

# Abortion and giving birth

If you are pregnant, or you're concerned that you're pregnant, and you don't want to be, you can access emergency contraception, or abortion. If you want to continue with your pregnancy there are resources available to support you.

## Emergency contraceptives ('morning after pill')

If you have had unprotected sex or your contraception has failed, and you don't want to become pregnant, you have a few options to reduce your chances of pregnancy.

There are 3 types of emergency contraception available in Australia:

1. The **levonorgestrel** emergency contraceptive pill (brand names include Postinor-1, Postinor-2, Postelle-1, Postella-1, NorLevo, NorLevo-1, Levonelle-1 and Levonelle-2) should be taken within **72 hours (3 days) after unprotected sex**. It is available without prescription.
2. The **ulipristal acetate** emergency contraceptive pill (brand name EllaOne) should be taken within **120 hours (5 days) after unprotected sex**. There is a limited supply of this in Australia, so it may be difficult to obtain. It is available without prescription.
3. A **copper intrauterine device (IUD)** can be inserted within 5 days of unprotected sex by a trained doctor or nurse.

Emergency contraceptive pills can be obtained from a chemist or pharmacy **without a prescription**. Emergency contraception is also available at [Family Planning NSW clinics](#) and some GPs. For a copper IUD, contact your nearest [Family Planning NSW clinic](#) or [Family Planning NSW Talkline](#) to get information about getting an IUD within the 5-day timeframe. [TransHub](#) has trans/gender specific contraception information, and a list of [trans-friendly health care providers](#).

It is important to remember:

- Emergency contraceptive pills must be taken as soon as possible. They will work better **the sooner you take them**.

- Some medications can reduce how well the emergency contraceptive pill works, **be sure to discuss any medications you are already taking** with your pharmacist or doctor.
- The emergency contraceptive pill will not protect against pregnancy **if you have unprotected sex again** in the same menstrual cycle.
- Emergency contraception **does not protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)**.

[Read more detailed information on emergency contraception](#).

## Pregnancy tests

**Home pregnancy test kits can be purchased from chemists and most supermarkets.** They range in price from \$5 to \$10. They claim a high accuracy (up to 97% for some), but results will be most accurate if you wait until your period is due, or 2–3 weeks after possible conception.

**If the test indicates that you might be pregnant**, or if you have any concern about the result of the test, you should visit a doctor. A doctor will conduct a urine or blood test to confirm whether you are pregnant, and inform you about your options. You may also choose to just visit a doctor and skip the home pregnancy test altogether.

Some people prefer to contact a [Women's Health Centre](#) or [Family Planning NSW clinic](#) to discuss the right pregnancy decisions for them.

## Termination of pregnancy (abortion)

If you are pregnant and don't want to continue the pregnancy, you can terminate the pregnancy, also known as abortion. Pregnancy terminations are safe and common medical procedures.

There are 2 types of abortion: [surgical abortion and medical abortion](#). A medical abortion may be organised over the phone, this is known as [abortion by telehealth](#) (or teleabortion).

A termination of pregnancy is legal in NSW under certain circumstances as long as it's performed by a registered doctor.

## Continuing with your pregnancy

If you decide to continue your pregnancy you should seek initial advice and support from your doctor, a [Women's Health Centre](#), or other service provider.

**While you are receiving pregnancy care** it is important that you feel comfortable asking questions of the practitioner who is caring for you (whether gynaecologist, midwife, or your local doctor). If you feel uncomfortable or unsure about asking questions, bring a person with you to your appointments. Writing your questions out beforehand can also be helpful. All practitioners should be happy to answer any of your questions.

## Hospitals, birthing centres and homebirths

In planning the birth, your doctor can refer you to a hospital near your home – this may be a private or public hospital. A public hospital's labour ward will provide professional attention by midwives, and an obstetrician will be available if necessary. Some public hospitals have birthing centres which are run by midwives and will often have bigger baths and beds than in the regular labour ward.

If you have any complications with your labour where you require an obstetrician, or you want pain relief (e.g. gas or epidural), a birthing centre may not be suitable for you. If you are already at the hospital birthing centre and you experience complications, you may be transferred to the labour ward.

You can contract a private midwife for your care during pregnancy but be aware of the costs. If you would prefer to give birth at home, a private midwife can be very expensive, though some insurers offer a rebate for midwifery services. A few public hospitals offer **Medicare-funded homebirth** for low-risk pregnancies, though places are very limited.

## What are the costs of giving birth?

Australian residents and others who are eligible for Medicare will have their pregnancy and birthing costs covered or mostly covered if they use public hospitals and services.

If you are an international student, you will need to check whether your OSHC covers pregnancy. If you are not covered for pregnancy, giving birth in Australia will be very expensive.

## Is your partner pregnant?

It is normal to experience a range of emotions. It is okay to feel confused, especially if it was not expected or is your first time. [Family Planning NSW has useful resources](#) to help with understanding pregnancy and supporting your partner.

## Disclaimer

This information is current as at March 2023 and where it includes legal information is intended as a guide to the law as it applies to people who live in or are affected by the law as it applies in NSW. It does not constitute legal advice.

Written by SUPRA Postgraduate Advocacy Service and SUPRA Legal Service March 2023