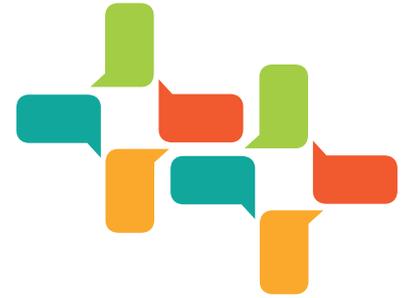


Fact Sheet

Planning Pregnancy and Pregnancy Choices



Having a baby is a big decision. It is useful for women to talk to other mothers about the good things and the difficult things about having a baby before deciding to have a baby. It is up to the woman to decide if she wants to have a baby or not. Talking with family and friends can help with her decision.

Being pregnant can be very exciting. A woman's body changes a lot while the baby is growing inside her. There are lots of things a woman has to learn about babies and lots of things a woman has to do to be ready for the baby to be born. Knowing what it will be like to have a baby can be difficult to imagine sometimes.

Some of the good things women may think about having a baby are that:

- Babies can be lovely to cuddle
- Babies are fun and can make you laugh
- A woman will not be lonely if she has a baby
- A baby will love its mother
- Having a baby means being grown-up and independent

It is important for women to know that these things do not happen for every woman who has a baby. Sometimes having a baby can be difficult.

Some of the things that may be difficult for women who have a baby are:

- The baby might keep them awake at night so they are always tired
- The baby may not stop crying and the mother might not know what is wrong
- The mother cannot go out with friends if she does not have someone to look after the baby
- The mother might find it hard to buy enough food and clothes for herself and the baby
- The mother might not have enough help from other people to look after the baby
- Some women may decide they do not want to have any children. That is OK.

It is important for a woman to think about the good things and difficult things about having a baby before she gets pregnant. A woman can ask someone she trusts to help her make a list of all the good things and all the difficult things before deciding to have a baby.



In this picture a woman is writing a list of good things and hard things about having a baby.

Staying healthy before getting pregnant

When a woman wants to have a baby she should make sure she is as healthy as possible. It is very important for women to look after their health. This will help the baby to be strong and healthy. It is a good idea for the woman to go to a doctor or Family Planning clinic to find out how to look after herself before she gets pregnant.

A woman should tell the doctor about any medicine she is taking. This is important because there are some medicines that can make a baby sick if the woman is taking them when she is pregnant.

The doctor can do a blood test to check if the woman is protected against diseases that might harm the baby.

The doctor will tell her to eat healthy food with plenty of fruit and vegetables. The doctor will tell her to stop smoking and drinking alcohol. This is because it is bad for the baby's health if the woman smokes or drinks when she is pregnant.

While a woman is trying to get pregnant she should take folate tablets (a type of vitamin). She should keep taking these for the first 3 months that she is pregnant. Folate helps to protect the baby from some health problems. A woman can buy folate tablets from the supermarket, chemist or from a health food shop.

If a woman wants to have a baby but she does not become pregnant after trying for over a year then she should talk to her doctor.

How can a woman know if she is pregnant?

There are lots of different things that happen to a woman's body when she is pregnant. A woman's periods will stop when she is pregnant. Some women feel sick in the stomach. This is called morning sickness. Some women get sore breasts. Other women feel well.

Every woman is different and will experience different things when they are pregnant. The best way for a woman to know if she is pregnant is to see a doctor and take a pregnancy test.

Pregnancy test

If a woman has sex with a man and her period does not come (she misses her period) she should have a pregnancy test. A pregnancy test is done to check if a woman is pregnant or not. A woman should have a pregnancy test if any of the things in this list happen to her:

- If her period is more than one week late
- If there is a lot less blood with her period
- If her breasts get bigger or sore and her nipples get darker
- If she is urinating more than usual
- If she feels sick in the stomach and feels like vomiting.

A woman should have a pregnancy test as soon as she thinks she might be pregnant. A pregnancy test is usually done about 7 days after the time her period was due to come. If the test is done before this time it might not be correct. A woman can do a pregnancy test at home or go to a doctor or a Family Planning clinic.

Some women do a pregnancy test themselves at home. A woman can buy a home pregnancy test from a chemist and some supermarkets. A woman should read the home pregnancy test



instructions to make sure she is doing the test the right way. If a woman does a home pregnancy test and it says she is pregnant, she should still go to a doctor to check she is pregnant.

Every woman who thinks she is pregnant should have a pregnancy test at her doctor's clinic or at a Family Planning clinic. The doctor at the clinic will usually ask the woman to go to the toilet and urinate (wee) into a jar. Sometimes the doctor will ask the woman to have a blood test.

This is a specimen jar. When a woman goes to the doctor for a pregnancy test the doctor will ask her to wee into a jar like this.



In this picture a woman is giving the jar with her wee in it to the doctor. The jar is in a paper bag to keep it private.

When women find out they are pregnant

Some women get pregnant because they want to have a baby and they have been trying to get pregnant. This is called a planned pregnancy. Other women get pregnant but they have not been trying to get pregnant. This is called an unplanned pregnancy. Having an unplanned pregnancy can be a big surprise.

When women find out they are pregnant they may have many different feelings. Some women are very happy to be pregnant as they want to have a baby. Some women may be unsure if they want to have a baby or not.

When some women find out they are pregnant they can be upset and frightened. Not everyone finds having a baby and raising a child easy and some people do not want to do this. Some women may feel they are not ready to have a baby. Some women may think that they cannot look after a baby properly. Some women do not want to have a baby. That is OK.

Women who find out they are pregnant may need to talk to someone about how they feel. It is important for women to speak to a doctor when they find out they are pregnant.

Pregnancy choices

When a woman finds out she is pregnant but she has not planned to have a baby she will need to think about whether she wants to have a baby or not. It can sometimes be very difficult for a woman to make a decision about what she is going to do.

It can be useful for a woman to make a list of all the good things and all the difficult things about having a baby. To help her make a decision that is right for her a woman can:

- Talk to someone she trusts
- Talk to a counsellor
- Go to a Family Planning clinic and talk to someone there
- Talk to an advocate at a disability advocacy service.

These people can give a woman advice but it is always the woman's choice to continue the pregnancy or not.

For more information go to the fact sheet called 'Where to go for help or advice'.



In this picture the women on the couch are talking to a counsellor to help them make a decision about having a baby.

Continuing the pregnancy and keeping the baby

Some women choose to continue the pregnancy and look after the baby. They may choose to look after the baby with a partner or by themselves.

If a woman chooses to look after the baby with a partner it is important for them to talk about how having a baby will change their lives and how they will look after each other and the baby.

Some people may choose to look after the baby by themselves. Sometimes people look after the baby by themselves because their relationship may have ended.

It is important to know that a person can get help to look after a baby if it is difficult for them to do this by themselves. A person can get support from family, friends and people they trust. A person can ask their doctor or a counsellor for more information about where to get help with looking after their baby.

Adoption and fostering

Some women choose to continue the pregnancy but the baby is looked after by someone else. Sometimes a baby is looked after by another family for the rest of the baby's life. This is called adoption. Both the baby's birth parents must agree to the adoption.

Sometimes a baby is looked after by another family for a short time or for part of their life. This is called foster care. There are two different types of foster care.

- Temporary foster care: this is when another family looks after a baby for a short time while the parent sorts out housing, money or personal problems. A parent can visit their child while they are in temporary foster care.
- Long-term foster care: this is when a baby is looked after by another family for a long time. While the baby is in foster care the parent will not be able to make decisions about their child's life.

For more information go to the factsheet called 'Where to go for help and advice'.

Abortion

Some women who are pregnant choose not to continue the pregnancy. This is called having an abortion. Sometimes people call having an abortion a 'termination' or 'termination of pregnancy'. An abortion stops the pregnancy. An abortion is usually done early in a pregnancy.

There are many reasons for a woman deciding to have an abortion. A woman can talk to a friend who she trusts or a counsellor if she needs help to decide what to do.

There are two ways a woman can have an abortion:

- In NSW a woman can have a 'surgical abortion' at a clinic. The doctor or nurse will give the woman medicine to make her sleepy. The doctor will then use a special tool to empty the woman's uterus. This means she is not pregnant any more. The surgery is very quick but the woman will need to be at the clinic for about four hours to make sure she is OK.
- A 'medical abortion' is when a woman takes medicine to empty her uterus. Once the medication is taken the woman will bleed from her vagina like a period. This means she is not pregnant anymore. A woman can get a medical abortion through clinics, some hospitals and some doctors. The medicine can be taken at home.

Sometimes a woman may not want to have an abortion but her partner, someone in her family or her friends may want her to have an abortion. A woman has a right to choose if she wants to have an abortion or not. If this happens she should talk to an advocate at a disability advocacy service. This service can support the woman to carry out her choice to have an abortion or not.

For more information go to the factsheet called 'Where to go for help and advice'.



What you need to know:

- Having a baby is a big decision. It is up to the woman to decide if she wants to have a baby or not.
- A woman can ask someone she trusts to help her make a list of all the good things and all the difficult things before deciding to have a baby.
- If a woman wants to have a baby she should go to a doctor or visit a Family Planning clinic to find out how to be as healthy as possible.
- If a woman thinks she may be pregnant, she should go to a doctor or a Family Planning clinic to have a pregnancy test.
- Some women will continue the pregnancy and some women will decide to have an abortion. Both decisions are OK.
- If someone is trying to make a woman have an abortion and she does not want to, she should talk to a disability advocate.