

Think you might be pregnant?



About BPAS

British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS) is the UK's leading abortion care service.

We offer unplanned pregnancy counselling and abortion treatment. We've been treating women with unplanned or unwanted pregnancy for almost 50 years.

Nearly all the women we see have their care paid for by the NHS. We also provide contraception, STI testing and vasectomy.

About this booklet

We produced this booklet to help the thousands of young people who have an unplanned or unwanted pregnancy every year.

If you feel like you have no-one to turn to, or don't want to discuss it with someone who knows you, then you can get advice from your local family planning clinic, Brook Centre or BPAS (see our 'Information & advice' page at the back of this booklet).

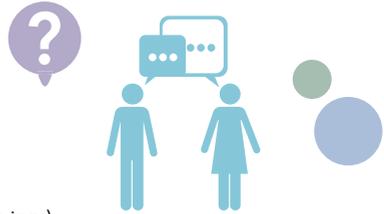
All of these organisations deal with young people every day, so they understand what you are going through.

What are the signs of pregnancy?

Signs of pregnancy can develop a week after conception.

These can vary, but may include:

- Your period being late
- A lighter or shorter period than normal
- Swelling or tenderness in the breasts
- Sensitive nipples
- Peeing more than usual
- Feeling sick or being sick
- Tiredness and feeling irritable
- Mood changes
- Appetite changes (going off certain foods or food cravings)
- Stomach cramps, period-like pains or feeling bloated



If you experience any of these signs (and especially if your period is late), you should do a pregnancy test.

How does pregnancy happen?

Pregnancy can occur when a man and woman have sex without using contraception or they experience contraception failure (for instance a condom splits or a pill is forgotten or taken late). A sperm can then fertilise an egg by joining with it.

Not sure if you are pregnant?

Pharmacies and major supermarkets sell **home pregnancy tests** costing less than £5. These are reliable if you follow the instructions carefully.

Most pregnancy tests work as soon as your period is 1 day late. If your periods are not regular, take the test 3 weeks after unprotected sex.

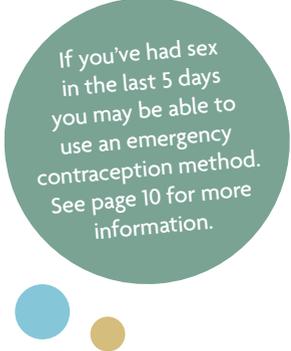
Pregnancy testing

You can have a test for **FREE** at:

- Most GP surgeries
- Community contraceptive clinics
- Some genitourinary medicine (GUM) clinics
- Sexual health clinics (these offer contraceptive and STI testing services)
- Some young peoples' services

You will be asked the date of the first day of your last period.

If you have a friend or relative you can trust, then take them along too.



If you've had sex in the last 5 days you may be able to use an emergency contraception method. See page 10 for more information.

Pregnancy test results

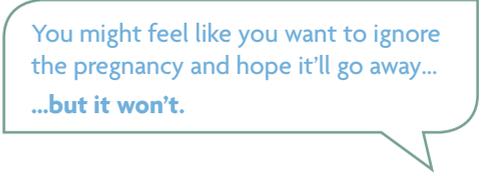
When you get your result you will know if you are pregnant (**POSITIVE**) or not pregnant (**NEGATIVE**).

If the test result is **NEGATIVE** and you don't want to get pregnant in the future, you need to think about the suitability of your contraception. See our guide 'Want to know about contraception?' or the contraception pages at www.bpas.org.

If your result is **POSITIVE** then you have 3 choices and **YOU** need to decide what to do. There are many people you can talk to who will be able to help you to make this decision.

You could:

- Continue the pregnancy and become a parent
- End the pregnancy with abortion
- Continue the pregnancy and choose adoption



You might feel like you want to ignore the pregnancy and hope it'll go away...
...but it won't.

Who can I talk to?

Once your pregnancy is confirmed, it is important to make plans for the next step as soon as you can.

It is normal to have mixed feelings about being pregnant when you didn't plan to be. It may help to talk about your options with someone you trust. If you do not feel that you can turn to the father or your parents, perhaps you can approach an older family member such as a sister, brother, aunt, cousin or grandparent. A friend, school counsellor, school nurse or doctor might be another option.

You might feel that you want someone to tell you what to do as this can seem easier than making your own mind up. The final decision **must be your own**.

An unplanned pregnancy can make you feel confused, frightened, shocked and lonely.



Seeking help

Some organisations offering free pregnancy testing and counselling are strongly opposed to abortion and will not discuss all the options available to you in a balanced way.

Before you make an appointment for help with your unplanned pregnancy, it is a good idea to ask the organisation if they can arrange an appointment for abortion treatment, if you decide on that option.



Your options

It might help to think about how other women felt about becoming a parent, abortion, or adoption. Have a look at some of the things they say and perhaps write down your thoughts.

We can arrange for a pregnancy test, offer counselling regarding your options and provide an abortion should you decide that is what you want to do.

Become a parent

“My boyfriend and I both want a child”

“I don’t have enough money to bring up a child properly”

“I think I am too young to become a parent”

Adoption or fostering

“I like the idea of giving someone else the child they can’t create themselves”

“I don’t think I could give up the child after 9 months of pregnancy and giving birth”

Abortion

“My religious beliefs are against abortion”

“I could postpone being a parent until later in life when I feel ready”

Whatever decision you make, it’s important to take action as early as possible. Arrange maternity care promptly if you decide to continue the pregnancy, or arrange an abortion as soon as you can.

FACT

Having an abortion will not affect your chances of having a child in the future.



What is abortion?

An abortion is when the pregnancy is ended so that it does not result in the birth of a child. Sometimes this is called 'termination of pregnancy'.

The pregnancy is ended, either by taking pills (medical abortion) or by surgery (surgical abortion).

Is abortion legal?

Yes, abortion is legal. In non-NHS clinics it is possible up to 24 weeks of pregnancy.

After 24 weeks of pregnancy, abortion can only be carried out in an NHS hospital in very exceptional circumstances.

Is abortion safe?

Yes, early gestation abortions are the simplest and safest. Complications are rare, but all procedures do have some risks.

What happens if I choose abortion?

Make arrangements as soon as you can to see your GP, talk to Brook or arrange a consultation with BPAS to discuss the treatment options available to you.

Call **03457 30 40 30** to book a consultation with BPAS.

FACT
9 out of 10 abortions take place in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy - which is within 8 weeks of missing a period.

Do my parents have to know?

Not if you do not want them to. Although we won't talk to your parents against your wishes, we do encourage you to tell a parent or another adult who you trust, so that they can support you through this time.

Our staff will make sure you are fully aware of what's involved with an abortion. If you are sure it's what you want to do and you understand the procedure and everything that may happen, you can agree to the abortion yourself even if you are aged under 16.

FACT
Even if you are under 16, doctors have to keep anything you tell them completely private.



Will anyone be told about the abortion?

No. We won't tell anyone about your treatment without your permission.

Doctors, nurses and other health workers are not allowed to give out information about you without your consent unless they think that you or another person is in serious danger. In these exceptional cases they would try to discuss it with you first.

Our staff will ask you whether they can inform your GP as it is always best for them to know your full medical details.

If you choose to have an abortion, you do not need to get the agreement of the father. However, some men will want to be involved in the decision and can be very supportive.

It is up to you whether you tell the father or involve him in your choice. He has no legal right to be informed of your decision.

Do I have to pay?

In most areas of the country, abortions are paid for by the NHS and are carried out at an NHS hospital or BPAS clinic. Your local NHS contraception clinic or GP can advise you of the services available to you.

Call BPAS on **03457 30 40 30**, and ask if we can treat you on behalf of the NHS (at no charge to you). If you cannot get an NHS funded abortion at BPAS, we can treat you but there will be a charge.

What happens next?

You will attend a consultation appointment where you can ask any questions you may have. You will have a scan to confirm how long you have been pregnant and discuss the various types of abortion available to you.

Different methods of abortion are available, depending on your medical history and how long you have been pregnant. You will be given more information about the method of treatment you choose and how to prepare for your treatment.

Can I bring someone with me?

You will find it really helpful to bring a family member, friend or boyfriend to support you at the treatment clinic.

If you are under 16, a female adult can stay with you during most of the treatment. Otherwise your friend or relative may stay with you until you go for treatment, and you can rejoin them in the waiting room afterwards.

If you choose treatment with conscious sedation (or if we recommend a general anaesthetic), you will need an adult to accompany you home when you are discharged from the clinic.



What kinds of abortion are available?

Medical abortion

Abortion pill up to 10 weeks

- Up to 10 weeks of pregnancy
- Involves taking medicine to cause an early miscarriage (you may bleed heavily and pass large clots)
- No surgery or anaesthetic involved

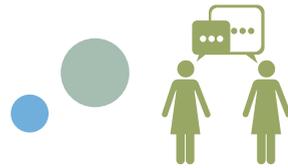
Abortion pill after 10 weeks

- 10 to 24 weeks of pregnancy
- Involves taking medicine to cause the womb to contract and push out the pregnancy
- From 22 weeks an injection to the womb is also required
- 2 visits to the clinic are required
- Sometimes an overnight stay may be required at the second visit

Surgical abortion

Vacuum aspiration

- Up to 15 weeks
- Involves removing the pregnancy by gentle suction
- 1 visit to the clinic, going home the same day
- Can be done under local anaesthetic, with conscious sedation and sometimes under general anaesthetic



Dilatation & Evacuation

- Between 15 to 24 weeks of pregnancy
- A doctor will remove the pregnancy using narrow forceps passed through the neck of the womb
- Carried out with conscious sedation or under general anaesthetic
- 1 visit to the clinic, usually returning home the same day for abortions up to 20 weeks
- Treatments over 20 weeks may require more than 1 visit or a local overnight stay

More details and videos about “What to expect on the day” can be viewed at www.bpas.org.

Will I feel anything?

Abortion pill up to 10 weeks - this involves passing the pregnancy at home. You will experience some strong cramps which can be very painful, but the clinic staff will advise you on pain relief and other possible side effects.

Abortion pill after 10 weeks - this involves passing the pregnancy while you are awake and you are likely to experience some pain when the womb pushes out the pregnancy. The staff at the clinic will give you pain relief.

Surgical abortion with local anaesthetic - this involves an injection into the neck of the womb and you stay awake during the procedure. The procedure can be uncomfortable but a nurse will be with you and can give you pain relief.

Surgical abortion with conscious sedation - you are awake, relaxed and sleepy. Anxiety and pain is reduced.

Surgical abortion with general anaesthetic - you are asleep during the treatment and will not feel any pain. Afterwards you may get period-like cramps.

What happens afterwards?

Most women recover quickly after an abortion. How much pain and bleeding you experience afterwards can vary depending on the type of treatment you have. The nurses at the clinic will give you plenty of information on how to look after yourself at home. With some of the treatments, you will be well enough to return to school, college or work the next day. With others you may need to rest for longer.

How will I feel after the abortion?

Everyone is different. It often helps if you have been able to involve a friend or relative as you can talk to them about your feelings.

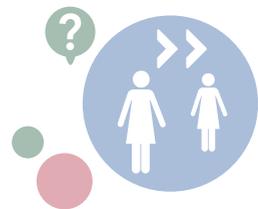
You won't forget that you've had an abortion, but most women who choose an abortion don't regret it - especially when they have thought carefully about all of their reasons first.

It is normal to feel a range of different emotions, often all at once:

- Relief
- Optimism
- Freedom
- Anger
- Regret
- Guilt

These feelings do not usually last for long and may come and go.

BPAS offers post-abortion counselling if you feel that you would like to talk about your feelings.



Emergency contraception

Emergency contraception can be used to help prevent an unwanted pregnancy up to 5 days after sex.

If your contraception fails (you forget to take your pill or the condom splits) or you didn't use contraception at all, you can use emergency contraception, but you need to act fast.

There are 2 kinds of emergency contraception; the emergency contraceptive pill (morning after pill) and the copper intra uterine device (IUD or coil).

FACT

An egg lives for just a day after ovulation but sperm can live inside a woman's body for around 6 days.

Emergency contraceptive pill (morning after pill)

There are two different kinds of emergency contraception pill (morning after pill); Levonelle® and ellaOne®.

The pills work by preventing or delaying the release of an egg from the ovary (ovulation), and may also affect the lining of the womb so a fertilised egg cannot settle there.

Levonelle® can be taken up to 72 hours (3 days) after unprotected sex.

ellaOne® can be used up to 120 hours (5 days) after unprotected sex.

The emergency intrauterine device (IUD)

An IUD, which is sometimes called the 'coil' is the most effective method of emergency contraception. It can be fitted up to 5 days after unprotected sex, or up to 5 days after the date of expected ovulation (release of egg from the ovary).

About emergency contraception

Emergency contraception is available from:

- GPs
- Brook Centres (for under 25s)
- Pharmacies
- Family planning centres

Get advice on emergency contraception as soon as possible after having unprotected sex.

Emergency contraception does not protect you against sexually transmitted infections (STIs). You can attend a genito-urinary medicine (GUM) clinic for free and confidential advice about STIs. Ring the National Sexual Health helpline on **0300 123 7123** or see www.nhs.uk to locate your nearest GUM clinic.

Information and advice



BPAS

BPAS provide pregnancy testing, emergency contraception, counselling for unplanned pregnancy and abortion treatment. Most of the women we see have their treatment paid for by the NHS. Call 03457 30 40 30 or visit www.bpas.org

Brook

Provide free and confidential sexual health advice and contraception for under 25s. The website has tons of useful information. Visit www.brook.org.uk

Rape Crisis

Rape Crisis centres provide a range of specialist services for those who experience rape, sexual violence or abuse at any time. Visit www.rapecrisis.org.uk

NHS national sexual health helpline

NHS provide information and advice on contraception, sexual health and local services. Call 0300 123 7123 or visit www.nhs.uk

Information and advice (if you continue your pregnancy)

Department for Work and Pensions

For information regarding maternity allowance, child benefits, child tax credit and support visit www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators

National Childbirth Trust

The NCT is a charity for parents. They provide information and support to parents through pregnancy, birth and early days of parenthood. For information and advice on pregnancy and birth visit www.nct.org.uk

CoramBAAF Adoption and Fostering Academy

CoramBAAF works with everyone involved with adoption and fostering across the UK. Call 020 7421 2600 or visit www.corambaaf.org.uk/info/pregnant



Social Services

Google social services in your area for contact information

BPAS - here if you need us.

03457 30 40 30



www.bpas.org

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