

PREGNANT? WORKING THROUGH YOUR OPTIONS



This booklet is for people who have an unplanned pregnancy and are unsure of what to do.

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Pregnant?

Working through your options

This booklet is for people who have an unplanned pregnancy (or those who support them) and are unsure of what to do. It provides you with information about a range of options available to you. It outlines some of the things to consider, such as where to go for support and tools to assist your decision-making.

Family Planning NSW understands that a pregnancy can happen in a range of different situations and relationships and acknowledges that people who are gender diverse and/or live with intersex variations can experience unplanned pregnancies.

This booklet is for people who are pregnant. We occasionally use the term 'woman' for the people that are pregnant and 'man' for the other person involved in the pregnancy. We acknowledge that this is a generalisation and will not be accurate for everyone.

Finding out you are pregnant

Signs of pregnancy can include missing a period, feeling sick (nauseous) or vomiting, having sore or larger breasts and feeling dizzy or tired. Not all people who are pregnant have these signs. It is a good idea to do a pregnancy test if your period is more than a week late. The length of your pregnancy is measured from the first day of your last period.



PREGNANCY TESTS

If you think you are pregnant it is important to have a test to confirm the pregnancy. A pregnancy test can be done with a urine or blood sample. You can buy a urine pregnancy test from a pharmacy or supermarket and follow the instructions on the packet. The test can also be done at a Family Planning NSW clinic, GP practice, Women's Health Centre or other health service. The sooner you find out for sure, the more time you have to think about your options.

PREGNANCY OPTIONS

It is important that you take the time you need to make the best decision for you. When you are making the decision it is good to consider your personal circumstances, support available and how many weeks pregnant you are.

The options with an unplanned pregnancy include:

- continuing the pregnancy – choosing to parent
- continuing the pregnancy – adoption or foster care
- terminating the pregnancy – abortion

It can be helpful to talk to someone you know and trust. Sometimes it is useful to speak to a health professional. If you need someone to talk to you can call:

Family Planning NSW Talkline 1300 658 886

Family Planning NSW Talkline is a confidential telephone, email and webchat service. It is staffed by nurses specialising in reproductive and sexual health. Family Planning NSW Talkline is open 8.30am to 5pm weekdays for information and referral advice. Further information is also available at www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline.

If this is a crisis for you, please make contact with:

Lifeline 13 11 14

Lifeline provides a 24 hour telephone counselling service, online chat for crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services. Further information is available at www.lifeline.org.au



Choosing to parent

Choosing whether or not to raise a child is a big decision. You may choose to parent with a partner or parent alone. If the pregnancy has occurred when you are in relationship, you may choose to involve your partner in a discussion about the options.

PARENTING WITH A PARTNER

It is important to talk to your partner about how you both feel about the changes to your relationship, income and lifestyle that raising a child will bring. It is normal to feel a range of emotions, and to be worried about how you will cope. If you have not made decisions as a couple, or if your relationship is new or not stable, the decision-making journey may be difficult, or overwhelming.

PARENTING ALONE

Some people may choose to parent alone and others may find themselves parenting alone due to the breakdown of a relationship or differences in how to proceed with an unplanned pregnancy.

It is good to seek support from your family and friends and think about the support networks that will be available for you.

PARENTING SUPPORT OPTIONS

There is support available to help with raising a child, including both financial and practical support. If you are thinking about continuing the pregnancy and would like more information about possible financial assistance options visit <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/subjects/payments-families>

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Is it the right time for me/us to have a child considering other plans and responsibilities?
- Am I/are we financially and emotionally ready for a child?
- Do I/we have the support necessary to raise a child?
- Would we stay together if there wasn't a pregnancy?
- How could we best look after our child if we did separate (now or in the future)?

SOMEONE TO TALK TO

Counsellors can help you deal with the emotional and practical issues of raising a child on your own or with a partner.

You can find counselling and support at:

Family Planning NSW

You can make an appointment for pregnancy options counselling at a Family Planning NSW clinic near you. Find a clinic near you by visiting <https://www.fpnsw.org.au/clinics>

Pregnancy, Birth & Baby

Call their Helpline (1800 882 436) or access www.pregnancybirthbaby.org.au/about-pregnancy-birth-and-baby which provides information, advice and counselling about pregnancy, childbirth and a baby's first year.

INFORMATION ABOUT PREGNANCY CARE

For more information about pregnancy care, call the Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 to talk to a reproductive and sexual health nurse. Talking to the nurse is confidential and anonymous. You can also contact your GP, the maternity unit of your local hospital and speak to a midwife or a social worker.

It is important to talk about any medications you are taking with your doctor or midwife. Your doctor or midwife can also advise you about the tests that are available during pregnancy to ensure the health and wellbeing of you and your pregnancy.

Continuing the pregnancy and adoption or foster care

ADOPTION

Adoption is when the birth parents or parent give all of their parenting rights and responsibilities to the adoptive parents. This involves signing a legal agreement for someone else to become the legal guardian of a child. Parents must wait at least 30 days after the child is born before they can sign the legal agreement. The birth parents can keep in contact with the child by agreeing on an adoption plan with the adopting parents. A caseworker can help to form this plan. Family and Community Services (FACS) is the government agency that looks after adoption services in NSW. They work with birth parents considering adoption and families who wish to adopt.

All adopted children have the legal right to know about their birth family and their culture. An adoption caseworker works with the adoptive parents to form an adoption plan that outlines the agreed upon details of how contact will be maintained.

If you feel you cannot parent a child, adoption is not the only alternative. Foster care may be an option.





FOSTER CARE

Foster care is when your child is looked after by another family. There are different types of foster care. Foster care options include:

- **Temporary Foster Care:** This can be used while you sort out accommodation, financial or personal problems. During voluntary care (not ordered by the court) you remain the child's guardian and can see your child. Temporary care is usually limited to several weeks
- **Long Term Foster Care:** If your child is in long-term foster care, you will lose legal guardianship and/or custody of your child. You will still be the child's legal parent. In long term foster care, children often become emotionally attached to their foster family

INFORMATION ABOUT ADOPTION/FOSTER CARE

FACS provide a range of adoption and foster care services. You can talk about your options for the care of your child with a qualified and experienced worker. Contact FACS Adoption Services on 02 9716 3003 or email adoption.permanentcare@facs.nsw.gov.au. Further information about the adoption process and alternatives can be found on the FACS website, <https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families/adoption>

Abortion

Abortion is when medication or a surgical procedure is used to end a pregnancy. If you have decided to have an abortion you are not alone. It is estimated that one in four Australian women will have an abortion in their lifetime.

There are two types of abortion:

- **surgical abortion** (which involves an operation, usually under a light sedation)
- **medical abortion** (which involves taking medications that cause a miscarriage)

SURGICAL ABORTION

Surgical abortion is available in NSW through Family Planning NSW, community-based clinics and occasionally through public hospitals. In NSW you do not need a referral from a doctor to visit a clinic, which means you can call the clinic directly for an appointment. Some clinics only perform surgical abortions up to 12 weeks while others will perform abortions up to 20 weeks of pregnancy.

Before you make an appointment it is important to know how many weeks pregnant you are and what the clinic can offer. If you are not sure how pregnant you are, you may need to have an ultrasound. An ultrasound is done to check how many weeks pregnant you are. It is usually best to wait until you are six to seven weeks pregnant before having a surgical abortion. If it is done earlier than this there is a higher chance that the abortion will not work.

The surgical abortion is usually done while you are under light sedation, which will make you relaxed and sleepy. Sedation is used to make you feel as comfortable as possible during the procedure. The abortion removes the lining and the contents of the uterus. This is done by applying gentle suction to the inside of the uterus with a small, plastic tube. This is a safe, simple and low risk procedure when done by an experienced doctor. The procedure takes about 15 minutes, but you will need to be at the clinic or hospital for about four hours to ensure the anaesthetic has worn off and you are able to travel home safely. After around 16 weeks of pregnancy a different procedure is used. This procedure is often more complicated and can be harder to access. The cost of a surgical abortion generally increases the longer you are pregnant.

MEDICAL ABORTION

Medical abortion is available through Family Planning NSW, community-based clinics and some specialists and trained doctors. Medical abortion is an alternative to a surgical abortion. This involves taking medications and can be done in your own home. It is available if you are less than nine weeks pregnant.

Medical abortion usually involves two appointments. In the first appointment you will be prescribed the medications and be told when and how to take the medication. The medications that are prescribed are mifepristone and misoprostol.

Step 1: Mifepristone is one tablet that you take as normal with a glass of water.

Some bleeding or spotting can happen after taking the first tablet. The effects of mifepristone are usually mild and do not last long. Most women are able to carry out their usual daily tasks after taking this first medication

Step 2: Misoprostol is taken 36-48 hours after the first medication (mifepristone).

Misoprostol causes contractions in the muscles of the uterus. This causes the cervix to open slightly and the uterus to be emptied, with the pregnancy expelled. You are likely to begin bleeding and having cramps within 1-4 hours after taking the tablets so we recommend that you plan to take misoprostol on a day when you can stay at home for most of the day.

Most people have bleeding and cramping that is mild to severe. The cramping usually lasts about 24 hours but the bleeding may continue for two weeks or more. Taking pain relief tablets is recommended. Having a support person at home with you is also important.

Other side effects may include:

- fever
- chills
- nausea
- vomiting

The staff at the clinic or the doctor will discuss what to expect and give you a 24-hour aftercare phone number. You will need to have a follow up blood test 7 days after you take the first medication and you will have a follow up visit to the clinic 14-21 days after taking the medications to check that the abortion is complete.

SURGICAL OR MEDICAL ABORTION: WHAT IS BEST FOR ME?

There are many reasons why you might choose to have a surgical abortion or a medical abortion. That decision can depend on the duration of your pregnancy, your feelings about having a surgical procedure and your feelings about having a medical abortion in your own home. If you're not sure what is best for you, Family Planning NSW can speak to you about your options.

SURGICAL

Timing

A surgical abortion is usually not performed until six weeks of pregnancy. It becomes more expensive after 12 weeks of pregnancy.

Process

- surgical procedure in a clinic
- light anaesthetic usually required
- procedure usually takes 5-10 minutes with up to four hours recovery time in the clinic
- nil to light bleeding for up to two weeks
- antibiotics recommended
- may only require one clinic visit

Supports and recovery

A responsible adult will need to accompany you home from your visit as you are not able to drive following the procedure.

Side effects

- may feel tired due to anaesthetic
- may have bleeding and mild cramping which usually lasts less than two weeks

Cost and availability

- most services are provided in community-based clinics
- cost is variable

Complications

- complications are rare but may include infection requiring antibiotic treatment
- the doctor will explain the risks of a surgical abortion to you

MEDICAL

Timing

A medical abortion needs to be done before nine weeks of pregnancy.

Process

- medications taken in your own home
- lead to similar effects as a miscarriage with cramping and bleeding which is heavy for the first few hours
- cramping may be mild to severe
- light bleeding usually lasts about 2 weeks but can continue for 4-6 weeks
- pain relief tablets are recommended
- a second visit to the clinic may be required to make sure the abortion is complete

Supports and recovery

It is good to have someone to support you at home for at least 24 hours.

Side effects

- fever
- chills
- nausea
- vomiting
- bleeding
- cramping

Cost and availability

- most services are provided in community-based clinics
- cost is variable

Complications

- complications are rare but may include infection requiring antibiotic treatment
- the doctor will explain the risks of a medical abortion to you

THE COST OF ABORTION IN NSW

The cost of abortion in NSW is different at each clinic. It is a good idea to contact clinics directly to find out about the cost. The cost of an abortion will be partially covered by the Medicare rebate.

Other things that will impact on the cost of an abortion are:

- if you have Medicare card
- whether you have a concession card
- how many weeks pregnant you are
- if you choose to have a surgical or medical abortion

The cost of surgical abortions will rise after 12 weeks of pregnancy. Costs will be much higher after 16 weeks of pregnancy.

The cost of the medication for a medical abortion is subsidised by the government if you have a Medicare card. The consultation and ultrasound may have a "gap" fee.

LEGAL INFORMATION

Abortion is legal in all states and territories of Australia under certain circumstances and when carried out by a registered health professional.

In NSW, abortion is legal, but there are different requirements depending on your stage of pregnancy. You can request an abortion up until 22 weeks of pregnancy. If you need more information around this, you can speak to your healthcare professional.

You must have enough information to understand your decision and consent to have an abortion. Your partner or family cannot decide if you should have an abortion or not, although it can be helpful to make this decision together.

If you would like more information about having an abortion (including if you are experiencing financial difficulties), you can call the Family Planning NSW Talkline, or make an appointment to see a health professional at a Family Planning NSW clinic near you. You can also talk to your GP, a health care provider, or a social worker.

Contact Talkline on 1300 658 886 or www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline. Talking to our reproductive and sexual health nurses is confidential and anonymous.

Contraception

Whatever you decide, it is important to consider what contraception option you might use in the future.

Contraception can be started immediately after an abortion or birth. There are many methods of contraception available. Long acting reversible contraceptive methods are the most effective. These include the contraceptive implant and the intra-uterine devices (IUDs).

More information about the range of contraception options available can be found at the Family Planning NSW website: <https://www.fpnsw.org.au/health-information/individuals/contraception>

You can also speak with a reproductive and sexual health nurse on Family Planning NSW Talkline on 1300 658 886 or www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline. Talking to the nurse is confidential and anonymous.



Talking to your partner involved in the pregnancy

It is up to you if you will involve your partner in the decision-making process. This will depend on the current circumstances of the relationship.

The Family Law Act 1975 talks about the rights and obligations of men in a pregnancy, whether they are involved in the decision-making process or not. Some things that are talked about include:

- the financial responsibility of the father, once the child is born, this can be worked out by the parents or by the Child Support Agency
- the father has the right to a meaningful relationship with his child
- both parents may be directed to participate in mediation to facilitate the development of a parenting plan

You are the only person who can (or cannot) consent to an abortion. No one else can make you have or not have an abortion.

Both of the birth parents must consent to a child's adoption. How partners participate in the decision-making process will differ depending on the circumstances of the relationship. You may want to attend counselling together or your partner may want to talk to someone to discuss their own feelings about the pregnancy.

For further information about where men might find support they can contact Mensline: 1300 78 99 78 or visit www.mensline.org.au/home.html



Safety in your relationship

In a healthy relationship there is respect for each other's values, opinions and boundaries as well as communication, trust and support for each other. All relationships can have challenges. However, there is a difference between challenging moments and unsafe moments in a relationship. Violence and control in a relationship can lead to unsafe moments.

Some violent and controlling partners see getting someone pregnant and making them have a child as a way of keeping them under control. This is called reproductive coercion and is a form of domestic violence. Reproductive coercion is when you do not have control over pregnancy decisions in your relationship.

Some examples of how reproductive coercion may affect your pregnancy include:

- putting pressure on you to become pregnant when you do not want to be
- damaging or removing contraception to get you pregnant
- stopping you from having an abortion when you want one
- pressuring you to have an abortion when you don't want one

Domestic violence and reproductive coercion can happen to anyone. No one has the right to hurt you or make you live in fear. It is important to think about safety in your relationship during the decision-making process. You should have the right to decide if, and when you become pregnant. If you would like support in discussing how this may affect your decision-making process make an appointment with a Family Planning NSW social worker for counselling and or practical support: 02 8752 4369.

Family Planning NSW respects your right to live without fear of violence. You have the right to control and decide freely on all matters related to your reproductive and sexual health.

Making a decision

There can be a number of things that might affect the decision you make about an unplanned pregnancy. If you are unsure of what to do, you are not alone. While some people know what they want straight away, others find the decision-making process difficult. You can record your thoughts and feelings below to help you "make sense" of what to do next. It might also be helpful to take the information you write down to a Family Planning NSW clinic, your GP, or other health professional or support worker so you can talk through any issues or questions you may have. There are many things to consider when making a decision and often this can be a stressful time:

- taking your time (you might be limited by your stage of pregnancy)
- allowing yourself to explore and consider all the options
- expecting that your feelings about your options and decision might change from day to day
- accessing information about the practicalities to support your decision (for example available support networks)
- asking:
 - is there anyone I can talk to while I make the decision?
 - how might they react?
 - who will support me in my decision making
- talking to a counsellor or health professional
- looking after yourself physically and emotionally

Be kind to yourself and trust that you will make the right decision for **YOU**.

HOW WILL THIS FEEL IN THE FUTURE?

The decision you make is based on your current circumstances. You might want to write down or keep records of your decision-making process. Circumstances can change over time and in 5 or 10 years you may look back and forget what the reasons were.

How do I feel about...

PARENTING

I feel this way because _____

What more do I need to know about continuing the pregnancy and choosing to be a parent? _____

ABORTION

I feel this way because _____

What more do I need to know about having an abortion? _____

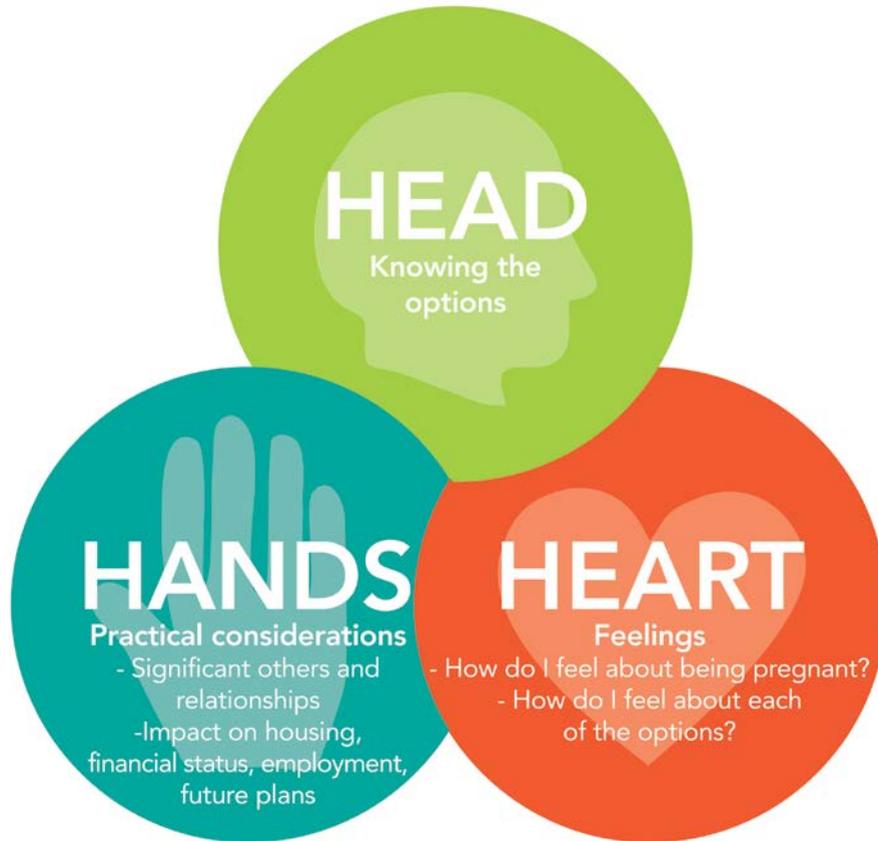
ADOPTION/FOSTER CARE

I feel this way because _____

What more do I need to know about continuing the pregnancy and choosing to be a parent? _____

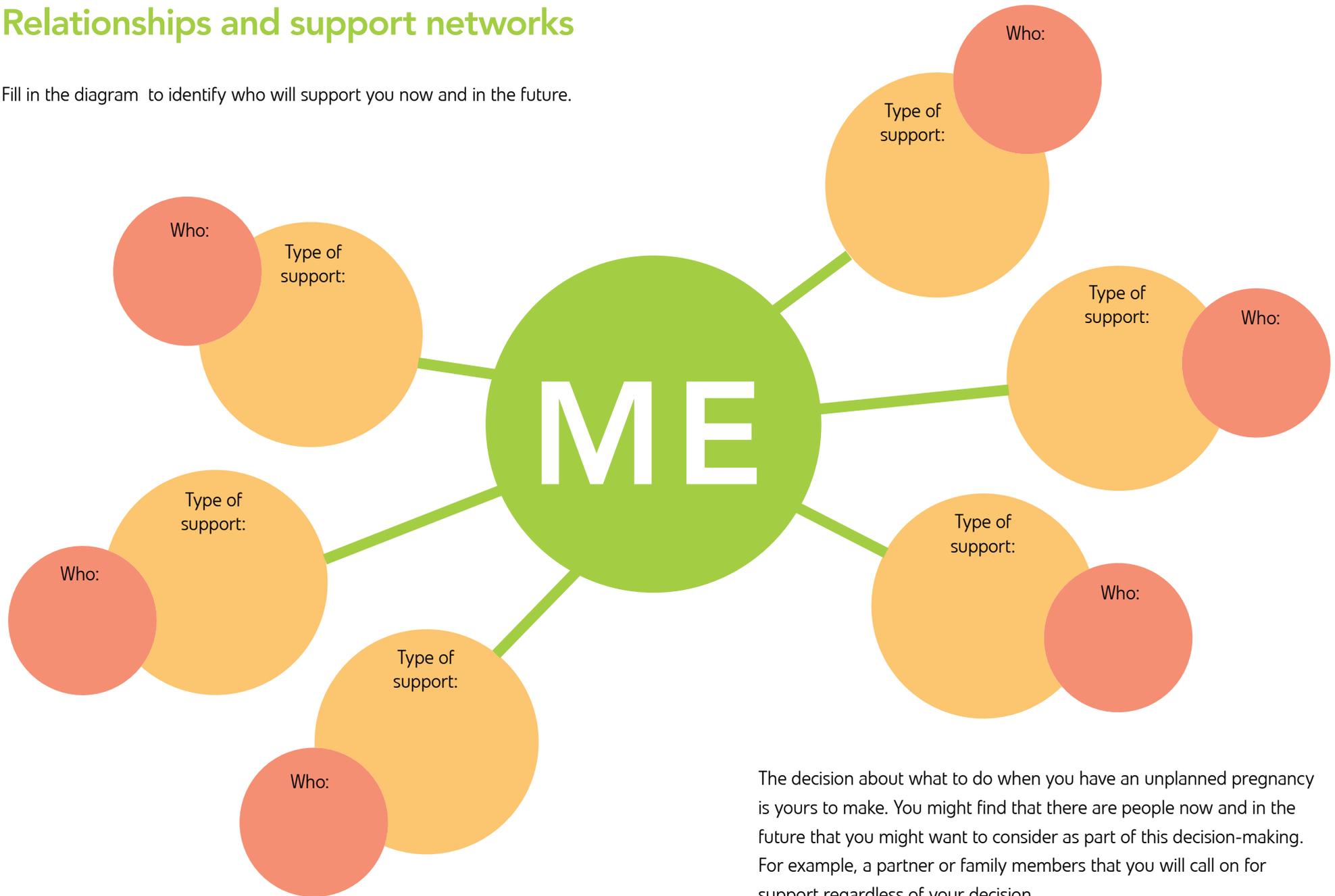
Things to consider

There are many things that can influence your decision. These might include having enough information about your options, the practical considerations for you and how you feel.



Relationships and support networks

Fill in the diagram to identify who will support you now and in the future.



The decision about what to do when you have an unplanned pregnancy is yours to make. You might find that there are people now and in the future that you might want to consider as part of this decision-making. For example, a partner or family members that you will call on for support regardless of your decision.

Weighing it all up

The good things about:

	In the next 12 weeks	1 year from now	5 years from now	In general
Parenting				
Abortion				
Adoption / Foster care				

The difficult things about:

	In the next 12 weeks	1 year from now	5 years from now	In general
Parenting				
Abortion				
Adoption / Foster care				

Referral and resource information

For further information and support about pregnancy options please contact the following services. They have a range of information and help available.

FAMILY PLANNING NSW TALKLINE 1300 658 886

Family Planning NSW Talkline is a confidential telephone, email and web-chat service staffed by experts in reproductive and sexual health. Family Planning NSW Talkline is open 8.30am to 5pm weekdays for information and referral advice. Further information is also available at www.fpnsw.org.au/talkline

FAMILY PLANNING NSW CLINICS

Family Planning NSW has five fixed clinics in NSW (Ashfield, Fairfield, Penrith, Newcastle and Dubbo) where you can seek advice and support about pregnancy options. Further information about making an appointment is available from Family Planning NSW Talkline or at www.fpnsw.org.au/clinics

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For further **information about your options** contact Children by Choice (Brisbane, QLD) on (07) 3357 5377. They provide free and confidential support and counselling, covering all options for an unplanned pregnancy. Children by Choice is a pro-choice and women centred service, providing non-judgemental and respectful advice. Access to their information line is available from 9am-5pm Monday to Friday. Further information is also available at: www.childrenbychoice.org.au

If you need more detailed **information about continuing a pregnancy and advice on raising a child**, contact Pregnancy, Birth and Baby on 1800 882 436. They are a phone and online service providing information, advice and counselling about pregnancy, childbirth and your baby's first five years. This includes access to 24 hour phone counselling for women, their partners, friends and relatives. Further information is also available at: www.pregnancybirthandbaby.org.au/about-pregnancy-birth-and-baby

If you are **in distress and need crisis counselling**, contact Lifeline on 131 114. Lifeline offers a 24 hour, 7 days a week telephone counselling service, online chat for crisis support, suicide prevention and mental health support services. Further information is also available at: www.lifeline.org.au

If you and your partner/family are having **difficulty deciding what decision to make and would like counselling support** contact Relationships Australia. Relationships Australia 1300 364 277 (NSW) provides relationship support service for individuals, families and communities providing services including individual, couple and family counselling and family dispute resolution. Ring the number provided, or visit the website to find your local service. Further information is also available at: www.relationships.org.au



www.fpnsw.org.au | [talkline 1300 658 886](tel:1300658886) | [shop](#)

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