



Decision Time

Pregnancy can be very stressful. Often, it's difficult to make the decisions that need to be made. Perhaps you're worried about what people will think, say, or do when they find out you are pregnant. Maybe you are worried about how you will cope. It could be that the pressure is getting too much, or you're feeling very alone. It's normal for you to have these questions & worries. This chapter offers you helpful ideas & information.

Whose decision is this?

This decision is **YOURS**
Make sure you have thought
through & understood
all your options

Listen to yourself - you will
know what's best

YOUR decision - some factors to CONSIDER

Your health & well-being – physical, emotional, spiritual

Your education – how do you plan to continue with it?

Your views on abortion

Your views on adoption, foster or Te Whangai

Your financial situation – how you plan to support yourself & your child

Your plans & dreams for your future - will a child affect these?

Your support – family & whanau, friends & networks

Your capabilities & inner strength

Your reasons for wanting to be a parent

Your readiness to change areas in your life to become a parent

Worried about telling your family?

Often, young women who are pregnant are worried about the reaction of their family. Perhaps your family will be upset, hurt, disappointed, or angry. While your pregnancy may be upsetting news, it may be comforting for you to know that the families of many young women in similar situations to yours, come to terms with the pregnancy & provide the help & support that is needed.



As outlined in Chapter 1 *So, You Are Pregnant*, if you choose to have an abortion, you don't require the consent of your parents/guardians. This means that you can arrange to have the procedure without involving them. Therefore, if you feel it absolutely necessary, you don't have to tell them. If this is your situation, it's very important that you have a support person before & after the abortion. If there is any possibility that your parents/guardians could be supportive, it's probably better to tell them. Keep in mind that if you are aged under 16, & need to have a medical procedure that is due to side effects from the abortion, the law requires parental/guardian consent. (A very small number of women have side effects; make sure you find out what the risks are from the hospital/clinic.)

For some young people, the fear of upsetting mum, dad & other family & whanau has meant they have kept the pregnancy a secret, sometimes until the baby is almost born. Keeping your pregnancy a secret is very stressful, lonely & unsafe. If you are going to continue with your pregnancy then it's usually best to tell your family as soon as possible (especially if you live with them). **Here are some reasons why:**

So you can enjoy your pregnancy

So you can have support

So you can have practical help

So you receive professional pregnancy care for your pregnancy & birth

So you & your family/whanau can prepare

“I would never advise anybody to keep it to themselves. Get it out in the open. There’s nothing worse than keeping something like that to yourself. I didn’t tell my sister until I was 8 1/2 months pregnant & then she told mum & dad. They were really good, if I’d known I’d have told them sooner. They had been really worried about me & thought that I had some condition & put on weight. I just ignored & avoided them. The thing that upsets me when I see pregnant women walking around is that I didn’t do it. I never really was officially pregnant. I didn’t wear maternity clothes or read any pregnancy books or go to antenatal classes. I didn’t do anything. Because I didn’t look after myself during pregnancy or prepare for birth, my labour & delivery were difficult. Now it upsets me that I wasn’t interested.”

Jo (age 18)

Tips to help you cope

- Get lots of rest
- Go for walks
- Eat healthy food
- No drugs or alcohol
- Take time to think
- Do activities you enjoy

When the pressure gets too much

Perhaps your family/whanau, friends or partner have strong opinions about your pregnancy & what you should do. This pressure can make you feel bad about yourself, like nobody understands or will listen, & can take away your power over your life & body. Here are some examples of pressure:

- **Your family says that you can't have an abortion because they think abortion is wrong**
- **Your friends say that if you have the baby they won't hang out with you**
- **Your family says that you have shamed them**
- **Your boyfriend says he will leave if you have the baby**
- **Your family says that they will kick you out of home**
- **Your family says that you have to give the baby to a relative**
- **Your boyfriend says that if you have an abortion you are killing his baby**
- **Your boyfriend's family says that you should have the baby & give it to them to raise**

Too much pressure?
Call Youthline 0800 376 633

If you can relate to any of these examples, you will need to find someone to talk to, who doesn't have any opinions or strong emotions about what you should do. Someone who can listen & respect your views & issues, not preach or push. The best person for this is an unbiased & professional pregnancy counsellor. If you feel that they are the right person, perhaps you could talk to a trusted friend or relative, school counsellor or nurse. You can get help & be connected with free or low-cost professional counsellors by calling Youthline.

"When I was pregnant, it was so hard because everyone gave me their advice & opinions & my family was either angry or sad. They acted like it was the end of the world. I was so miserable & had no energy. If your family are making things worse, then you should go talk to someone who won't."

Miria (age 16)

Pregnancy counselling

Impartial pregnancy counselling is when a caring & specially trained counsellor (who is usually a woman) gives you the support & information that you need as YOU make the BEST choice for YOUR situation. They can help you explore your issues, help you make an informed decision about what to do about your pregnancy, & link you with other useful services. They also offer counselling after an abortion or miscarriage. Your visits are private & confidential.



WHAT is a support person?

Someone you can talk to. Someone you can trust. Someone who doesn't preach or push.

WHO is a support person?

friend / family & whanau / partner / school nurse / friend's family & whanau / counsellor / social worker

The father & you

Obviously you didn't get pregnant on your own. Perhaps you're in a relationship. Maybe the relationship has finished. It could be that you were never going out with the guy who has fathered the pregnancy. Whatever your situation is, **make sure you understand what the law says about paternity in Chapter 10 *Legal Information*.**

If you are in a relationship with the father, then it's likely he will have an opinion on the pregnancy. Keep in mind that the majority of teenage mums parent alone, so if you are thinking about continuing with your pregnancy, it makes sense to make the decision based on your future, as well as what you want & can cope with, rather than expectations you have for your current relationship. If you & your partner disagree on the best pregnancy option, it may be useful for you to go to pregnancy counselling, & for both of you to go to counselling together to help you understand each other's issues. Make sure that you have other support people besides your partner.

If you aren't in a relationship with the guy you are pregnant to, then you may or may not want to tell him about the pregnancy

in the early stages. This may depend on how comfortable you are talking to him. It's important that you focus on your well-being & what is best for you & your future. So if you feel that you will get a negative or unfair reaction, then wait until you are sure about what pregnancy option is best for you, then decide if & when you want to tell him. If you decide to keep your baby, then you may want to discuss with him & his family/whanau the involvement that you foresee them having in your pregnancy & child's life. Arrange a first meeting & take a support person along.

If you are unsure exactly who the father is, make sure you know the name & whereabouts of the guys who may be the father. This makes it easier if you want to have paternity established once the baby is born.

WHAT if . . . ?

You were pressured or forced into having sex by the father.

The father is a relative or a person who is considered a family member.

The father is a lot older than you.

In any of these situations, the man that you are pregnant to may have committed a serious crime known as sexual abuse. Often women keep this a secret because they feel guilty or ashamed, & they think they made it happen, or think that no one will believe them. Whatever happened, it was not your fault. Is there someone you know that you feel you can talk to about it? Perhaps a friend, teacher, counsellor, or family member. There are places you can call to talk to someone about what happened. **Look under *Rape & Sexual Abuse* in the service directory that's provided with this booklet.**

What if you are hit or hurt by your family or partner?

If your family or partner hurts you by hitting you or abusing you with words or threats you may be experiencing domestic violence. Make sure you **read about domestic violence in Chapter 6 Relationships & Chapter 10 Legal Information.**

Research shows that often women are abused for the first time when they are pregnant & that often the violence carries on. It also shows that young women are at a greater risk of domestic violence. If you are hurt by your family or partner, or are too scared to tell your family or partner that you are pregnant because they will probably hurt you, then you need to tell a professional about what is going on: a counsellor, doctor, school nurse or domestic violence agency. What you tell them is private & confidential. **Look under *Domestic Violence* in the service directory provided with this booklet.**