

While the actual procedure takes between 10 and 15 minutes, you will spend between two and four hours at the clinic to allow for pre-abortion counselling and time to recover.

If you are under 16 years of age and supported by a parent (usually meaning you live at home with them), a custodial parent must be informed that you are considering an abortion. While your parent needs to be given the opportunity to participate in the counselling process and in consultations between yourself and your doctor, **the final decision is still made by you.** You can apply to the Children's Court for an order to proceed with an abortion without your parents knowing. For more information contact FPWA.

Abortions cost between \$150 (for Health Care Card holders) and \$250 for pregnancies up to 12 weeks, and up to \$750 for later pregnancies. Some costs are covered by Medicare or private insurance cover, but be sure to discuss this with the doctor or clinic. Never try to end a pregnancy yourself, as this is not a safe option. Get proper medical attention as soon as possible if you want to end the pregnancy.

Talk about your feelings with someone if you are considering abortion. It's normal to feel a mixture of emotions such as fear and grief. A sense of loss is common even if you are clear that you don't want to continue the pregnancy. Most women feel a sense of relief after the procedure but you may also feel sad, irritable, fragile or guilty. Seek assistance if you feel you're not coping.

For more information about abortion see FPWA's 'Unplanned Pregnancy – Considering Abortion' sheet.

For more information about unplanned pregnancy contact:

FPWA - **9227 6177**

Quarry Health Centre for under 25s - **9430 4544**

Sexual Health Helpline - **9227 6178** or **1800 198 205** (country callers)

For unplanned pregnancy counselling services contact:

Roe St Centre for human relationships - **9228 3693**. Sessions on unplanned pregnancy and post abortion issues are available for a small fee.



70 Roe Street, PO Box 141, Northbridge, WA, 6865
ph: (08) 9227 6177 fax: (08) 9227 6871
info@fpwa-health.org.au

Sexual Health Helpline (08) 9227 6178 or
1800 198 205 (country callers)
sexhelp@fpwa-health.org.au

Quarry Health Centre for under 25s
7 Quarry Street, PO Box 378, Fremantle, WA, 6959
ph: (08) 9430 4544 fax: (08) 9430 8114
quarry@fpwa-health.org.au

www.fpwa-health.org.au

Help

I think I'm



Pregnant!



Unplanned pregnancy

Unplanned or unwanted pregnancies can happen to all sorts of women - young, single women, women already with children, new mothers, or victims of incest or rape. Only you can know if the time is right to have a child.

This brochure will help you to consider your choices and decide what to do. You don't have to make this decision alone. Information and support is available from many organisations, some of which are listed here. Be aware that some organisations which advertise to help pregnant women have very strong beliefs, which you may not share. Try finding out about an organisation before you approach them. Alternatively, if you are not getting the sort of advice and support you want, don't feel intimidated. Simply go elsewhere for help.

Ignoring an unplanned pregnancy won't make it go away. Seek help as early as possible.

Are you really pregnant?

Find out whether you are pregnant for sure before you begin worrying. A missed period is the most obvious sign, but it doesn't always mean you're pregnant. Other symptoms include nausea and vomiting, sore breasts, needing to pee more often and tiredness.

If you think you might be pregnant, a simple and accurate test can show if you actually are right after you miss a period. You should have a test if you think you are pregnant and your period is more than one week late.

There are two types of pregnancy tests available to you at this stage – urine and blood tests. Urine tests are quick and generally accurate. Home test kits are available from pharmacies and supermarkets, but results should be confirmed by a health professional. Blood tests are available from doctors or sexual health clinics.

If you live in the country, see your community nurse or women's health service or ring FPWA on **1800 198 205**.

The choice is yours

If you are pregnant, your options are:

- To continue the pregnancy, and have the child
- To continue the pregnancy, and place the child up for adoption
- To end the pregnancy (have an abortion)

There isn't always an ideal solution to an unplanned pregnancy and you may not feel happy with any of these options. However you need to choose the one that is best for you at this time. Only you know what you want out of life, and which choice you should make. Most women find the decision easier if they talk it over with someone - a relative, friend, or the father of the child.

It might be difficult to tell those close to you that you're pregnant, however it is usually a big relief once you do. They may initially be shocked or surprised, but often these people can provide you with valuable support.

If you are pregnant there are many things to consider, so it's a good idea to contact one of the many organisations that offer professional counselling and support. They are not emotionally involved, and can help you clarify your thoughts and feelings about your situation. Think about your plans, not only for the next few years but also for 10 or 20 years down the track - how will a baby change them? Are there things you want to do before parenthood?

What about pressure from other people - is anyone trying to make you do what's best for them? Are you uncomfortable with the advice you are getting? What support would you have if you had the child? Could you cope with a dependant and demanding baby? Or perhaps you feel ready to take care of a child, either alone or with a partner, and think it would be a positive experience.

By making a thoughtful, informed decision, you can take responsibility and make the best decision for you at this time in your life.

Keeping the child

Becoming a parent can be joyful and exciting, but the years of commitment involved are an ongoing responsibility. If you decide to keep your baby, there are many sources of help you can use during pregnancy, and while raising your child.

Some things to consider:

- **Housing** – do you have somewhere to live? Is your current accommodation suitable for a baby? If not, where will you live? The State Government's Department of Housing and Works may be able to help.

- **Money** – how will you pay to look after your child? Contact Centrelink to see if you qualify for any benefits. Financial advice for people on a tight budget is also offered by some organisations. Remember the father of your child is required to assist you with financial support.

- **Health** – you will need to begin ante-natal (pre-birth) health care by seeing your doctor or health worker early in your pregnancy. You will then have regular appointments until the birth. Classes to prepare you for childbirth and parenting are strongly recommended, especially for a first pregnancy.

- **Relationships** – how will a baby change your relationship? Even if you are no longer in a relationship with the father, he still has rights to the child, meaning it is likely that you will have on-going contact with him for many years to come.

- **Parenting** – you may sometimes feel isolated and frustrated as a parent. This is normal, and help and support is available.

If you are considering keeping your child and are unsure of where to go for help, phone the Sexual Health Helpline on **9227 6178** or **1800 198 205** (country callers) for more information.

Adoption

Adoption is another alternative if you are pregnant. This is a legally binding arrangement where your child becomes the child of the adopting couple or person. Adoption arrangements cannot be made until at least 28 days after the birth of the child, during which time you can change your mind. If you do decide to go ahead, adoption procedures can commence. Once you have signed an Adoption Consent, and the 28 day Revocation Period has passed without you formally withdrawing that consent, you cannot change your mind.

After the adoption you may experience a mixture of feelings, such as relief, happiness, depression or guilt. Women who place their child up for adoption often go on thinking about the child, sometimes for years, and many find their sense of loss increases with time.

If you are considering adoption discuss your plans early in your pregnancy with an Adoption Officer at the Department for Community Development, as it can take time to understand the legal side of things. You will be provided with all the necessary information about adoption, as well as other options. If you decide to proceed with the adoption, you can be involved in selecting who adopts your child, keep in contact with the child and receive updates on their progress if you wish.

It can help to talk with someone about how you are feeling if you are considering adoption, and counselling services are available.

Abortion

An abortion is a legal medical procedure to end a pregnancy. Abortions are most commonly performed between 6 and 12 weeks of pregnancy. After 12 weeks the procedure is more complex and carries greater risks.

If you choose to have an abortion you must see a doctor who will provide you with information about the medical risks of ending the pregnancy and of having the baby, before providing you with a referral for the procedure. The doctor will also offer you the opportunity of a referral for appropriate counselling relating to abortion, and let you know that post abortion counselling is available. You can then go to one of a number of abortion providers in WA.

Some doctors, for a variety of reasons, refuse to refer women for an abortion. If your doctor won't help contact FPWA, or if you live in the country phone the Sexual Health Helpline to find out where you can go.