

# Pregnancy options in the Northern Territory

This booklet helps people in the Northern Territory to make decisions when facing an unplanned pregnancy or an unexpected problem with a pregnancy.

# Contents

<b>Planned and unplanned pregnancy</b> .....	<b>3</b>
I had unprotected sex – what do I do? .....	3
I think I'm pregnant - what do I do? .....	3
How many weeks pregnant am I?.....	3
The pregnancy is planned but there is a problem with the pregnancy and I don't know what to do?.....	4
<b>Continuing the pregnancy and parenting</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>Adoption</b> .....	<b>5</b>
What do I do if I think I want to place a child for adoption?.....	5
<b>Termination of pregnancy (also called an abortion)</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Early medical termination of pregnancy.....	5
Surgical termination of pregnancy.....	6
What to do if I think I want a termination of pregnancy?.....	6
<b>Information over the internet</b> .....	<b>6</b>

## Planned and unplanned pregnancy

Every woman has the right to make her own health choices. This booklet will help you understand your options regarding your pregnancy.

### I had unprotected sex – what do I do?

If you have been sexually assaulted, had unprotected sex or contraception has failed (for example a condom 'broke') and you don't want to get pregnant, you may be able to take the emergency contraceptive pill (which used to be known as the 'morning after pill').

Emergency contraceptive pills **MUST BE TAKEN WITHIN FIVE (5) days** after having unprotected sex. They work best when taken as soon as possible after having unprotected sex.

These pills are taken at a very early stage, before it would be possible to tell if a pregnancy would happen. They are to stop it from happening and are very different from the medicine needed once it has been confirmed you are pregnant.

Emergency contraceptive pills are available from most pharmacies after you talk with a pharmacist. You do not need a prescription. If you live in a remote community these pills are usually available from your local health care centre (clinic).

### I think I'm pregnant - what do I do?

Many women and people who can get pregnant (as many as one in three women) have an unplanned or unexpected pregnancy at some time in their life. If you think you are pregnant you need to confirm this with a pregnancy test.

#### Options for a pregnancy test include:

- using a home pregnancy test from a pharmacy or supermarket
- seeing your local doctor who can do a urine or blood test
- going to your local health centre (clinic) in a remote community
- visiting/making an appointment at Family Planning Welfare NT (in Darwin and Palmerston).

### How many weeks pregnant am I?

Your pregnancy is calculated from the first day of your last normal menstrual period. Your pregnancy is then counted in weeks and days rather than months.

Your doctor, nurse or health practitioner can help you work out how many weeks pregnant you are. This will be done with an ultrasound scan.

### Pregnancy has three parts

#### Each part is called a trimester:

- The first trimester is from the beginning to 12 weeks.
- The second trimester is from 13 weeks to 28 weeks.
- The third trimester is from 29 to 40 weeks.

## The pregnancy is planned but there is a problem with the pregnancy and I don't know what to do?

You may have a planned pregnancy but find out there is a problem with the pregnancy. This can be a very concerning and confusing time. You will need to get as much information as you can about the pregnancy, including from your doctor, other specialists and results of various tests.

You can then discuss all of your options with your doctor or others, such as counsellors.

### Getting support

Experiencing an unplanned pregnancy or an unexpected problem with a pregnancy can be a confusing time. You may or may not want to talk about your pregnancy but it may be helpful to talk with someone you can trust who can give you unbiased information.

There are some useful websites listed at the end of this booklet that can provide information and assist you to make a decision.

### Options for your pregnancy

If you have an unplanned or unexpected problem with a pregnancy you have three options:

- continuing with the pregnancy with a view to parenting the child
- continuing with the pregnancy and placing the child with an agency for adoption
- terminating the pregnancy (also called abortion).

## Continuing the pregnancy and parenting

Choosing to become a parent or raise a child is a life changing decision. You may want to think about:

- possible support from your partner, parents, extended family and friends
- your physical and mental health
- your use of alcohol and drugs before and during the pregnancy
- where you will live and your financial situation
- your safety and wellbeing, e.g. pressure from your partner or family, domestic and family violence issues
- your hopes and goals for your life
- any fears you have about continuing the pregnancy and ways to deal with these fears.

### If you choose to continue with your pregnancy

Make an appointment with your doctor who will help you to plan the next steps in your pregnancy, for example, arranging blood tests and advising you about options for your pregnancy care.

## Adoption

Adoption is where the legal rights and responsibility for raising a baby and child are permanently transferred from the birth parents to the adoptive parents. Once the baby is adopted the birth parents are no longer the legal parents of the child.

The Northern Territory Adoption Unit is a part of the Northern Territory Government Department of Territory Families Housing and Communities and is responsible for adoption arrangements in the Northern Territory.

If you make an adoption plan you can choose to be involved in the process of selecting adoptive parents.

If you give birth but need time to make a decision about adoption, the baby can be placed into foster care. While you are making your decision you can still visit the baby in foster care.

The consent process (agreeing to adoption) cannot start until the baby is at least 23 days old. An adoption consent form cannot be signed until the baby is 30 days old. Over this time you can have counselling about the adoption process and your options. You have another 30 days after this time to change your mind.

## What do I do if I think I want to place a child for adoption?

Contact the Adoption Unit in the Department of Territory Families Housing and Communities

T: 08 8922 7443 or 08 8922 5519.

E: [tfhc.adoptions@nt.gov.au](mailto:tfhc.adoptions@nt.gov.au)

P: PO Box 37037, Winnellie NT 0820

The unit will make an appointment for you to discuss your options and the adoption process.

You can visit the adoption [website](#) for more information: <https://nt.gov.au/community/child-protection-and-care/adoption>.

## Termination of pregnancy (also called an abortion)

Having a termination of pregnancy is relatively common in Australia. Around one in three women in Australia have at least one termination of pregnancy in their lifetime and most happen in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy.

**The type of termination of pregnancy and where you have it will depend on a number of factors you will need to discuss with your doctor.**

See the brochure "Having a Termination of Pregnancy in the Northern Territory" for more information.

## Early medical termination of pregnancy

### *What is this?*

- a low risk medical procedure
- you must be no more than nine weeks (or 63 days) pregnant
- if your doctor recommends a termination after nine weeks pregnancy, this must occur in a hospital
- you will see a doctor who is trained in giving medicine for terminating a pregnancy
- you will need an ultrasound to check how pregnant you are
- you will take two different medicines (called MS-2Step) prescribed by a trained doctor

- it can take three to four days for the termination to be complete
- you will experience pain and bleeding
- your doctor will talk with you about what you need during the termination and check you can get appropriate care in the unlikely event of a medical emergency.
- your doctor will ask if you have:
  - a working phone and phone coverage
  - reliable transport and road access, including wet season access
  - safe accommodation, including privacy and a toilet and shower facility
  - a support person or people for the whole time of the termination.
- on rare occasions the process does not work fully and you may need extra medicine or a separate surgical termination.
- You will need a health check-up 14 to 21 days after the process to make sure the termination is complete and to discuss contraception options.

## Surgical termination of pregnancy

### **What is this?**

- Surgical termination of pregnancy is available in consultation with one doctor up to 24 weeks gestation. After 24 weeks gestation, two doctors need to be consulted about your termination of pregnancy.
- In most cases you are given a general anaesthetic and usually you can go home on the same day of the procedure.
- You will experience pain and bleeding after a surgical termination and will need a support person to bring you home from hospital.
- There are always risks associated with surgery or anaesthetic.

## What to do if I think I want a termination of pregnancy?

Speak with your doctor, nurse or health practitioner about your options for a termination of pregnancy and read the *"Having a Termination of Pregnancy in the Northern Territory"* booklet.

## Information over the internet

Be aware that some services may not provide unbiased information about pregnancy options. You will need to consider the information for yourself and decide what is best for you.

Listed are some suggested websites that can help you make a decision about an unplanned pregnancy.

### **Children by Choice**

This is a Queensland based woman-centred counselling, information and referral service which is pro-choice, non-directive and non-judgemental.

Visit their website for more information: <https://www.childrenbychoice.org.au/information-support/decision-making/>

### **Family Planning Northern Territory**

The Family Planning Welfare Association is located in Darwin and Palmerston Northern Territory and aims to promote sexual health and rights for everyone.

Visit their website for more information: <http://www.fpwnt.com.au/>.

### **Shine South Australia**

Shine South Australia is the Family Planning Association of South Australia.

Visit their website for more information: [www.shinesa.org.au/health-information/pregnancy/pregnancy-options/](http://www.shinesa.org.au/health-information/pregnancy/pregnancy-options/).

### **Family Planning NSW**

Yarning about pregnancy options is a booklet produced by Family Planning NSW for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, Aboriginal Health Workers, clinical, education and welfare professionals. The website has other booklets about sexual and reproductive health.

Visit their website: <https://www.fpnsw.org.au/health-information/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander/yarning-about-resources>.

### **Marie Stopes Australia**

An organisation providing a range of reproductive health information and services including termination of pregnancy.

**Call: 1300 866 315 66430**

**Website: [www.mariestopes.org.au](http://www.mariestopes.org.au)**

#### **Disclaimer**

The information in this document has been provided for information and educational purposes only. NT Health has taken every care to ensure that the information is accurate and up-to-date at the time of publication. Individuals concerned about any personal reproductive or sexual health issue are encouraged to seek advice and assistance from their health care provider.