Dear Alice,

My girlfriend is approximately five days late on her menstrual cycle, and we are getting nervous. We are living in separate cities, but I flew out for a weekend visit. We engaged only once while I was there, and it was twenty-three or twenty-four days after her last menstruation. We did have unprotected sex, but I did not ejaculate. We are both completely monogamous, as well. Is it possible that a pregnancy even occurred? The odds seem so small, yet we are still so worried. I also wonder if in a couple of weeks, it hasn't shown up and she takes a pregnancy test and it turns out to be a pregnancy, what we will do. We will probably want to abort immediately, but we don't know where it is legal, how much it will cost, and if there is a possibility of having it done with neither of our families needing to know or be involved. So how much do first trimester abortions cost, and where can they be performed? Are we just being paranoid or is there a real possibility here?

?Concerned Boyfriend

Answer

Dear Concerned Boyfriend,

You and your girlfriend are obviously, and understandably, anguished about the "what if I'm pregnant!?" possibility. Your questions represent the types of concerns that typically rush through people's minds when they encounter the chance of an unexpected pregnancy. While it's not really possible to know the "odds" of whether your girlfriend is pregnant, knowing your options and discussing a plan of action with your girlfriend might help calm both of your nerves. Here are some thoughts:

To gain a little certainty in an unexpected situation, the first step of your plan might be to take a pregnancy test. Pregnancy tests are available over-the-counter from pharmacies, and from health care providers; in either case, there's no need for yours or her family to find out that she's taken a test. If your girlfriend would like to have a test with a health care provider, she might look into the type of insurance coverage she has and whether testing from her regular provider will show up on any bills that will be seen by her family. If so, it's always an option to visit a student health center and/or Planned Parenthood [2]. Both types of health centers are accustomed to helping patients who need to keep their testing confidential.

If your girlfriend is not pregnant, how will you feel? Relieved? Wary of another pregnancy scare? Next time you plan to have sex, it might be best to use birth control, if you don't
already, so that you can feel more certain that you will avoid pregnancy. To help you decide what method is right for you and your girlfriend, you may want to talk with a health care provider about your contraceptive options and choices. Also, if there is a time when the two of you are "swept away with passion" and do not use any birth control, emergency contraception (in one-pill formulations like Plan B One-Step® and its generic versions) is now available on retail shelves at many pharmacies. No prescriptions are needed and proof-of-age will not be required to purchase it.

If your girlfriend is pregnant, how will you feel? It appears that you and your girlfriend have decided on terminating the pregnancy. Remember that this is a decision both of you can be involved in and agree with, however your girlfriend will make the final call. Most states require that a woman have what's called "options counseling" before having an abortion. In this counseling session, a woman, and possibly her partner, is able to discuss the different types of abortion available. Or, if she is not sure that abortion is the right choice, she can discuss her feelings and learn more about abortion, adoption, and/or becoming a parent. The cost of an abortion can vary, beginning around $400 or $500 but possibly costing more, depending on insurance coverage, the provider, and when the abortion is performed. Many health insurance plans, including plans provided by universities for their students, do cover abortion; your girlfriend can call her insurance company to find out more.

Whichever option, it could affect both of you differently and/or change the dynamic of your relationship. If you do need to make a decision about a pregnancy, it may help to think about questions, together or with a counselor, such as: How do I feel about abortion? How do I feel about having a baby? How will I pay/help pay for any necessary medical care? Again, a family planning clinic, like Planned Parenthood, will either be able to provide related services or refer you to other resources.

If your girlfriend is 18 or older, she will be able to have an abortion without parental consent (some states do require parental consent for young women under the age of 18). However, if she doesn't want her family to find out, she may also need to confirm that any medical bills or insurance documents are sent directly to her or are pre-paid. While many people in your situation are concerned that their parents will be upset at the prospect of an unplanned pregnancy, you could consider whether you need to discount them entirely as a source of support. How might yours or your girlfriend's parents react? Would they support you in making your own decisions? Would they be able to provide emotional support, or maybe even financial support? While you don't need to inform either of your families about having an abortion, it's possible they would be an unexpected source of empathy, compassion, and/or help with logistics.

Reading the related Q&As below can be helpful in providing you two with information about fertility time frames; early signs of pregnancy; testing for pregnancy; and, concerns about cost, confidentiality, insurance coverage, legality, after-care, and referral regarding abortion. Hopefully taking things step-by-step will help quell the questions and concerns rushing through your mind and help both of you feel comfortable about your decisions.

Take care,

Alice!

Category: Sexual & Reproductive Health

Pregnancy Options