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## Pregnancy - unplanned

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### Summary

- If you think you may be pregnant, it is important to confirm it as soon as possible.
  - The sooner a pregnancy is confirmed, the sooner you can receive care, and the more options you will have available to you.
  - If you are experiencing an unplanned pregnancy you can seek professional support and information to help you make the best decision for you.
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Not all unplanned pregnancies are unwanted. Every woman will consider her options and decide what is right for her at this time, whether to continue or terminate her pregnancy.

If you think you may be pregnant it is important to confirm it as soon as possible so you can start considering your next steps – such as what support and information you need to make a decision, and what medical care you need.

The sooner you can make a decision the more options you will have open to you. For instance, if you decide that you want to terminate the pregnancy there are more service options available for having an abortion if the pregnancy is under nine weeks gestation.

If an unplanned pregnancy is a difficult and stressful experience for you, you can seek professional counselling support. Call **1800 My Options** for information about counselling and clinical services available in Victoria.

### Support and counselling for unplanned pregnancy

When faced with an unplanned pregnancy, deciding what to do is not always easy. Talking with trusted people in your life can help you reach your decision about the pregnancy, and provide you with support and information. Not all women need or want counselling, but some find it helpful to talk with a professional counsellor. A counsellor can provide you with comprehensive, impartial information on your pregnancy options, and enable you to consider them. They will support you in making a fully informed decision.

### Unplanned pregnancy – options

If you have an unplanned pregnancy, options include:

- continuing the pregnancy and becoming a parent
- terminating the pregnancy (having an abortion)
- continuing the pregnancy and choosing adoption or alternative care arrangements for the child.

### Continuing the pregnancy and becoming a parent

If you choose to continue with the pregnancy, pregnancy care is important for your health and that of the fetus.

Your GP can provide a range of tests and medical assessments, and give you information about:

- what care is recommended during the pregnancy
- public or private services available
- various options for the birth
- how and where you can receive antenatal care – your GP can make the referral for this care.

### Alternative care or adoption

If you feel you need more time to prepare for the responsibilities and challenges of becoming a full-time parent,

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there are alternatives to placing the child for permanent adoption.

For example:

- your extended family may be able to be involved in caring for the child
- temporary foster care can be arranged where a child lives with, and is cared for by, another family until the birth parent or parents are able to care for and have their child live with them.

You may decide to continue with the pregnancy then place the child for adoption. The adoptive parents will then become the child's permanent, legal parents.

The Victorian Department of Health and Human Services oversees permanent and temporary care of children. If you are considering this option, you can contact your **regional agency**.

For more information, visit the department's 'Families and children' pages about **adoption** and **kinship care**, or visit Better Health Channel's page about **support services for foster carers, permanent carers and adoptive parents**.

### **Terminating the pregnancy (having an abortion)**

**Abortion** is when a pregnancy is intentionally ended. There are two types of abortion: **surgical abortion** and **medication abortion**. Abortion is safe and legal in Victoria.

There are more services available for an abortion when the gestation is under nine weeks because medication abortion is provided up to nine weeks.

Medication abortion is provided by some GPs, community health services, private clinics, and hospitals. Surgical abortion is provided by some hospitals and private clinics.

Each woman will experience an abortion differently, depending on her individual circumstances. Studies show that most women who feel they made a free and informed decision to have an abortion, and received appropriate support, feel they made the right decision and are unlikely to experience long-term psychological or emotional problems.

If you have decided to have an abortion but are finding it difficult and feel ambivalent or distressed, seek additional support. Support, before and after the abortion, can help you to work through your decision and find ways to cope better with the experience.

Call **1800 My Options** for information about counselling options and where to access abortion services in Victoria.

Better Health Channel also has information about where to access an **abortion services in Victoria**.

### **Where to get help**

- **1800 My Options** – Victoria's sexual and reproductive health information and phonenumber service Tel. 1800 My Options (**1800 696 784**)
- **Family Planning Victoria** – comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for people of all ages Tel. **1800 013 952** or **(03) 9257 0100**
- **Family Planning Victoria Action Centre** – comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services for people of all ages, with an afternoon drop-in clinic for people under 25 years of age Tel. **(03) 9660 4700** or **1800 013 952**
- Your local community health service's sexual and reproductive health clinic or women's health clinic
- **Women's health organisations** for your region
- Victorian Department of Health and Human Services – **Adoption**
- **Your GP**

**This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:**

Family Planning Victoria

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