

# Pregnancy: a decision-making guide



the women's  
the royal women's hospital

This guide is designed to assist people who are undecided about whether to continue with their pregnancy. This information is designed to explain your options and help you make the decision that is right for you.

## What are your options?

When making a decision, you may want to consider all your options. If you would like some unbiased advice and support, pregnancy options counselling is available.

### For more information about pregnancy options counselling

1800 My Options [1800myoptions.org.au](https://1800myoptions.org.au)

If you have an unplanned pregnancy your options include abortion, adoption, alternative care or parenting.

## Abortion

This is when your pregnancy is stopped. It is sometimes called a termination. There are two types of abortion:

### Early medical abortion

This involves taking two medicines to stop the pregnancy. This causes bleeding and cramping which is like a miscarriage. It can be done up to nine weeks of pregnancy and occurs at home.

### Surgical abortion

This involves an operation. A suction tube or specialised instruments are used to remove the pregnancy from the womb. The operation does not take long to perform, and usually you will go home on the same day.

The type of abortion available depends on how many weeks pregnant you are and if an abortion service is available near where you live. Costs vary. If you are considering an abortion, it is important to explore your options early so that all options are available to you.

Abortion is safe and legal in Victoria.

## Adoption

You may consider continuing the pregnancy and having your child raised by another family. Adoption is permanent.

## Alternative care

If you choose to continue with your pregnancy but feel unable to care for the child, alternative care arrangements could be an option for you. You could consider:

### Kinship care

Care is provided by extended family.

### Foster care

Care provided by another person.

## Parenting

You may choose to continue with your pregnancy and parent your child.

## Things to consider

### Abortion

- The pregnancy is interrupted and ended.
- This decision is often made in the early stages of your pregnancy, usually between weeks 5-12.
- Most abortion services do not need a local doctor (GP) referral.

Abortion is safe, legal, and common in Victoria. There are two methods of abortion available.

#### Medical abortion

- Available up to 9 weeks into your pregnancy.
- Feels like a natural miscarriage.
- You take two different medicines taken 1 to 2 days apart.
- These medicines cause the pregnancy tissue to detach from the womb.
- Usually occurs 1-6 hours after taking the second medicine.
- Can be done at home.
- Bleeding and cramping are normal and expected.
- Lighter bleeding and crampy pain are expected after the abortion.
- It is important to take pain relieving medicine before, during and after taking the abortion medicines.
- It is important to follow up with your doctor or clinic after the procedure to be sure the pregnancy has ended.

### Surgical abortion

- Often done up to 12 weeks of pregnancy. It can be done later, but fewer services offer abortion after 12 weeks, so it may be more difficult to find a service to assist you.
- You will have an operation to remove the pregnancy from your body.
- You will need to be in hospital or a clinic.
- The operation can be done under local anaesthetic (so you feel less pain) and sometimes with some medicine to make you feel sleepy. It can also be done under general anaesthetic (while you are asleep).
- The operation does not take long. Most people go home on the same day as their operation.
- You will need to have someone to take you home after the operation.
- You are unlikely to feel any pain during the operation, but you may have some pain or cramps for up to a week after the operation.
- Pain relief medicines like those taken when you have a period may help.

#### For more information about abortion

1800 My Options  
[1800myoptions.org.au](https://1800myoptions.org.au)

## Things to consider (continued)

### Adoption

This option is permanent, so it is important to consider all your options before deciding on adoption.

- You continue with the pregnancy, but the child is legally raised by another family.
- Adoption in Victoria is a legal process. After the adoption, the adoptive parent(s) become the child's permanent, legal parent(s).
- Once you proceed with an adoption, after an initial cooling off period, you cannot reverse your decision.
- Adoption counselling is offered as part of the process and there to assist you in considering your options. It can begin before or after the child is born.

#### For more information about adoption

The Department of Justice and Safety  
[justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/adoption](https://justice.vic.gov.au/your-rights/adoption)

### Parenting

- You decide to continue with the pregnancy and raise your child.
- It is important to visit your local doctor (GP) as soon as possible so that your pregnancy can be confirmed and to discuss your pregnancy care options.
- There are services available which can support you during your pregnancy and into parenthood.

#### For more information about pregnancy, birth and the first weeks with your baby

The Royal Women's Hospital  
[thewomens.org.au/hi-pregnancy-and-birth](https://thewomens.org.au/hi-pregnancy-and-birth)

### Alternative care

There are two forms of alternative care. These are Kinship Care and Foster Care.

#### Kinship Care

- You continue with the pregnancy but care for the child is provided by the extended family, for example, grandparents, aunts, uncles.
- This care may be provided permanently or until you are able to care for and live with the child.
- Kinship care can be arranged on a formal or informal basis.

#### For more information about Kinship Care

Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing  
[services.dffh.vic.gov.au/kinship-care](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/kinship-care)

#### Foster Care

- You continue with your pregnancy but feel unable to provide care for your child at the time and choose to have them cared for by another family temporarily.
- Foster Care is temporary care provided by trained, assessed, and accredited foster carers.

#### For more information about Foster Care

Victorian Department of Families, Fairness and Housing  
[services.dffh.vic.gov.au/foster-care](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/foster-care)

## What matters the most to you?

Listed below are some points you may choose to consider when making your decision. This information is designed to help you to work out the best decision for your circumstances now.

### Consider your dreams and goals for your life

I want to be a parent

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I do

I'm not sure

I don't

### Consider the timing of this pregnancy

I am ready to be a parent

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I am

I'm not sure

I'm not ready

### Consider your current safety

I am currently safe to make this decision

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I am

I'm not sure

I'm not

I have sufficient safety in my life to parent

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I do

I'm not sure

I don't

### Consider your physical and mental wellbeing

I feel physically well enough to parent

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I do

I'm not sure

I don't

I feel mentally well and able to parent

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I do

I'm not sure

I don't

## What matters the most to you? (continued)

### Consider your relationship with the pregnancy partner

I have a healthy relationship with my pregnancy partner

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I do

I'm not sure

I don't

### Consider the stability in your life

I have somewhere to live if I continue with the pregnancy

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I do

I'm not sure

I don't

I have sufficient finances to parent

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I do

I'm not sure

I don't

My residency status is secure.

(Do you have a permanent visa allowing you to stay in Australia indefinitely?)

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Yes

I'm not sure

No

### Consider any formal and informal supports you may have

I have friends and family to support me

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I do

I'm not sure

I don't

I have access to professional support

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

I do

I'm not sure

I don't

## What matters the most to you? (continued)

### Consider your values and beliefs about pregnancy and your options

How do I feel about the idea of having an abortion?

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How do I feel about continuing with the pregnancy and having the baby adopted?

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How do I feel about continuing with the pregnancy and placing the baby into alternative care?

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How do I feel about the idea of having a baby and becoming a parent?

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## What matters the most to you? (continued)

## How do you feel now about your decision?

I know what I want to do

Yes,  
I have decided what to do

I think I know  
what to do

No,  
I am undecided

## Where to from here?

- ☐ I'm ready to act on my decision
- ☐ I want to discuss my options with others
- ☐ I want to learn more about my options

Write down any questions, concerns, or your next steps. For more information see page 8.

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## Remember

You are the expert in your life. You have the answers to your situation and can be supported to make the best decision to fit your circumstances.

The decision may not be perfect, but this information is designed to help you to work out the best decision for your circumstances at this time.

## For more information

### The Royal Women's Hospital

For information about  
unplanned pregnancy

[thewomens.org.au/wm-unplanned-pregnancy](http://thewomens.org.au/wm-unplanned-pregnancy)

### 1800 My Options

For information about contraception,  
pregnancy options and sexual health  
in Victoria.

☎ [1800 696 784](tel:1800696784)

(Monday to Friday 10am-4pm)

[1800myoptions.org.au](http://1800myoptions.org.au)

### Sexual Health Victoria

For a range of sexual health resources.

[shvic.org.au](http://shvic.org.au)



## Do you need an interpreter?

If you need an interpreter, remember  
you can ask for one.

## Family Violence Support

### 1800 Respect National Helpline

Support for people impacted by sexual  
assault, domestic or family violence  
and abuse.

☎ [1800 737 732](tel:1800737732)

(24 hour support service)

[1800respect.org.au](http://1800respect.org.au)

## Feedback

The Royal Women's Hospital aims to  
develop health information that is useful  
for our patients, their families and other  
consumers. We always welcome your  
comments. If you have anything you  
wish to tell us about this information,  
please contact the Women's at  
[rwh.publications@thewomens.org.au](mailto:rwh.publications@thewomens.org.au).

#### Disclaimer

This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.

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