



Preparing for Adoption:
A Month-by-Month Guide
for Expectant Mothers



Adoptions
with Love, Inc.



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ANL is Here for You

From prenatal care to childbirth, telling your family to making an adoption plan, we will help you navigate each phase of your pregnancy.



Introduction: Choosing Adoption

Discovering an unplanned pregnancy is a life-changing experience. If you are here, you might already know this firsthand. You recently discovered you are pregnant and have since felt like your world has been turned upside down. You were not planning for this, not prepared for this, and do not know what to do next. You might be feeling scared, confused, alone, and unsure of whom to turn to for support.

If you are facing an unplanned pregnancy, it is important to know that you are not alone. Each year, millions of women discover this same news – they are expecting the unexpected. Like you, they have had to make a very difficult choice regarding their baby and future: Do they terminate their pregnancy, parent their child, or continue their pregnancy and make a loving adoption plan?

Out of a deep-found love for their children, thousands of these women courageously choose adoption. Through this choice, they give their child a life full of opportunity and support, a life beyond what they can provide at the time.

Adoption is a selfless choice that begins with love, compassion, and hope – three feelings you likely already have for your baby. Perhaps that is why you are here. You want to see your child grow, but do not feel ready to become a parent right now. As much as you love him or her, you may not have the time, finances, or emotional resources needed to raise your child. As a result, you are thinking about adoption.

At Adoptions With Love, we understand adoption is not an easy decision to make, and admire you for coming this far. These first nine months are only the beginning of a lifelong journey, but know that you will not have to walk any of it alone. Whether you just discovered you are pregnant or are in your third trimester, we open our arms to you. We can assist you through this pregnancy and beyond, and help you design an adoption plan tailored to your needs.

It can all start here. In this month-by-month guide, we will walk you through the various stages of your pregnancy and help you navigate each phase of the adoption process. From proper prenatal care to childbirth, telling your family to choosing a family for your baby- this guide will prepare you for every step along the positive path of adoption.





Trimester One





First Trimester, Months 1 & 2: Confirming Your Pregnancy



Over the past month or so, you may have noticed your body start to experience possible pregnancy symptoms: you missed your period, you are feeling fatigued, you may be gaining a bit of weight. Are you one-hundred percent sure that you are pregnant?

No matter how scary it may be, if you think you are pregnant, your first step will be to confirm your pregnancy with a doctor. Even if your home pregnancy test came back positive, it is still important for you to get validation from a medical professional so that you can know for sure. Schedule an appointment with your physician, gynecologist, or walk into a nearby clinic if you are experiencing the following symptoms:

- Missed period
- Morning sickness
- Breast tenderness or changes in size
- Frequent urination
- Fatigue and mood swings
- Food cravings and weight gain

While these early symptoms usually hint at pregnancy, none of them guarantee you are pregnant. Some of these may be brought on by other factors, instead. For example, high stress or too much exercise can cause a missed period.

Confirming and discussing the news with a trusted medical professional is very important in that you can begin to prepare for all that is ahead: If you choose to continue your pregnancy, now will be the time to start taking prenatal vitamins, cease any substance use, and gather professional advice on your options. The start of prenatal care can begin as early as the first trimester, in which you will receive blood tests, a physical exam, and have thoughtful conversations about maintaining a healthy pregnancy.





First Trimester, Month 3: Making a Pregnancy Plan

Confirming your pregnancy marks the start of the planning process – the time in which you can fully begin to consider all of your options, specifically the positive alternative of adoption, and start making decisions with your child’s best interests in mind. You may not have planned to get pregnant, but you can start making a loving plan for your baby’s life.

At this time, it is important that you meet with a counselor or clinician who specializes in unplanned pregnancy. If you are strongly considering adoption, you should also take time to meet with an adoption social worker or reputable agency to further discuss this choice. An adoption professional will educate you on your pregnancy options, listen to your wishes and needs, and help you understand the adoption process. Together, you can decide if adoption is the best choice for you and your baby long-term.

By the end of your first trimester, you can also start planning for the rest of your pregnancy, deciding on things like where you will live, who you will see for ongoing prenatal care, and how you will cover any medical and maternity expenses. Many private insurance plans do include some maternity assistance, though there is often a 12-to-24 month waiting period before this coverage applies. If you do not have insurance, your state may offer public assistance programs for pregnant women, such as food stamps or government-funded housing.

If you choose to move forward with making an adoption plan, you can rest assured that there will be financial assistance available to you. At Adoptions With Love, we offer housing assistance, legal services, and complete counseling at no cost to expectant mothers during and weeks after pregnancy. If you do not have a doctor, we can help you find quality and compassionate medical care. If you do not have insurance, we will also cover any uninsured medical expenses after your adoption is complete.

Now is the time to find the right resources and begin making a plan for the next six-plus months. If you need adoption support or help at any point throughout your pregnancy – now or months from now – know that Adoptions With Love has you covered. We are always here for you, and only one call away.



Trimester Two





Second Trimester, Month 4: Getting Prenatal Care

A lot happens during your second trimester. At four months pregnant, your baby is already about the size of the palm of your hand and has begun to develop a brain, a heart, fingers and toes, eyes and ears, a mouth and hair, and can even move around. As an expectant mother, you will start to notice your belly growing, your baby kicking, and your morning sickness subsiding.

Because so much occurs during the second trimester, month four is a crucial time for prenatal care. Prenatal care allows you to track your baby's health as he or she grows. During the next few months, you will need to visit your doctor about every four weeks for a checkup. As you get closer to your due date, however, your appointments may increase to one every two to three weeks.

Prenatal care is essential to any pregnancy, whether you decide to parent your child or make an adoption plan. If you do not receive proper prenatal care, your baby will be at higher risk for serious, long-term health issues and low birth weight. Without prenatal care, you may also be at risk for pregnancy and birth complications.

Not only will prenatal care help monitor your baby's development, but it will also help find, address, and prevent any potential health problems with your child. In addition, these regular appointments will give you the opportunity to ask questions about your pregnancy symptoms, the birth of your baby, or ease any discomfort you may have. From your OB/GYN or medical provider you will also learn how to take care of yourself and your baby over the next several months:

- Taking prenatal vitamins such as folic acid
- Eating a healthy, balanced diet full of whole grains, fruits and vegetables, lean proteins and foods high in calcium
- Avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and use of other substances (even certain prescription drugs)

It is never too late to start prenatal care, though early prenatal care will be best for a healthy pregnancy and birth. If you choose to make an adoption plan, Adoptions With Love can help you find and receive prenatal care – all at no cost to you.



Second Trimester, Month 5: Telling Family & Friends



The second trimester is the time in which most women will start showing. It is also when women typically ensure they are due for a healthy birth. Most expectant mothers, as a result, will share the big news around this time – about halfway through their pregnancy.

If you are facing an unplanned pregnancy, however, you may be a bit uneasy about delivering the news. Up to this point, you have likely kept your pregnancy a secret from most – if not all – people in your life. We understand this completely. Unplanned pregnancy is in no way easy, and telling your friends and family, as well as the father of your baby, may be the most difficult part yet. You do not have to do this alone.

If you feel unsafe or simply nervous about sharing the news, consider asking a trusted friend or counselor to stand by your side for the conversation. An Adoptions With Love staff member, for example, can help you start the discussion with loved ones and help them understand the positive choice of adoption. We can also help you tell the biological father, who you may find is actually supportive of your pregnancy and adoption decision. If you do not have a good relationship with the father of your child, we can also contact him so that you do not have to speak with him directly.

You may also decide to share the news only after you have made a decision regarding your baby. Some expectant mothers choose to wait until this point so that their decision is not influenced by outside opinions from friends or family members. Remember, this is your decision to make.

Five months is only a benchmark for telling your friends and family. Only you will know when the time is right to share the news about your pregnancy. In fact, you may choose not to tell anyone about it at all, though we recommend at least confiding in a trusted professional or adult figure to help you navigate the journey. Even if your family and friends do not understand, an adoption counselor will, and will also support you through this time. Rest assured that adoption agencies like Adoptions With Love are completely confidential, so that you can make a thoughtful plan in a safe, free-of-pressure environment.





Second Trimester, Month 6: Making an Adoption Plan

As you approach the end of your second trimester, it is time to start reconsidering your options, weighing their benefits and challenges, and deciding on the path that will bring the best outcome to you and your child. At this point, you still have the option to parent your child or to make an adoption plan.

While you may still be leaning towards the adoption option, it is important to take time to explore both these possibilities. Ask yourself questions such as: Am I ready to raise a child? Can I offer my child the life he or she deserves? Can I still fulfill my own life goals, such as completing college or landing my dream job? Where do I see myself in five or ten-plus years? Is there a child by my side? Am I happy?

Only you can answer these questions, so be sure to do so honestly. It is these answers that will help lead you in the right direction. If you decide you are not prepared to raise a child, know that adoption is a very positive and loving choice. By choosing adoption, you can make a plan fully tailored to your wishes and needs as an expectant mother. You can choose the type of adoption plan you want, the kind of family you envision raising your child, and what type of relationship you want with your child and his or her adoptive family long-term.

Choosing adoption does not mean you would not make a great parent. It does not mean that you are “giving up,” or that you do not love your child, either. Adoption is a decision made with great love and strength, a decision that puts your child’s needs above your own. By making this selfless choice, you can give your child a loving, devoted adoptive family, a stable and secure home, and the life that he or she deserves. You can even decide if you want to be a part of that life moving forward. An open adoption plan will allow you to maintain contact with your child’s adoptive family and receive updates of your son or daughter over the years. Adoption does not have to mean goodbye; it can be the start of beautiful, lifelong relationships and bring new meaning to the word “family.”





Trimester Three





Third Trimester, Month 7:

Choosing an Adoptive Family



At seven months pregnant, your baby is already over three pounds and has developed his or her five senses. At this stage, your baby can now sleep – and dream – while in the womb. Only two months away from your due date and the potential placement, you are likely dreaming a bit, too.

Like many expectant mothers who choose adoption, you might already have a picture in your mind of the perfect home and family for your child. Maybe you want your child to have a brother or sister, a family dog, and live in a country-style home with a big backyard. Maybe you envision your child growing up in the city, taking piano or dance lessons after school and day trips with mom and dad on the weekends. Perhaps you want your child to grow up in a family of a particular race or religion, with certain traditions or a given background. We welcome you to share these hopes and desires with us.

At Adoptions With Love, you will have the option to make your wishes a reality by choosing the perfect adoptive family for your baby. If you would like to do so, we will show you detailed profiles and photo albums of the waiting families that best meet your needs and expectations. You will also have the option to speak with them through email, phone, or meet them in person.

No matter what family you choose, rest assured that your baby will be placed in a safe and loving home. At Adoptions With Love, all potential adoptive families are thoroughly screened and evaluated before they are approved to become parents. Through a series of interviews and background checks, we have personally confirmed that each waiting family is fully ready and able to support a child for life. All of the families at our agency are not able to have biological children and dream of becoming parents.

By choosing adoption you can fulfill your own dreams, your dreams for your child, and the dreams of an adoptive family. You can also find great peace in choosing an adoptive family for your child. Women who make this decision typically report lower levels of sadness and worry following the adoption, knowing that they placed their child in a loving and supportive home. Your child may also find peace in knowing that you handpicked his or her family.



Third Trimester, Month 8: Arranging a Hospital Plan



At eight months pregnant, you are quickly approaching the finish line, meaning it is time to plan for labor and delivery. If you have not already, now is the time to choose the hospital in which you will give birth. Again, Adoptions With Love can help you find a reputable, compassionate hospital with staff who understand your emotional and physical needs. We can also help you create a hospital plan.

Many expectant mothers worry about their hospital experience: will they have enough time with their baby? How will they feel after giving birth? How will the hospital staff treat them and their adoption decision? Should they invite the adoptive parents into the delivery room? To ease these anxieties and questions, we recommend you create a hospital plan prior to your baby's birth.

A hospital plan allows you to put into writing your needs and wishes for your hospital stay, and ensures you will be comfortable before, during, and after your baby's birth. In creating a hospital plan, we recommend asking yourself questions such as:

- Who do you want in the hospital with you?
- Do you want the adoptive family in the waiting room or delivery room?
- How much time do you want to spend with your baby?
- Do you want your baby to be in the room with you following birth?
- Will you name your baby, or choose a name with the adoptive family?
- What, if any, mementos do you want to bring home from the hospital, and what do you want to pass onto the adoptive family?
- How do you wish to leave the hospital?
- When would you like to sign the papers allowing your baby's adoption?

If you have an open and trusting relationship with the prospective adoptive family, you might consider having them be at the hospital or in the birthing room. This can help them bond with your child from the beginning. If you are comfortable seeing your baby, you may also consider taking some personal time to feed, change, or hold your child before making your final adoption decision. These are all things to consider prior to the birth of your baby, and we can help you plan for the ideal hospital experience.



Third Trimester, Month 9: Making a Post-Adoption Plan



The month is finally here. You are only days away from giving birth to a beautiful son or daughter, and potentially days away from placing him or her with a loving adoptive family. This is an exciting and scary time for expectant mothers. On one end, you must start watching for possible labor symptoms, such as regular contractions that get increasingly intense, and for your water to break. You must also look ahead to the future, and think about what is going to happen after delivery and after the adoption takes place.

Finalizing your adoption plan and preparing for the post-adoption journey is one of the last steps in the adoption process. This can be started during your final months of pregnancy, or even after giving birth to your child. It is never too late to make an adoption plan. Adoptions With Love will be here to help you navigate these final days of pregnancy, your adoption decision, and make a plan for the road ahead.

Rest assured you will have time to think about adoption and make a decision after your baby is born. In fact, all states require that birth parents wait until their baby is born before signing any adoption papers. This ensures they are completely comfortable and confident in their decision.

If you know that adoption is the right choice for you and your child, you must now think about how your adoption plan will proceed into the future. As an expectant mother, you are in the driver's seat of your adoption plan. If you would like direct contact with your child and his or her adoptive family, you can choose to have an open adoption arrangement. If you are more comfortable with a confidential plan, we can maintain your anonymity through a closed adoption. You can also make an adoption plan that falls somewhere in-between. No form of adoption is any "better" than another; only you can decide what is best for you and your child.

If you choose to pursue a more open post-adoption plan, you will have various options for ongoing contact, including email, texting, phone calls, Skype, FaceTime, and in-person visits. If you prefer a less identifying option, you can always receive updates of your child through Adoption With Love's letter and picture program. At any point in your adoption journey, pictures and letters from your child's adoptive family will be here for you.



After Delivery





After Delivery: Finding Post-Adoption Support



Congratulations! You are now a wonderful mother who has taken great strides in providing a fulfilling life for her child. You should be proud of yourself for all the strength and courage you exhibited throughout this journey. We admire you for coming this far, and welcome you to motherhood.

Remember that adoption is the beginning of a lifelong journey. Along the way, you will encounter new and sensitive emotions, as well as budding and delicate relationships. At first, there will be highs and lows, and you may not know how to handle all that comes your way. This is okay, this is normal, and it is why we offer free, ongoing adoption support.

At Adoptions With Love, ongoing counseling will always be available to you. Whether through one-to-one sessions or a birth mother support group, our staff will be here to help you navigate any feelings or challenges that may arise postpartum and over the years. We can also help you manage any adoption relationships or conversations that take place with your child's adoptive family. If you feel uncomfortable at any point in your post-adoption journey, know that we are always here, at no cost to you.

Choosing to place your child for adoption is one of the most difficult decisions you will ever have to make. We want you to know that you will never have to go through this alone – not now and not in the future. We will always be here to answer your call. That is our promise to you.

Adoptions With Love is a private, non-profit, full-service adoption agency that will fully commit to you and your needs. We have the resources, experts, and wholehearted devotion necessary to guide you through your unplanned pregnancy and prepare you for the adoption process. We hope this guide has helped ease your mind along the way.

To learn more, you may **call us toll-free at 1-800-722-7731** or **text us confidentially at 1-617-777-0072**. The Adoptions With Love staff is available at any time of the day, seven-days a week. We would be honored to hear from you, learn about your situation, and help you make the perfect adoption plan.

