

FACT SHEET

TOOL KIT FOR TEEN CARE, SECOND EDITION

PREGNANCY OPTIONS

How do you know if you are pregnant?

- A missed menstrual period is a common sign of a pregnancy. Other signs include spotting or a very light menstrual period, tender breasts, being tired, upset stomach or nausea, feeling bloated, frequent urination, and being moody.
- A urine test or blood test performed at a doctor's office is the best way to find out if you are pregnant.
- If home pregnancy kits are used, no matter what the
 results, you should go to a doctor or to a clinic to make
 sure you are pregnant or to get birth control if you are
 not. (For information on birth control, see the fact sheet
 "Contraception.")

If you are pregnant, what are your options?

- Any decision will be easier with a strong support system. Some young women may find it helpful to talk with a family member, good friend, or counselor.
- Once it is certain that you are pregnant, you must decide early on what will be the best option for you. You may consider the following options:
 - Have and raise the baby
 - Have the baby and make a plan for the baby to be adopted
 - End the pregnancy by having an abortion

Raising the baby

- Raising a child can bring about many physical and emotional demands, but it also can bring about joy.
- A strong support system may make it easier to raise a child.
- Raising a child means making some sacrifices:
 - Goals that you set for yourself may have to be put on hold.
 - You may not be able to be in as many social activities as your friends and may need to change your social life to care for the baby.
- Staying in school is very important, but school is more difficult while raising a child.

Adoption

- In an adoption, a child is legally raised by a new set of parents and a new birth certificate is issued in some states.
- Making the decision to place your baby up for adoption can be stressful, but knowing you considered your baby's needs can be comforting.
- · Before the child is born, you make a plan for adoption.
- When the child is born, you are given papers that give your permission to place the child for adoption and end your parental rights.
- Depending on the state, the father may or may not be involved in the adoption.
- After a waiting period of 1–6 months, the adoption becomes final.

What are the types of adoption?

- Open adoption—you and the adoptive parents may exchange information about each other.
- Closed adoption—neither you nor the adoptive parents know the identity of the other, but important medical and sexual history may be shared.

Who helps to arrange an adoption?

- Adoption agencies—you can work with a licensed adoption agency. Parents are chosen through the agency after careful screening.
- Independent adoption—you can work with lawyers, counselors, or independent organizations as needed in the adoption process to place the baby in the adoptive parent's home.

Abortion

- A medical or surgical abortion is a procedure to end a pregnancy.
- As with any of the options, the decision to have an abortion is a personal one.
- The decision should be made as early as possible.







 The laws of each state vary, and minors may need parental consent, parental notification, or court authorization to get an abortion.

What are the procedures involved in an abortion?

- · Surgical Abortions
 - A surgical abortion does not take long and can be performed in a doctor's office or clinic in the early weeks of pregnancy.
 - Surgical abortions performed after
 12 weeks of pregnancy may be more complicated and usually are performed in a clinic or hospital.
- · Medical Abortions
 - A medical abortion involves a combination of drugs taken over several days.
 - It can be performed in a doctor's office or in a clinic 49–63 days after the last period began (depending on the method).
 - Some women prefer medical abortions because they allow more privacy, may not require anesthesia or surgery, and can be done very early in the pregnancy.

Are there any complications or risks involved in having an abortion?

- An abortion is considered to be a low-risk procedure. It is less risky than having a baby.
- Complications may include bleeding or infection.
- The longer you wait to have an abortion, the more complicated the procedure.

Is it necessary to go back to where you had the procedure done?

- A follow-up visit is required after an abortion.
- It is necessary to be sure that the procedure worked, that you are healing as expected, and that you get birth control.

- You may experience feelings of guilt, anger, loss, or regret. You also may feel relieved. All of these feelings are normal and often go away with time.
- Counseling can help you cope with these feelings.

How can you decide what to do?

- Talking to a loved one such as a parent, close friend, and the baby's father can be helpful.
- Talking to a counselor at a family planning clinic, a family services agency, or an adoption agency also can be helpful.
- You should think about your own values and your family's values to help make a choice that is best for you.
- Several factors play a role in determining the best decision:
 - Some teens have medical problems that put the fetus or the teen at risk during pregnancy.
 - There are major costs involved in raising a child.
 - A pregnancy can interfere with educational and lifelong goals.
 - Often the teen and the father of her baby do not stay together.
 - Many times the teen mother has to raise the child without the help of the father.
 - There may be positive and negative aspects to all of the different pregnancy options. It is a decision that each person has to think about very carefully.
- Your decision to have and raise the baby, to have the baby and place it for adoption, or to have an abortion is a personal and difficult decision. Talking it over with someone you trust like a parent or responsible adult can be helpful. It is better to make a decision early in the pregnancy and get medical care. However, you should take as much time as needed to make a decision that is well thought out, realizing that there are limitations on when abortions can be legally performed.

For More Information

We have provided information on the following organizations and web sites because they have information that may be of interest to our readers. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) does not necessarily endorse the views expressed or the facts presented by these organizations or on these web sites. Further, ACOG does not endorse any commercial products that may be advertised or available from these organizations or on these web sites.

Advocates for Youth

Telephone: (202) 419-3420 Web: www.advocatesforyouth.org

American Academy of Family Physicians Telephone: (913) 906-6000 or (800) 274-2237

Web: www.aafp.org

American Academy of Pediatrics

Telephone: (847) 434-4000 Web: www.aap.org

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Telephone: (202) 638-5577 or (800) 673-8444

Web: www.acog.org

Guttmacher Institute

Telephone: (212) 248-1111 or (800) 355-0244

Web: www.guttmacher.org

National Abortion Federation

Telephone: (202) 667-5881 or (800) 772-9100

Web: www.prochoice.org

National Adoption Center

Telephone: (800) TO-ADOPT (862-3678)

Web: www.adopt.org

Planned Parenthood Federation of America Telephone: (800) 230-PLAN or (212) 541-7800

Web: www.plannedparenthood.org