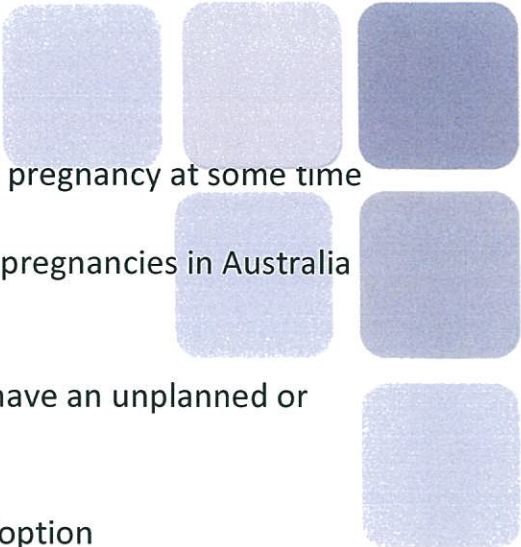




**Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT
2015**



Many women are faced with an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy at some time in their life.

It is estimated that there are almost 200,000 unplanned pregnancies in Australia every year.

There are three options available to women when they have an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy:

- Continue the pregnancy and parent
- Continue the pregnancy and place the child for adoption
- Have an abortion

So you think you are pregnant?

What to do first:

You will need to confirm the pregnancy. You may have already done a home pregnancy test. If you ensure that the test is in date and you follow the manufacturer's instructions correctly the accuracy is 97 %.

To confirm the pregnancy you will need to make an appointment to see your GP or to see a nurse or doctor at a family planning clinic. Seeing a nurse or doctor will allow you to obtain any further information, advice, assistance or referral as needed.

How many weeks pregnant are you?

A pregnancy is calculated from the *first* day of your last *normal* menstrual period. The pregnancy is then counted in weeks and days rather than months and the length is referred to as 'gestation'. For example: 8 weeks and 4 days gestation.

Pregnancy is divided into 3 trimesters:

The **first** trimester is from the beginning to 12 weeks

The **second** trimester is from 13 weeks to 28 weeks

The **third** trimester is from 29 weeks to 40 weeks.





Feelings

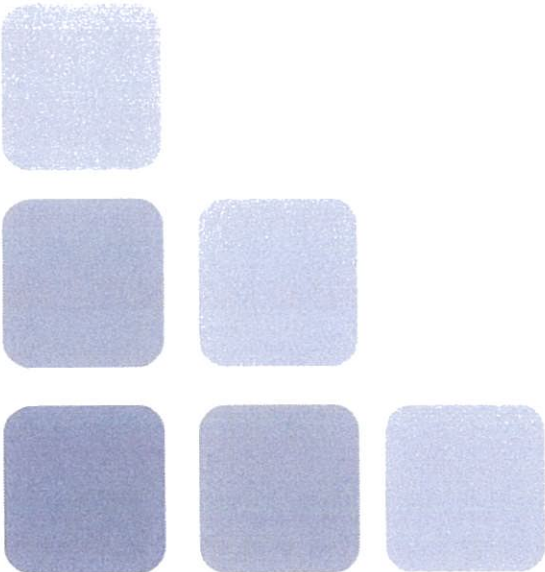
Experiencing an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy can be a very difficult and confusing time. It can be particularly difficult if you are feeling uncertain about what decision you will make about the pregnancy, or your thoughts and feelings about it differ from your partner, or the man involved in the pregnancy.

Shock is a common experience when a pregnancy is first confirmed, even if it was already suspected. This may continue for some days. Feelings of uncertainty and ambivalence are also common, even in a planned pregnancy and especially if the pregnancy is unexpected.

Emotions generally can be quite intense during pregnancy. This is thought to be due to the effect of pregnancy hormones. A woman may experience mood swings and may become upset more easily. This can make dealing with an unplanned pregnancy, and making a decision like this a lot more difficult.

It is important to remember to look after yourself during this difficult and stressful time, take time out from focussing on the decision. Take time to relax and rest and do some things that you enjoy and that nurture you, such as taking a bath, going for a long walk, having a massage, going to a movie or catching up with close friends.

Talking to someone close who you trust and who you know will support you in whatever decision you may make can also be very helpful.





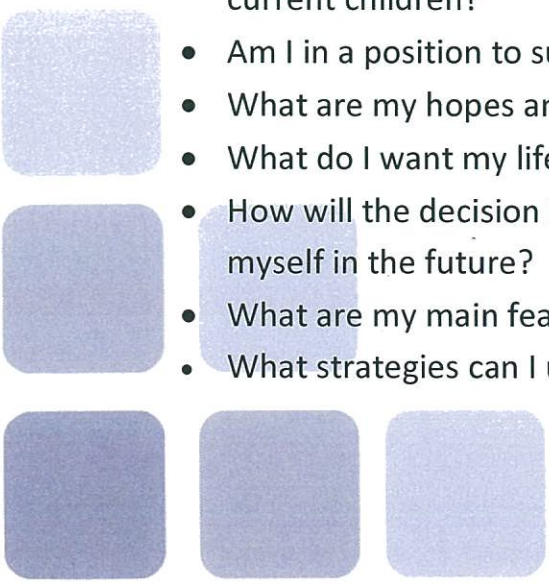
Pregnancy options

Continuing the pregnancy and parenting:

Choosing to become a parent, or to raise another child, is a life changing decision. There are many issues that you may consider when thinking about this option. These may include:

- The level of parenting support from the man involved in the pregnancy
- Your existing relationship and family circumstances
- Support from parents, extended family and friends
- Financial security, housing and employment issues
- Your physical and mental health
- The use of drugs and alcohol during pregnancy
- Looking after a baby & child - feeding, health and wellbeing
- Any domestic violence and issues in regard to your safety and wellbeing

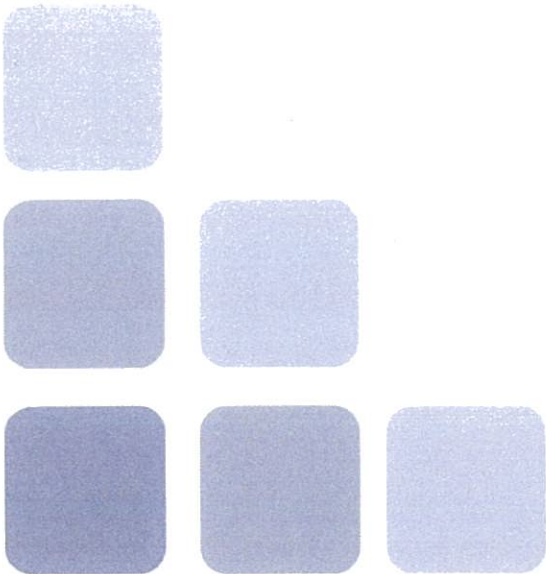
Questions you may want to ask yourself when considering continuing the pregnancy and parenting

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- How do I feel about the prospect of becoming a parent/having another child?
 - Will I have support from the man involved in the pregnancy?
 - If not, can I parent this child on my own?
 - If I continue the pregnancy and keep the child what will change in my life?
 - What effect will continuing the pregnancy and parenting have on my current children?
 - Am I in a position to support myself/ a child?
 - What are my hopes and goals for my life?
 - What do I want my life to be like in one year...5 years...10 years.
 - How will the decision I make about this pregnancy affect what I want for myself in the future?
 - What are my main fears about continuing the pregnancy?
 - What strategies can I use to deal with those fears?



What to do next if you are continuing the pregnancy:

Make an appointment to see your GP. They will be able to organise the routine blood tests done in pregnancy, talk to you about pregnancy health and antenatal care, and about your birthing options.





Adoption

Adoption is where legal rights and responsibility for a child are permanently transferred from the birth parents to the child's adoptive parents. This means that once the child is adopted, the birth parents will no longer be the child's legal parents and the child's adoptive parents will be the child's legal parents

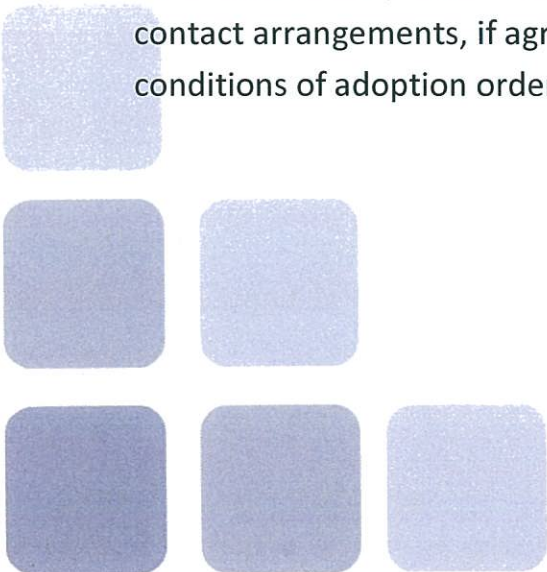
The ACT Adoptions and Permanent Care Unit is responsible for adoption arrangements within the ACT, and is part of the Office for Children, Youth and Family Support in the ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services.

Both parents of a child have legal rights and ideally in most situations both parents should be involved in the adoption plan for their child. Sometimes however it may not be possible for a mother to involve the child's father in the adoption decision

When birth parents make an adoption plan for their child, they may choose to be actively involved in the process of selecting adoptive parents

An adoption decision for a child only becomes official when the parent signs a consent form. A parent cannot sign a consent form until the baby is at least 8 days old and they must have had the consent form for at least 14 days. There is then a cooling off period of 30 days during which the parent can change their mind.

Birth parents may choose to meet the adoptive parents and have occasional contact with the child and adoptive parents. Photographs and updates about the child can also be provided to the birth parents by the adoptive parents. Any contact arrangements, if agreeable to both parties, can be included in the conditions of adoption order made in the Supreme Court.



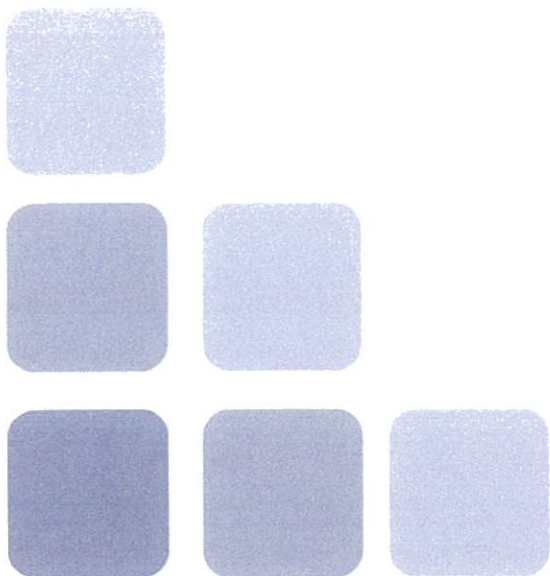


Questions you may want to ask yourself when considering adoption

- How do I feel about adoption?
- What are the pros and cons of adoption?
- How would I feel putting a child up for adoption?
- How do I think I may feel in a year from now if I consider a child up for adoption?
- How do I think I may feel in 5 or 10 years from now if I consider a child up for adoption?
- Do I know anyone who has put a child up for adoption?
- What are my main fears about adoption?
- What strategies can I use to deal with those fears?

What to do next if you think you want to place a child for adoption:

Contact the **Adoptions and Permanent Care Unit** on 6207 1335. They will make an appointment to come and talk to you about adoption and the adoption process.





Abortion

It is estimated that 1 in 3 women in Australia have at least one abortion in their lifetime. Over 92% of these **occur in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy.**

Availability of abortion:

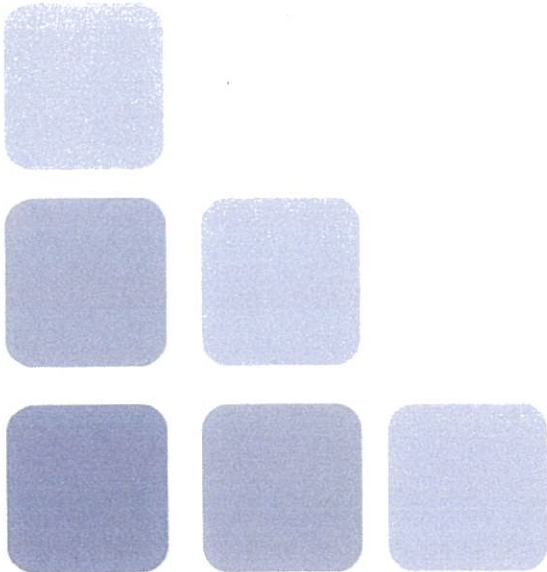
The law in relation to abortion in Australia varies in different states and territories and remains in the Crimes Act everywhere except the ACT and Victoria. All states & territories in Australia have some abortion services; however the availability and limits on gestation vary.

In the ACT abortion is no longer under the Crimes Act and there is no legal restriction on gestation.

There are two clinics which provide termination services in the ACT region:

- **Marie Stopes International** based in Canberra City which provides termination up to 15 weeks and 6 days gestation at time of publication: Ph.1800003707
- **Gynaecology Centres Australia** based in Queanbeyan, which provides termination up to 14 weeks gestation at the time of publication: Ph. 62995559

In NSW there are clinics which provide abortion up until 20 weeks gestation and in Victoria there are clinics which provide abortion until 24 weeks gestation. If you need further information and contact numbers for these services please contact SHFPACT on 62473077.





Types of abortion

Medical abortion:

Medical abortion is available in Australia for pregnancies under 9 weeks. Medical abortion is a method of terminating a pregnancy using medication instead of a surgical procedure. You will still need to attend a clinic or see a doctor for tests which are required, such as ultrasound. Success rates for medical termination are up to 98% in the first 9 weeks of pregnancy.

Surgical abortion:

First trimester surgical abortion is a simple surgical procedure which takes 10 to 15 minutes. It is usually carried out in a day procedure clinic and is most often performed under IV sedation, where the woman is effectively asleep during the procedure. Second trimester abortions (over 12 weeks gestation) may require a different procedure and are more expensive, with cost increasing with length the pregnancy.

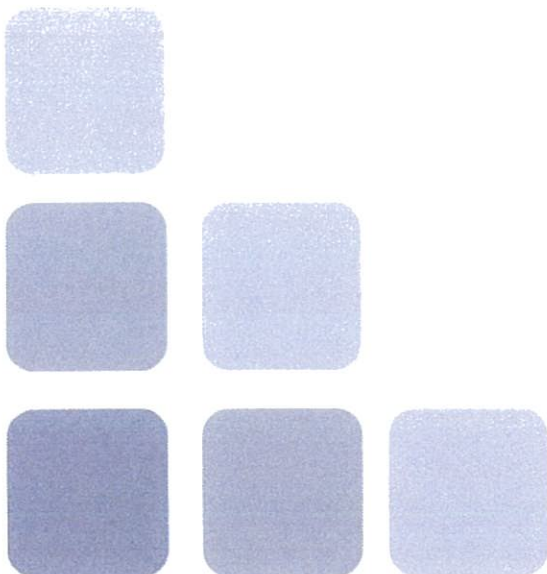
Complication rates:

Abortion in Australia is one of the safest medical procedures and has a very low rate of complications. The complication rate for early abortions is around 1%. This rises to 5 % after 15 weeks gestation.

Research has shown no link between safe, legal abortion and future infertility, breast cancer or ectopic pregnancy.

Most women feel they made the right decision:

Studies show that the vast majority of women who have abortions (around 98 per cent) feel they made the right decision.





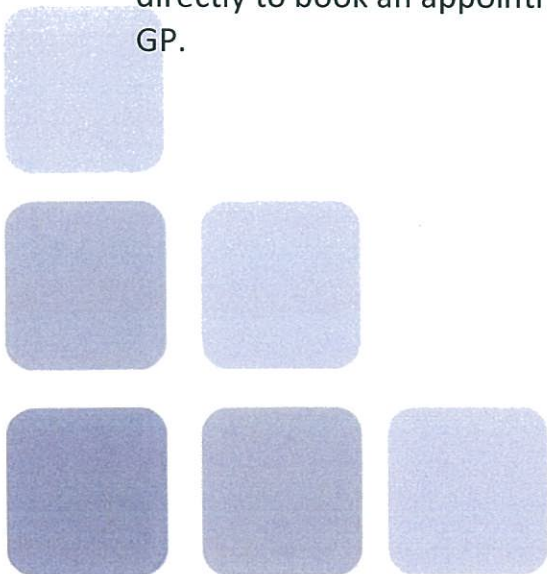
Emotional problems following an abortion:

Most women cope very well with having an abortion. Women who experience emotional problems tend to be those who were very ambivalent at the time of the abortion, or were coerced into having an abortion by someone else. Some women are pressured by partners, family or others to have an abortion. If a woman wants to continue the pregnancy, a coerced abortion can result in emotional problems for her afterwards. If a woman has had problems with anxiety or depression in the past, and has found the decision a very difficult one then she may need more support during this time. This support may be from family or friends or through professional counselling if needed.

Questions you may want to ask yourself when considering abortion:

- How do I feel about abortion?
- What are the pros and cons of abortion
- How do I think I may feel 6 months from now?
- How do I think I may feel 2 years from now?
- What are my ethical and religious beliefs about abortion?
- Do I know anyone who has had an abortion?
- What are my main fears about having an abortion?
- What strategies can I use to deal with those fears?

What to do next if you decide to have an abortion?



Make an appointment with one of SHFPACT's unplanned pregnancy counsellors, nurses or doctors for more information, or contact one of the abortion clinic directly to book an appointment (see below). You do not need a referral from a GP.



Making a decision about a pregnancy

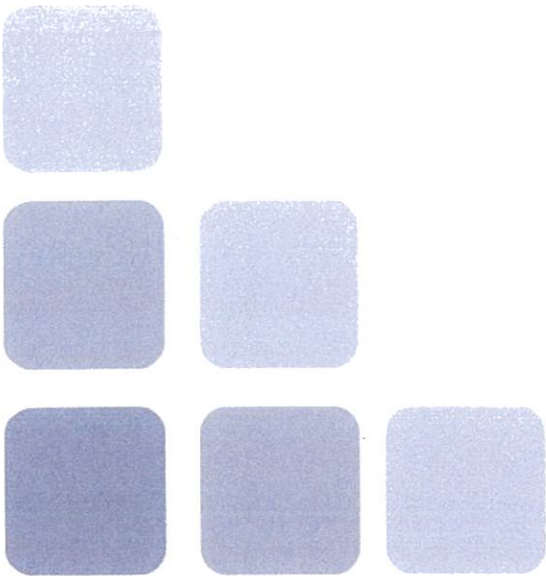
For some women having to make a decision about whether to continue a pregnancy or not can be relatively straightforward, while for others it may be a very difficult decision depending on their individual circumstances.

Most women who are considering their options in relation to an unplanned pregnancy consider many factors, including:

- The state and stability of the relationship with their partner, or the man involved
- Whether or not they feel ready to take on a parenting role
- The needs of children they may already have
- Career, study and financial considerations
- Current life plans and goals
- Their state of physical and emotional health
- Their moral, emotional and religious beliefs

Unless you are completely clear about what you are going to do it is usually advisable to take some time to make a decision if possible. Consider the different options and factors impacting on your decision, and if you are in a relationship talk it through with your partner.

If you find that it is just too difficult and you are unable to make a decision, or you would like to talk it through with somebody to clarify your thoughts and feelings, counselling may be helpful.





Unplanned pregnancy counselling

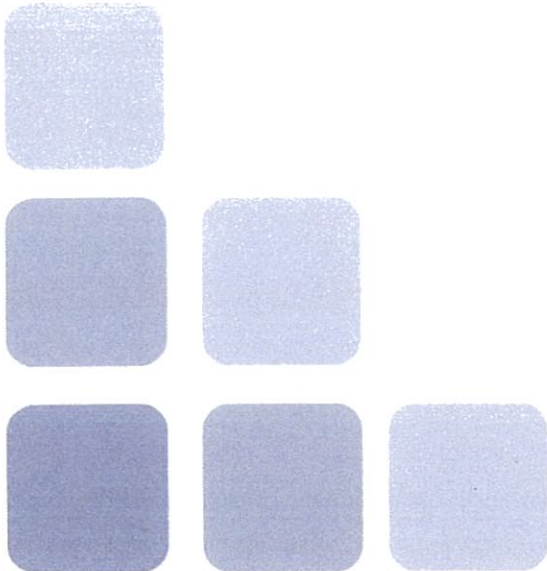
Counselling is really an umbrella term, and can include advice, information, support, education and/or therapy. Counselling can offer a valuable and much-needed resource when making a decision about a pregnancy. Some women may not feel a need for it, while others do.

Counselling can be whatever you need it to be. If you feel you need support with decision making, feel you have already made a decision and just need to talk it through, or simply need someone to talk to counselling can be helpful.

Many women feel uncomfortable or unable to talk with friends and relatives about an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy. In this situation professional counselling can provide an opportunity to work through your thoughts and feelings in a supportive environment. Counsellors can also provide accurate unbiased information which may assist you in making the decision which is right for you at this time in your life.

A word of caution.....

It is important that the counselling you access is non-judgemental and non-directive. Some organisations offering unplanned pregnancy support or counselling may misrepresent their service when advertising or placing notices. Always check that this is a genuine non directive counselling service. One way of checking is to ask if they will give you information about abortion services if needed. A non directive service will always do this.





Unplanned pregnancy counselling in the ACT region

Sexual Health and Family Planning ACT provides professional, unbiased, non-directive, respectful and confidential counselling for women who are making a decision whether or not to continue a pregnancy, or who are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.

This is a free service, and the only free non directive service face to face unplanned pregnancy counselling service in the ACT. To make an appointment phone SHFPACT on: 62473077.

We are also able to refer you to external counsellors should you need more complex counselling or assistance.

Unplanned pregnancy information

If you don't feel you need counselling but would like information on abortion or pregnancy care and birth options we have specially trained nurses and doctors who can provide these services.

To make an appointment phone SHFPACT Clinic on: 62473077.

For further help with decision making see:

Children by Choice: <http://www.childrenbychoice.org.au/nwww/decision.htm>

The Pregnancy Advisory Centre: www.pregnancyadvisorycentre.com.au/





Phone numbers:

Sexual Health & Family Planning ACT:

Clinic and Unplanned Pregnancy Counselling service: 62473077

Parenting advice/support:

Parentlink: 13 34 27

Adoption:

ACT Adoptions and Permanent Care Unit: 6207 1335

Abortion:

Gynaecology Centres Australia: 62995559

Marie Stopes International: 1800003707

References:

- Marie Stopes International 2010 client information
 - Family Planning Queensland fact sheets-Abortion. 2010.
Children by choice:
 - <http://www.childrenbychoice.org.au/index.htm>
 - Better Health Channel:
 - http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Abortion_counselling_options?OpenDocument
 - http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Abortion_emotional_issues?OpenDocument
 - http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Abortion_some_misc_onceptions?open
 - Office for Children, Youth and Family Support:
 - <http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/ocyfs/services/adoptions>
 - University of Iowa Maternity Centre
 - <http://www.uihealthcare.com/depts/maternitycenter/pregnancy/emotions.html>
 - The Royal Women's Hospital Victoria:
 - <http://www.thewomens.org.au/Abortionthemyths>
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