

A legally binding *Adoption Plan* will be negotiated between the birth parents and the adoptive parents, which states how often and what information will be shared. It also includes the type of contact between you, the child and the adoptive family.

After adoption

Once the adoption is finalised, Fostering and Adoption Services can assist you with the implementation of the adoption plan, such as exchange of information, setting up contact and mediation services if required.

After adoption, you may experience a range of feelings and these may change over a lifetime. These feelings can include relief, happiness, sadness or guilt. Counselling services are available.

Termination (abortion)

A termination is a way of ending a pregnancy. Terminations are legal in Western Australia under 20 weeks of pregnancy as long as the person has given their informed consent.

If you are considering a termination you must see a doctor who will provide you with information about any medical risks, as well as offer you the opportunity for counselling. The doctor can then give you a referral for the termination. If the doctor doesn't offer you this service, find another doctor who will support you.

The cost of a termination varies and depends on your location, your stage of pregnancy, whether you have a Health Care Card and your Medicare or private insurance status.

It is normal to feel a range of emotions such as fear, relief, sadness and guilt. Pre and post termination counselling is available.

The procedure

There are two types of termination available in WA, depending on how many weeks pregnant you are. Medical termination is ending the pregnancy by using medication. Surgical termination is a procedure using gentle suction to remove the pregnancy from the uterus. The doctor will discuss this further.

Under 16 years of age

The law says that if you are under 16 years of age and still living at home, a parent or legal guardian must be informed about your possible termination. Parent(s) or legal guardian(s) need to be given the opportunity to participate in the counselling and consultation process between the doctor and you, but the final choice is yours.

In special circumstances you can apply to the Children's Court for an order to proceed with a termination without parental or legal guardian consent.

Information and support

SHQ offers non-judgemental support, including free counselling, covering all unplanned pregnancy options. Phone counselling is also available. If you decide to have a termination, our doctors can discuss a referral.

For more information contact:

SHQ (Sexual Health Quarters)
70 Roe Street, Northbridge WA 6003
Ph 08 9227 6177 | info@shq.org.au

Sexual Health Helpline
Metropolitan callers 08 9227 6178
Country callers 1800 198 205
sexhelp@shq.org.au

Counselling
70 Roe Street, Northbridge WA 6003
Ph 08 9228 3693 | counselling@shq.org.au

shq.org.au



SHQ is on Whadjuk land. We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country across Australia.

Help! I think I'm pregnant

Consider your choices



For some people, decisions around pregnancy are relatively simple. For others, the decision-making process is more complex.

This brochure will help you to consider your choices. Information and support is available and you don't have to make this decision alone. If you are not getting the support you want, you can go elsewhere for help.

Are you pregnant?

If you think you are pregnant, **get confirmation as early as possible**. A missed period is the most obvious sign, but doesn't always mean you are pregnant.

Other pregnancy symptoms include:

- nausea and vomiting
- sore breasts
- increased urination
- tiredness.

There are two types of simple and accurate pregnancy tests available.

1. Urine testing kits are available from pharmacies, supermarkets and health clinics. Results are available within minutes.
2. Blood tests may be used under certain circumstances.

I'm pregnant – now what?

Talking to a doctor about your options may help you decide what is right for you. Most people also find it helpful to talk to someone they trust.

Professional counselling can help clarify your thoughts and feelings by exploring all of the options available to you when a pregnancy occurs.

It is your pregnancy and the choice is yours to:

- continue the pregnancy and raise your child
- continue the pregnancy and place your child for adoption
- end the pregnancy (have a termination).

There isn't always an ideal solution to an unplanned pregnancy and you may not feel any of these options are right for you. By being informed, you can make the best decision for you at this time.

Things to consider

- What advice and support is available to you?
- How do you feel about each option?
- Are you feeling pressured to do what is best for others?
- How might you feel about your decision afterwards?
- How will you cope physically, emotionally and financially with each option?
- What effect will your decision have on your relationships?
- How will your decision affect your life now or your plans for the future?

Continuing the pregnancy

Parenthood involves commitment and ongoing responsibility. You may want to consider the following issues:



Health – Visit a doctor to check your existing health and to receive ongoing antenatal (pre-birth) care. You may need to re-think some of your lifestyle choices such as diet, exercise, smoking, and drug and alcohol intake. Prepare yourself by attending childbirth classes.



Housing – Consider how suitable your current accommodation is for raising a child. Contact the State Government's Housing Authority if you require assistance.



Money – Contact the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) to see if you qualify for any benefits. Both parents are required to financially support the child.



Parenting and support – Both parents have rights and responsibilities to the child even if you are no longer together. It may take time to adjust to parenthood and learn what works best for you. Seek support by reading parenting books, visiting online forums or talking to other parents or health professionals.

Adoption

Adoption provides a family for a child who is unable to live with their birth parents. It is a permanent legal arrangement where your child becomes the child of the adopting couple or person. Full parental rights are transferred to the adoptive family and all legal responsibilities are removed.

If you are considering adoption, contact Fostering and Adoption Services at the Department for Child Protection and Family Support to discuss your options. A staff member will help you to understand the process and you will be offered counselling and support.

Before adoption

You may find it helpful to place your child in temporary pre-adoptive foster care while you consider your options and feelings.

If you decide on adoption, both parents must sign an adoption consent form (or in some cases this may not be needed), after which you have a further 28 days to change your mind and remove your consent.

Proceeding with the adoption

During the adoption process you can be involved in selecting the adoptive parents you feel will be most suitable for your child.

Under the Adoption Act (1994), adoptions in Western Australia are open. This means the child, the birth parents and the adoptive parents are aware of each other's identity.