

## Your responsibilities and rights if you are pregnant

**If you are pregnant you have rights, but these go hand in hand with responsibilities.**



### RIGHTS

- You have a right to health care at the clinic, no matter how young you are.
- It is illegal to have sex before you are 16. But, once you are 14 years old, you can decide what you want to do if you get pregnant.
- Teachers at school and health workers at the clinic should not judge you or shout at you, and should respect your right to confidentiality.
- No one is allowed to call you bad names or discriminate against you at school. Tell a trusted teacher if this is happening.
- You can attend school for some of the time while you are pregnant.
- You have the right to come back to school once you have had the baby and once you have made arrangements for the baby to be cared for while you are at school.

### RESPONSIBILITIES

- Try to not get pregnant. If you have sex, use dual protection to prevent STIs and pregnancy.
- Finish your high school education.
- If you think you are pregnant, go to the clinic as soon as possible.
- Tell a teacher you trust that you are pregnant.
- If you decide to have the baby, take good care of it.
- Both parents are responsible for looking after the baby and paying for the costs of bringing up a child.

### Points to remember about pregnancy

- Your future starts now. Wait before you have a baby.
- Teenage pregnancy can harm the health of the mother and baby.
- Abstaining from sex is the best way to make sure you don't get pregnant.
- If you are having sex, always use contraceptives to prevent a pregnancy.
- If you have unprotected sex, you can get pregnant. Do a pregnancy and HIV test at the clinic.
- Get advice from a health worker on what you can do if you are pregnant.
  - Keep going to school for as long as possible while you are pregnant.
  - Go back to school as soon as possible after the baby is born, once you have made arrangements for the baby to be cared for.

#### Ask for advice and help

You may feel too scared or embarrassed to ask for help if you think you are pregnant. Don't be! The sooner you go to the clinic for a pregnancy test, the better.

Speak to a friend, family member, teacher or health worker. You can also phone one of the helpline numbers here:

**National AIDS helpline 0800 012 322**

**loveLife 0800 121 900 or sms 'plz cal me' to 083 3231023**

**Childline 0800 055 555 (also working with adolescents)**

**Lifeline's Crisis Line 0861 322 322**



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Teenage pregnancy

## Teenage pregnancy

Having a child at a young age is not a good idea. Here are some reasons why you should wait until you're older before you have a baby.

- Pregnancy will interrupt your schooling.
- Having a baby will change your plans for the future. Bringing up a child is a big responsibility that lasts for many years.
- Your body is still growing and early pregnancy can harm it.
- Giving birth when your body is still growing can also bring serious health complications for you and your baby.

## Falling pregnant

You can get pregnant:

- Even if it is the first time you have sex
- Any time you have unprotected sex
- Even if your partner withdraws before he ejaculates/before you have finished
- Even if you have sex during your period.

## Preventing pregnancy

There are different ways you can avoid getting pregnant.

- You can abstain. That means not having sex. You can do safe things with your partner, like kissing, hugging and touching.
- If you decide to have sex, always use contraception to prevent pregnancy.
- Condoms are a good way to stop you from getting pregnant, but you must use them properly. You can ask your health worker to show you how.
- It is even better if you use dual protection. This is using a condom and another contraceptive so that you can prevent both pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections like HIV. You can find out more about this in the leaflet on Contraception.
- If someone rapes you, the clinic can give you emergency treatment. Go to the clinic straight away.



## Finding out if you are pregnant

If you have had sex and do not get your period when you are expecting it, there is a chance that you might be pregnant. If you think you may be pregnant, go to the clinic for a free pregnancy test. The health worker will also suggest you do an HIV test.

If you think you may be pregnant, go to the clinic for a test as soon as possible.

## Making decisions if you are pregnant

It's your body. You have the right to choose what to do. Your health worker will tell you about the following options:

### Stay pregnant

Get health care during pregnancy and after the birth. It is free. Get checked often. If there are problems, the earlier they are found, the easier they are to solve. Your health worker will give you support and answer your questions. She will also discuss with you what you will do once the baby is born.

### End the pregnancy

This is called terminating a pregnancy or having an abortion. This is legal in South Africa. It is free and safe at government hospitals and clinics. You must do it before you are 12 weeks pregnant.

### Keep the baby and look after it

If you decide to have your baby, you need to look after it. You will get free health care for your baby at the clinic.

### Have the baby adopted

If you decide to have the baby adopted, you will not be able to see it again. The baby you give birth to will be given to a couple who can't have babies of their own.

These are big decisions and you have lots to think about. Having a baby is a very big responsibility. Think carefully about your education and what you want from your future. Ask the health worker to help you to make a plan for whichever option you choose.

## Telling someone you're pregnant

Sometimes girls are ashamed or scared so they keep quiet and don't tell anyone when they know they are pregnant. This is not a good idea. The longer you wait, the more limited your choices will be. Talk to someone you trust as soon as possible.

## What about school?

Your education affects your options for your future. That is why the best choice for you is to stay in school and to finish your education.

Many girls think that they can't attend school anymore if they fall pregnant. This is not true. You should get advice from your health worker on how long you can carry on attending school before the baby is born.

Go back to school after the baby is born but first make sure your baby will be well looked after while you are at school. Discuss this with your health worker, your family and your teacher, and agree on when you will return to school.

**Remember, if you are pregnant: whatever you decide, don't give up on your education!**

