** What are your hopes and aims for the future? You can think about all aspects of your life.

How would these things be affected if you decide to:

- continue with the pregnancy and keep the baby
- end the pregnancy by having an abortion
- continue with the pregnancy and have the baby adopted.

Another way of thinking about your situation is to consider how the statements below make you feel:

- I feel ready to be a parent and bring up a child.
- I don't want to be pregnant.
- Having a baby will stop me doing the things in my life that are most important to me.
- I do want to have a baby one day but I'd rather wait (because I feel I'm too young, or I'd like to be in a committed relationship).
- I am willing to give up other things in my life in order to bring up a child.
- My family would help me if I have a baby.
- My family wouldn't approve if I have a baby.
- My partner wants to have a baby with me.
- I couldn't go through with an abortion.
- I agree with abortion.
- I'm worried this might be my only chance to have a baby.
- I wouldn't be able to give my baby away.

Whatever you decide it needs to be right for you. The rest of this leaflet gives you some basic information about continuing with the pregnancy, abortion and adoption. This information may also help you make a decision.
Continuing with the pregnancy

This section tells you about where to go for help and advice if you decide you want to continue with the pregnancy.

What should I do now?

If you decide to continue with the pregnancy you need to start your antenatal care (care during pregnancy), whether you are planning to keep the baby or to have it adopted. To start your antenatal care you can visit your general practice, or register with one. Or you may be able to go directly to a midwife at your nearest maternity unit. To find your nearest maternity unit see www.birthchoiceuk.com or call NHS Direct (see page 15).

As part of your antenatal care, the doctor or midwife can talk to you about:

- healthy eating and exercise
- taking folic acid
- stopping smoking
- cutting out, or down on, alcohol
- stopping recreational drug use
- whether any medicines you are taking are unsafe during pregnancy
- getting advice and tests for sexually transmitted infections.

If you have a medical condition, such as epilepsy or diabetes, talk to your doctor or midwife as soon as possible because you may need special care. If you are taking medication, it is important that you continue to take this and seek advice from a doctor or nurse as soon as possible.
Further information and advice

Other organisations that can offer help and information during and after your pregnancy include:

- **Tommy's, the baby charity**

- **Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists**
  (www.rcog.org.uk). Information for women about pregnancy, including alcohol, exercise, antenatal appointments, and links to other useful sites.

- **Working Families**
  (Helpline: 0800 013 0313. www.workingfamilies.org.uk). Offers information and advice on what financial help you are entitled to.

- **National Childbirth Trust (NCT)**

- **NHS Pregnancy Smoking Helpline**
  (Helpline: 0800 169 0169. www.givingupsmoking.co.uk). Advice and support on stopping smoking.

- **Frank**

If you need to register with a general practice you can get details of your nearest practice from NHS direct in England and Wales, NHS 24 in Scotland and your local health board in Northern Ireland. For details of these services see How do I find out about services? on page 13.

**Extra help after the birth**

You may be worried that you won't be able to cope with looking after a baby. Knowing what help might be available may help you make a decision about your pregnancy. Below are some of the ways you may be able to get help.

- **Your partner, family and friends.** Think about who might be able to help you once the baby is born. If people you
trust can help with things such as doing the shopping or looking after the baby, it can be a great support, and enable you to have some time to yourself.

- Your midwife or health visitor can offer advice and support, and put you in touch with local groups where you can meet other new mums or get the support you need.
- Social services at your local authority can assess whether you might need extra support. They may be able to provide services such as nursery or day care, or a support worker who can come to your home.
- Home-Start (Tel: 0800 068 63 68, www.home-start.org.uk). A volunteer may be able to visit you at home to give free practical and emotional help. You can go directly to your local Home-Start or you can be referred by your doctor, practice nurse, midwife, health visitor or social services.
- SureStart (www.surestart.gov.uk) offers help in early education, childcare and family support. SureStart operates differently in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. See the website or call the Government Public Enquiry Line on 0870 000 2288.

Abortion

Legal abortion is a safe way of ending a pregnancy. This is a decision you may make because you do not want to be pregnant and have a baby at this time.

Who can have an abortion?

Abortion is legal in the UK regardless of your age. How easy it is to arrange an abortion can vary throughout the UK, and it can be very difficult to obtain an abortion in Northern Ireland.

When do I need to make up my mind?

It is important not to delay making your decision. Legal abortion is safer and easier the earlier it is done