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Pregnant and undecided ^[1]

Dear Alice,

I am nineteen-years-old. I just found out that I'm pregnant. I have been with the guy for two years and in college for one year. We are not financially stable. We have given it a lot of thought, but still do not know what to do. I have looked at the pros and cons and still I'm not sure. I have three little sisters and know that raising children is a hard job. Throughout this time I have leaned more toward the abortion, but don't feel like I know enough about it. Can you please HELP?

Thanks,

Undecided

Answer

Dear Undecided,

It is important to get the information you need to make your decision because this decision has a time limit. If you do not reach one within a certain amount of time, you may be limited to only one option.

If you are within 49 days of the first day of your last menstrual period you may choose to have a medical abortion using a chemical called RU-486 (Mifepristone). You can check out the response to [The abortion pill \(mifepristone\)](#) ^[2] for more information.

If it has been more than 49 days since the first day of your last menstrual period, your abortion options are limited to a surgical abortion. Clinically, surgical abortion is a safe and simple procedure when carried out legally by licensed and specially trained doctors and some nurse practitioners with sterile and proper instruments. If you decide to have an abortion, it is best to do so within the first trimester (first three months) — this is when an abortion is safer, easier, and less expensive. You may have a hard time finding someone to perform a second trimester abortion; and, third trimester abortions are only performed when your life is seriously threatened by the pregnancy, or if you need to be treated for a life-threatening disease with a medication that would be toxic to the pregnancy.

Most surgical abortions take anywhere from five to fifteen minutes. The most common technique, aspiration, involves inserting a small tube that is attached to a source of gentle suction, which draws the pregnancy tissue out from the uterus through the cervix. You can choose local (you're awake) or general anesthesia. This type of abortion is done during the first three months. Second trimester abortions usually involve an injection of medication to help trigger the abortion.

As far as how you will handle an abortion emotionally, some women feel relief, sadness, anger, upset, guilt, nothing at all, or all of the above. You may or may not experience unexpected emotions afterwards. If you choose to have an abortion, let a close friend or two, besides your boyfriend, know about it. Having people around who care and who can support you in your decision will help.

Ultimately, the decision is yours to make. You've got several choices to consider: you can terminate the pregnancy either surgically or medically (whichever is recommended as appropriate for you); or, you can carry the pregnancy to full-term, either keeping the baby or perhaps arranging for the baby to be adopted. Carefully think about which option will be best for you and your boyfriend. It may be a complicated decision to make, as family, religious, cultural, and future life concerns are so often influential. Speak with a health care provider or ask your student health service if you need more help making your decision. [Planned Parenthood](#) [3] is another great resource for women's health care, information, and support. You can check out their website, or give them a call at 1(800) 230-PLAN (-7526).

You may also find it helpful to speak about this difficult decision with a mental health professional, counselor or respected clergy or other trusted adult. Whatever you decide, know that it will be the best choice for you and your partner at this point in your life.

Alice!

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Published date:

Nov 20, 1998

Last reviewed on:

Jul 20, 2015

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