



A Guide to Teen Pregnancy



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Introduction



Did you recently find out you are pregnant? Have you been hiding your pregnancy for some time? Are you unsure of what to do next?



Discovering an unplanned pregnancy can cause you to feel a wide range of emotions. As a teenager, you may be feeling very scared, overwhelmed, and alone. Right now, you may feel like the only girl in the world in this situation. You may feel like you have nowhere to turn for support. You may feel sad, disappointed, or confused.

At **Adoptions With Love**, we want you to know that it is normal to have all these feelings. It is okay to feel scared or confused in this moment. It is also important to know that you are not alone in this. Millions of young women like you face unplanned pregnancies each year. In fact, about one out of every four teenage girls gets pregnant before her 20th birthday. There are other brave young women who have made it through this, who have faced the challenge of an unplanned pregnancy and have made their journey a positive one. You can, too.

Everything is going to be okay, even if you feel terrified right now. There will be challenges you will have to face and decisions you will have to make. **Adoptions With Love** knows this firsthand. We understand where you are now and can help you get where you want to go. We are here to guide you every step of the way.

Your pregnancy may not have been planned, but you can always start making a positive, thoughtful plan for you and your baby. Whether you are thirteen and pregnant, graduating high school, or already in college, know that there are many resources to help you through your pregnancy. It is important now that you slow down and educate yourself on your options as a pregnant teen. This is not a time for quick decisions.

To help you gather the most accurate, unbiased information about unplanned and teen pregnancies, **Adoptions With Love** has created this guide. Here, we will walk through many of the questions you will have, the considerations and decisions you will face, as well as your rights and your options as a pregnant teen.



Finding Trusted Pregnancy Support

At this time, you may have many questions such as “What do I do?” and “Who can I talk to?” You may not know where to find the answers you need.

The first step you should take after discovering you are pregnant is to talk to someone you trust. This may be a close family member, a boyfriend, or even your school counselor. It may be someone in your faith community or your doctor. **Adoptions With Love** also offers free support and options counseling to expectant teens.

Before talking to someone about your pregnancy, ask yourself who you can trust the most. Who will speak with you confidentially? Who will listen and respect you, no matter what? It is important to talk with someone who will not pressure you into a decision or push their beliefs on you.

Talking to someone you trust can help ease your mind and comfort you as you think about your options. If you choose to speak with an adult, this person may be able to help you find professional support, too.

Seeking quality, professional help is another step you must take after finding out you are pregnant. Even if you do not know what to do next, it is important that you receive the proper attention and care as soon as possible. Prenatal care from your medical provider, for example, can help keep you and your baby healthy while you think about your options.

If you do not have anyone you can talk to at this time, always feel free to contact **Adoptions With Love**. We are available all hours, every day to pick up your call or answer your text. We can help you find quality medical care and answer any pending questions you may have. We can listen to your feelings, offer unbiased advice, and even put you in contact with other young birth mothers if you wish.



Talk to Someone You Trust

It is important to talk with someone who will not pressure you into a decision, who can ease your mind as you think about your options.



Telling Your Parents You Are Pregnant



If you are young and pregnant, chances are, you are avoiding telling your parents. If you are still living under their roof or have been forbidden from dating and sex, you may be especially worried. How will they react? Will they still love you? Will they be there for you and your baby?

No matter how close you are with your parents, this conversation can be intimidating. But if you feel safe telling your parents, we encourage you to do so. Even though it feels scary right now, talking with your parents about your pregnancy can be beneficial in the long-run. It can help you sort through many feelings and challenges. Chances are, your parents care about you and are willing to help. They can talk to you about your options, offer you love and support, and make sure you get the healthcare you need. They can also help you talk to others – teachers, friends, family members – about your pregnancy. Most parents want to be supportive in this situation.

Of course, there is always the possibility your parents will freak out, yell, and cry. Most parents are shocked by this news. Some are disappointed at first. Some parents get angry; some are more understanding. Some do not show any emotion at all and need time to absorb the news. Others react quickly. It is important to be prepared for any reaction and to not take any hurtful words personally. While you have had some time to process this news, your parents have not.



Love & Parental Support

Your parents can help you think about your options, offer you love and support, and make sure you get the healthcare you need.

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Telling Your Parents You Are Pregnant, cont'

Your parents may try to pressure you into something you do not want to do; parenting, having an abortion or letting them raise the baby as their own. In the end, remember that it is your body and your choice. Only you know what is right for you and your baby.

When approaching this conversation with your parents, set up a time and place that will be free of distractions. If it makes you feel more comfortable, have someone you trust by your side when delivering this news. This person may be your boyfriend, a close friend, or even a counselor at **Adoptions With Love**. As you reveal your pregnancy to your parents, try to be open and honest at all times. Tell them how you feel, that you trust them, and that you really need their help. Doing this can encourage an open and calm response from them, too.

At **Adoptions With Love**, we have seen that a difficult situation like teen pregnancy can bring people closer together. Even from an unexpected situation like this, you may discover how much love, support, forgiveness, acceptance, and teamwork truly exists in your family.



Telling Your Parents

Set up a time and place free of distractions. Be calm, open, and honest. A counselor at Adoptions With Love can help you tell your parents.



Involving the Father of Your Baby

Every relationship is different. You may have a boyfriend who is very supportive of your pregnancy. On the other hand, you may not have a relationship with the father of your baby at all. Perhaps you do not know who the father is or where you can find him. If you are in a situation where it is possible and safe to involve the father of your baby in your pregnancy, we encourage you to do so.



As an expectant mother, you deserve enormous love and support. As you contemplate your options, you may find the father's support especially meaningful. He is walking a similar path and, like you, will have many different emotions. He may want to be a part of this process and walk this journey beside you.

If you have a good relationship with the expectant father, you can talk about your feelings together and discuss how each possible option may affect your lives. If you are considering adoption as a positive choice, **Adoptions With Love** can offer you both individual counseling and guide you through the process.

Even if you and the biological father are no longer together, you can still make an informed and loving decision for your baby. If you choose to make an adoption plan, you can each customize plans to fit your own comfort level. As an expectant mother, you may want to stay in touch with your child through open adoption, while the expectant father may be more comfortable receiving pictures every now and then.

If you do not have a relationship with the father, or feel intimidated in telling him the news, do not worry. You will never have to contact him directly. A licensed adoption agency like **Adoptions With Love** can contact him through an attorney or counselor and present him with his legal rights as a father.

While it may feel scary right now, talking with the father of your baby can be very beneficial. He may surprise you and want to be involved in your decision. But in the end, remember that this is your choice. While it can be helpful to involve the father of your child in your decision, you should never feel pressured into doing something you do not want to do.



Understanding the Effects of Teen Pregnancy



Right now, you likely have a thousand questions running through your head.
*Can I finish school? Can I still work? Will I graduate with my friends on time?
Do I have to get married? Where will I live? Where will my baby live?
I am so young – will my baby be okay?*

These are all normal – and important – questions to ask. As a pregnant teenager, you have to consider the impact that pregnancy and potentially raising a child may have on your life. Only then can you understand what is best for you and your baby. Only then can you make an informed decision.

Every young woman, every pregnancy, every situation, is unique. You may be in a supportive relationship or have a family that is willing to help out. On the other hand, you may lack the resources necessary to care for a child. Consider your current situation and the effects that raising a child may have on your:

- **Health** – If you have been hiding your pregnancy or delaying finding help, you may be alongside the other 33 percent of teen girls who do not receive prenatal care in their first trimester. This can have a major effect on your baby's health.
- **Education** – Are you in high school? Do you have plans of going to college? Pregnancy and parenthood are the leading reasons why young women drop out of school. Only 40 percent of teen moms who parent ever end up finishing high school, and it is usually after they turn 30.
- **Relationship** – Are you worried what effect a baby will have on your relationship? In most cases, teen parents do not marry. Only 20 percent of teen fathers eventually marry the mothers of their children. Those that get married before age 18 often divorce within ten years.
- **Finances** – Do you have the finances needed to raise a child? Will the baby's father offer you child support? Unfortunately, most teen dads do not pay child support. If they do, it is minimal. Most teenage parents today are also poor. Two-thirds of teen mothers receive some sort of public assistance (such as food stamps) during the first year of their child's life.

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Understanding the Effects of Teen Pregnancy, con't

Take a minute to close your eyes and think about how you want your life to be ten years from now. Are you enrolled in college? Do you have a steady, full-time job? Are you married or single? Do you have a child? If so, is your child happy and healthy? Are you happy?

Now, take time to think about your baby. You are an expectant mother. Your decisions now will affect your baby, and should therefore be made in his or her best interest. Try to think about where you hope your child will be ten years from now. Can you give your child what he or she needs to get there?



Think About the Future

Are you ready to raise a child?
Consider how parenthood may affect your finances, health, education, relationships, and your child's life.



Exploring Your Options

As a teenager facing an unplanned pregnancy, it is important to know that there are several options available to you: You can choose to terminate the pregnancy, parent your child, or make a loving adoption plan.

You do not have to make a decision just yet. Rather, take some time to explore these options and learn about the possible outcomes of each. While you think about your many options, make a point to talk to your doctor about prenatal care. This will help ensure that you and your baby stay healthy throughout your pregnancy and beyond.

No matter what you decide, know that this choice will have a lasting effect on your life. Know that this is just the beginning of a lifelong journey, but you can make it a positive one. Before making your choice, try to think about your values, your beliefs, and what is most important to you. Map out the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Then, ask yourself:

- Am I being pressured to choose one option over another?
- What do I believe is best for me, my baby, and my future family in the long-run?
- Which option(s) could I live with, and which could I never accept?
- How would each option affect my everyday life?
- What would each option mean for the people closest to me (boyfriend, parents, friends)?

In the end, this is your choice. You may be young, but as an expectant mother, you decide what will be best for you and your baby long-term. This does not mean you have to make a decision all alone. It may be helpful to talk your options through with a trusted adult, your significant other, and/or an unbiased, knowledgeable professional.

You can always talk to the counselors at **Adoptions With Love**. We know this is not an easy decision. We can help you research and understand all of your options, while also offering you compassion and support, free of pressure. By doing so, we hope you will gain clarity about what choice feels right to you. In the following pages, we will discuss two of your options: Parenting and Adoption.



Your Options as a Pregnant Teen: Parenting

There is no doubt that parenting can be a wonderful experience, but it also calls for a lot of hard work. Parenting is a lifelong commitment that demands a lot of energy, time, and money. For many teens, parenting is very difficult.

Most teen moms drop out of school to raise their children. As a teen mother, you may be left putting your education or career goals on hold for some time. You will not have the free time or friend time like you used to. If you choose parenthood, you will have to make sacrifices for your child.

Some teens get help from their families, some do not. Very few teens marry the fathers of their babies. In fact, nine out of ten teenage mothers are single. Typically, they receive less than \$800 a year in child support. Yet diapers can cost up to \$1,000 a year. Full-time daycare can cost over \$11,000 annually.

Teen parenting is challenging, but not impossible. If you truly believe you can love, care, and provide for your child, you may be ready to become a mother.

It is important to remember that parenthood is a permanent choice. It means choosing to raise a child for the next 18+ years of your life. Before you make your decision, ask yourself if you are prepared to handle all that parenthood brings.

- Are you emotionally and financially ready to raise a child?
- Do you have a safe and stable home for your baby to grow?
- Does the father support your pregnancy?
- Is he or your family willing to help financially?
- Can you maintain a full-time job and be there for your baby?
- Are you okay with putting your life on hold?

Lastly, ask yourself if you feel pressured to parent your child. Do you feel like parenting is your only option? There may be people in your life trying to influence your decision. Remember, only you know what is right for you. If you are not yet ready to become a mother, know that there are other options.





Your Options as a Pregnant Teen: Adoption

As a young woman, it is important to know that you are in charge of your choice. If you feel that your baby deserves the best possible life, a life you cannot offer at this time, you may consider the positive option of adoption.

Adoption means choosing another loving, supportive family to raise your child. It is a permanent choice that allows your child to grow up in a safe and stable home. Women who choose adoption may do so if they feel they are not yet ready to be a parent, if they cannot afford to raise a child on their own, if they want to finish school or pursue other goals before having children, or if it is simply not a good time in their life to have a baby.

As a young woman, you may not have considered making an adoption plan before. Perhaps you did not know it was an option for you at this age. In reality, adoption is a very positive option for pregnant teens. Through adoption, you can achieve your dreams of going to college and establishing a career. You can also provide the life you dream of for your child. You can give your child a loving family, a stable home, a good education, and the future that he or she deserves.

Today, you can even choose the home and family for your baby. As your child grows older, you can also have the option to receive letters, pictures, or even in-person visits if you wish. Adoption does not have to put an ending to your relationship with your child. Rather, it begins a new story for each of you. If you choose an open adoption plan, you can remain a part of your child's life, watch him or her grow, while still pursuing your own goals.

Adoption laws are different in every state. If you believe adoption could be right for you and your baby, it is important to talk to professionals at a reputable, licensed adoption agency. At **Adoptions With Love**, we can educate you on the effects of adoption, the different types of adoption plans, and help you think through your decision. If you choose to make an adoption plan with us, we can guide you through the adoption process.





Adoption is Positive



Like many pregnant teenagers, you may not have considered adoption before. Perhaps it was because you did not know it was an option, or simply because you did not know all of the facts. Before reading this guide, you may have believed that those who choose adoption do not love their children. You may have thought of adoption as “giving your baby away.”

More than ever, it is important for you to know that choosing adoption is not “giving up.” It does not mean that you do not love your child. Rather, adoption means that you love your child so much that you put his or her needs first. It is a way for you to give your child a devoted family, safe home, and wonderful life full of opportunities.

Adoption is a brave, selfless decision. It requires you to take time to think about what kind of life you want for your child, and to honestly ask yourself if you can provide that life at this time. Do you want your child to have a father figure, siblings, or stay-at-home parent? Do you want your child to go to college or on annual family vacations? You can make an adoption plan that provides all that you wish for your child.

Not only is adoption positive for your baby, but it can also benefit you. While your child is doing well with a loving adoptive family, you can pursue your own goals: finishing school, beginning a career, or even getting married before starting a family. Most women who choose adoption feel that it brought stability to their lives and allowed them to focus on the future. Many say it also gave them peace of mind, knowing they made the right decision for their child.

If you are considering adoption, know that you will have control over your baby’s adoption plan. You can choose between an open, semi-open, or closed adoption plan. If you would like, you can choose and meet the perfect adoptive family for your baby.

Adoption does not have to end the relationship with your child and his or her adoptive family. Whether it is through email, phone calls, letters and pictures, or in-person visits, you can keep in touch with your child as he or she grows.

Adoptions With Love can help you create an adoption plan that meets both you and your child’s needs.





Our Promise to You

Facing an unplanned pregnancy is never easy. You may feel like the only teenager in the world carrying a baby, but the truth is, teen pregnancy is much more common than you think. You are not alone. Today, there are plenty of resources to help you make the best possible choice for your baby.

We hope this guide has helped you feel ready to take the next step. If you need to talk or just want someone to listen, please do not hesitate to contact us at **Adoptions With Love**. Whether or not you choose to make an adoption plan, we will be here for you at any stage of your pregnancy.

We can provide you with the space and time you need to slow down, breathe, and consider your options in a pressure-free environment. We can offer you the information you need to make the best decision for you and your child. At **Adoptions With Love**, we offer free, confidential services to all pregnant young women considering adoption, such as:

- Complete and compassionate counseling services before, during, and after the birth of your baby
- Legal assistance from our expert team of adoption attorneys
- Help finding quality medical care and assistance with uninsured medical expenses
- Guidance in designing your adoption plan
- Housing and rental assistance
- Financial assistance with utilities, phone, maternity clothing and other necessities, as needed
- Ongoing contact with your child and his or her adoptive family through our letter and picture program



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Our Promise to You, con't

Adoptions With Love is a non-profit, full-service, licensed adoption agency that will commit to you at every stage of your pregnancy.

We have the resources and a compassionate team of counselors to help you navigate the decision-making and adoption process.

If you have any questions regarding your unplanned pregnancy, or to learn more about adoption, please call us toll-free at **1-800-722-7731**.

You may also **text us confidentially at 617-777-0072**. We are available at any time of day, seven days a week to answer your call.



It's Never Too Late

Whether you just found out you are pregnant, are in your third trimester, or have already given birth, you can always call Adoptions With Love.