



Children by Choice  
Association Incorporated

Providing pro-choice  
counselling, information and  
education services on all  
unplanned pregnancy options  
– abortion, adoption and  
parenting

### Contact Details...

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[www.childrenbychoice.org.au](http://www.childrenbychoice.org.au)

## Pregnancy and Parenting

Choosing to parent promises to be a challenging experience. This information sheet offers a brief introduction to the many issues for you to consider, including looking after yourself, relationships, finances, work, pregnancy, birth and parenting.

### Looking after Yourself

#### Emotional Health

While pregnancy can be a happy and exciting time, it is a time when you are dealing with many changes in your life. These include:

- Coping with physical changes, such as hormonal swings, sickness and tiredness, and change to your shape.
- Dealing with other people, such as the man involved with the pregnancy, and/or your partner, husband, family, friends, doctor, medical staff and strangers.
- Dealing with changes to your environment, your work and home life arrangements.
- Coping with new information and learning about pregnancy, birth and parenting.

Change often causes us stress, and it is important to be aware of your feelings and find your own ways to deal with your concerns.

You may feel many different and competing feelings, joy and sadness, anxiety and excitement. Some women find that it can help to write down all these feelings and why you think you are feeling them.

Pregnancy can raise lots of questions, such as:

- Will I be a good parent?
- How did my childhood affect me?
- How will this pregnancy affect my relationships?
- How will I manage?

You may ask yourself many other questions at different times during your pregnancy. Your pregnancy may raise questions for others around you too. However, you are the main person in this process. Others may be important too, but it is important not to forget yourself and your own needs during this pregnancy.

A few suggestions for coping are:

- Think about what or who has helped you deal with stress and

### Our Vision ...

All women have the knowledge and power to take control of their sexual health and reproductive choices.

### Useful contacts (nutrition)...

Food Authority of NSW:  
Comprehensive guide to food intake during pregnancy, including translated fact sheets  
[www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au)

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change in the past,

- Get more information, prepare for and investigate issues you are facing,
- Seek out people you trust, who will be supportive and understanding, without trying to pressure you to behave in a certain way.

### Nutrition – Food and Diet

Healthy eating is really important during pregnancy, for the maintenance of your own health, as well as the development of a healthy pregnancy. The most important things to remember are:

- Eat a balanced diet, selecting foods from each food group,
- Avoid foods that can harm your pregnancy, and
- Eat in moderation.
- During the first trimester (the first 12 weeks), it is important to ensure that you are eating enough required nutrients, as this is a critical time for organ development. Throughout your pregnancy, it is important to increase your intake of:
  - Protein: for building muscle and tissue. Found in red meat, beans, legumes, nuts and seeds.
  - Calcium: for strong teeth and bones for yourself and the foetus. Calcium is found in dairy products (eg. milk and cheese), soya beans and milk, some seafood (eg. salmon or sardines), spinach, broccoli, and calcium supplements.
  - Iron: for building blood cells and preventing anaemia. Sources of iron include red meat, chicken, fish, green leafy vegetables, wholegrain cereals, and dried fruit and nuts. Eating these foods in conjunction with Vitamin C (found in citrus fruits and many vegetables) assists your body to absorb iron.
  - Folic Acid: for brain and spinal cord development of pregnancy, and to prevent you from anaemia. Found in green leafy vegetables, breads, cereals, and fruit.
  - Water: to make sure you stay well hydrated.

Discuss your nutritional requirements with your doctor or nutritionist, as each individual is different, and you may have special dietary requirements.

Avoid foods that may harm your pregnancy. Caffeine intake should be reduced, and limited to less than 2 cups of tea, coffee, or cola per day. Alcohol should also be removed from your diet, as even

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### Useful contacts (drugs and medicines)...

Royal Brisbane Women's Hospital:  
Obstetric Drug Info Service  
(07) 3636 7599

Alcohol & Drug Info Service:  
(07) 3837 5989 or 1800 177  
833 outside Brisbane  
Info on all drug-related issues  
[www.health.gov.au/atods](http://www.health.gov.au/atods)

Drug Arm:  
1300 656 800 (9-5 Mon-Fri)  
Information and counselling  
for drugs and alcohol  
[www.drugarm.com.au](http://www.drugarm.com.au)

Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA):  
Information on prescription medicines during pregnancy  
[www.tga.gov.au/docs/html/medpreg.htm](http://www.tga.gov.au/docs/html/medpreg.htm)

Medicines Line:  
1300 888 763 (9-6 Mon-Fri)  
Independent pharmacist info  
about all medicines  
[www.nps.org.au](http://www.nps.org.au)

Quitline:  
131848  
Telephone support for  
smokers who want to quit  
[www.quit.info.au](http://www.quit.info.au)

### Useful contacts (Exercise)...

Better Health Channel  
Pregnancy and exercise  
guide  
[www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au)

moderate amounts may result in low birth weight, smaller head circumference, mental retardation and congenital heart defects. Empty calories (such as sugar, chocolates, soft drinks and lollies) contain energy but no nutrients, so these foods should be eaten sparingly.

Eating in moderation means eating the suggested amounts of foods from each of the food groups. Eating for two does not mean eating twice as much as normal.

### Drugs and Medicines in Pregnancy

Alcohol and other drugs such as tobacco, marijuana, cocaine, heroin can all have serious, negative and long-term consequences for both you and your child. Some common medicines and substances are not suitable for use during pregnancy and it's advisable to check with your doctor, health clinic or the TGA.

You may have a medical condition, such as epilepsy or asthma that requires drug treatment during pregnancy. It is very important to seek medical advice in these cases. Ideally, you will have a regular doctor who can monitor your condition and your pregnancy, and make you aware of any symptoms or side effects that could occur.

Avoid smoking during pregnancy as it can seriously affect the developing foetus. Within one day of quitting smoking, your blood's level of carbon monoxide and nicotine will drop dramatically.

To find out more and get support, ring the services listed on left, or talk to your local doctor or community health clinic.

### Exercise

Exercise is important during pregnancy to maintain your health and well being, and also to prepare your body for childbirth. Your exercise program now depends on the exercise you did before your pregnancy, and also the recommendations from your doctor or midwife. Here are a few tips to follow:

- Do gentle stretches to warm up and warm down.
- Take it easy, as your muscles are softer when you are pregnant.
- Maintain a good posture to protect your spine and help prevent backache. Keep your spine straight, tuck your bottom under, and roll shoulders back and down.
- Bend your knees and use your leg muscles for any bending or lifting movements.
- Do not spend too much time lying on your back as this puts pressure on the blood vessels that supply the uterus.

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### Our Vision ...

All women have the knowledge and power to take control of their sexual health and reproductive choices.

### Support us ...

Make a donation today and ensure that Children by Choice can continue to make a positive difference for women.

Membership of the association is open to all who agree with our aims.

Call us to explore opportunities to volunteer.

- Pelvis rocking, squats, abdominal bracing, spine stretching, and relaxation are all good activities to practice at home.

### Common Discomforts

Throughout the course of a pregnancy, it is not uncommon to experience several changes in your body that may lead to minor discomfort. Such changes can include, but are not limited to:

- Breast pain: this can be one of the first signs of pregnancy for many women. To minimize discomfort, it is important to get a supportive bra professionally fitted, as you may go up several sizes during your pregnancy. It is also normal for the nipples to darken and veins in the breast to become more obvious.
- Heartburn: Hormonal changes and pressure from the enlarging uterus on the stomach are often responsible for heartburn. Eating small meals often, avoiding spicy foods, avoiding eating before bed, and eating slowly while sitting upright can all help to ease the discomfort of heartburn.
- Morning Sickness: Intense nausea, vomiting, and an increased sensitivity to smells may occur at any time of the day or night. It is unknown what causes morning sickness, but it is thought to be hormonal and occurs most frequently in the first trimester of pregnancy. To lessen its effects, some people suggest eating small amounts of dry bland foods (such as crackers) first thing in the morning, eating small meals throughout the day, and drinking plenty of fluids.
- Swelling of fingers, ankles, and knees: Caused by hormonal effects on fluid retention. Try elevating legs or lying on your back for short periods throughout the day.
- Constipation and Haemorrhoids: Hormonal changes in pregnancy slow down the bowel movement, which may lead to constipation. Constant straining on the toilet may damage pelvic floor muscles and result in haemorrhoids. To avoid constipation, eat high fibre foods such as wholemeal breads and cereals, fresh fruit and vegetables, and water.

### Antenatal Care

Antenatal (or pregnancy) care is important for maintaining your own health, and the health of your pregnancy. Initially, you may choose to receive care from your regular doctor, or you may prefer to deal with a midwife, obstetrician, or public hospital staff. The decisions you make regarding your antenatal care may affect your birthing options.

The most common schedule for antenatal visits is:

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**Useful contacts (relationships)...**

Relationships Australia:  
Organisation specialising in relationship counselling  
[www.relationships.com.au](http://www.relationships.com.au)

Family Law Court:  
For arbitration and mediation with family breakdown  
[www.familylawcourts.gov.au](http://www.familylawcourts.gov.au)

**Useful contacts (work)...**

Queensland Working Women's Service:  
(07) 3211 1440 Brisbane or 1800 621 458 within Queensland  
Advisory service on all work related issues.  
[www.qwws.org.au](http://www.qwws.org.au)

Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations – Wageline:  
1300 369 945  
Information on award wages and employment conditions.  
[www.wageline.qld.gov.au](http://www.wageline.qld.gov.au)

Anti-Discrimination Commission  
1300 130 670  
Information and advocacy service on all forms of discrimination.  
[www.adcq.qld.gov.au](http://www.adcq.qld.gov.au)

- when you first think you are pregnant
- every 4 weeks until 32 weeks
- every 2 weeks until 36 weeks
- then every week until birth

However, this is only a guide and your visits may be more or less regular depending on your individual circumstances. Always check with your health carer when beginning your antenatal care as to the frequency and cost of visits.

**Relationships**

Having a child introduces a new person into your relationships. If the pregnancy is unexpected, this change may be something that you've never discussed. Even when the pregnancy is planned, many new issues can arise that you didn't think about in the past and you will need to find new ways of working together. Often we are not used to asking for help and making decisions jointly with others on a day to day basis.

The main challenge that faces you is being able to talk about issues together in a calm and constructive way. This holds whether you are working with anyone, from your mother, doctor or the man involved in the pregnancy, who may not be your partner. Between any two people, there are always differences which may cause conflict, anger and hurt feelings.

Important communication tools are to listen carefully to what others say and to express your feelings and needs clearly to them. You can do this by using the form of an assertiveness statement...

I feel .....  
When you .....(carefully describe the action)  
And I would like you to ..... (describe the action you want them to do).

This form is powerful because you concentrate on your feelings and their actions, without including what you think they might think or feel.

Allow yourself and the people you deal with good time and space to talk about things. Discussing important issues, where you may have conflicting views and values, when you're tired or sick makes the process even harder.

Sources of relationship conflict concerning parenting are many, but can include:  
choosing if and when and how many children  
financial stress and sharing costs  
sharing household tasks, and

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### Useful contacts (finances)...

Centrelink:  
Family Assistance Office  
13 61 50  
For information about  
accessing payments.  
[www.centrelink.gov.au](http://www.centrelink.gov.au)

Child Support Agency:  
13 12 72  
For information about  
accessing payments from the  
parent not responsible for  
daily care of the child.  
[www.csa.gov.au](http://www.csa.gov.au)

Financial Counselling  
Directory:  
[www.facs.gov.au/Internet/  
facsinternet.nsf/family/cfcp-  
cfcp\\_directory.htm](http://www.facs.gov.au/Internet/facsinternet.nsf/family/cfcp-cfcp_directory.htm)

FIDO:  
Financial Information  
Delivered Online, including  
budget tools.  
[www.fido.asic.gov.au](http://www.fido.asic.gov.au)

### Useful contacts (prenatal testing)...

Queensland Clinical Genetics  
Services:  
(07) 3636 1686  
Prenatal testing and genetic  
counselling.

Mater Mother's Hospital:  
(07) 3840 1896  
Prenatal testing and genetic  
counselling.

different beliefs about raising children.

Professional counselling for relationships is available when you cannot work together. The Family Law Court arbitrates legal responsibilities where relationships concerning children have broken down.

Every family is different and children are raised successfully in a wide range of relationships. If you work on arranging a stable routine and try to ensure that you and your child have a good support network from people that you trust, your relationships can grow stronger through parenting.

## Finances and Work

### Pregnant employees

If you are pregnant and currently employed in a full time position, and have been employed in that position for 12 months or more, then you are entitled to maternity leave under the Industrial Relations Act 1999. Under the Queensland Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 you are also legally protected from discrimination in employment, whether you are a full-time, part-time or casual employee, on the basis of pregnancy, marital status and family responsibilities. That means that if your employer attempts to terminate your employment, reduce your hours, demote you or does not offer training because you are pregnant, then your legal rights may have been violated.

### Finances

A new family member will definitely mean added expenses. It is important to think about the costs of raising a child and your capacity to meet these costs. Having a child may impact on your income from work, such as reduced working hours, living on one wage, managing childcare, health insurance, loan repayments and superannuation. If you don't currently keep track of your dollars in and bills out, start writing these down and try mapping out a budget. If you require assistance with your budget, there are a number of contacts you can try:

Firstly, Centrelink provides payments to parents in many different circumstances for a variety of reasons. Payments available during pregnancy and parenting can include Family Tax Benefits A and B, Maternity Allowance, Maternity Immunisation Allowance, Child Care Benefit, and a Parenting Payment. For more information on the assistance you may be entitled to, it is best to speak to someone from the Family Assistance Office, Centrelink.

Secondly, if you are not living with man involved in the pregnancy,

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### Useful contacts (birth options)...

Bubhub:  
[www.bubhub.com.au/  
serviceshospitals.html](http://www.bubhub.com.au/serviceshospitals.html)  
Online list of maternity  
hospitals and midwife-  
managed birth centres

Mater Mothers' Hospital,  
Brisbane:  
(07) 3840 8664  
Care for mothers and babies  
during antenatal, labour, birth,  
and postnatal periods. Both  
public and private hospital  
facilities and midwifery group  
practice.  
[www.mater.org.au](http://www.mater.org.au)

Royal Brisbane Women's  
Hospital:  
(07) 3636 8111  
Antenatal care, childbirth  
education classes, midwifery,  
birth suites, birth centre and  
postnatal services.  
[http://www.health.qld.gov.  
au/rbwh/default.asp](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/rbwh/default.asp)

Friends of the Birth Centre  
(Royal Brisbane):  
[www.fbc.org.au](http://www.fbc.org.au)

Home Midwifery Association:  
(07) 3839 5883  
Information on midwife  
networks and childbirth.  
[www.homebirth.org.au](http://www.homebirth.org.au)

you may be entitled to Child Support. Child Support is a payment made to the parent who is responsible for the ongoing daily care of the child by the other parent. You can arrange how much is to be paid and when between yourselves as parents, or you can arrange for the courts or the Child Support Agency to formalise this agreement for you. To get an understanding of the amount of support you may be entitled to, contact the Child Support Agency.

Finally, if you think you could benefit from support or counselling to assist you with your finances, many services are available.

## About Pregnancy and Birth

### Prenatal Testing

Any pregnant woman can choose to have prenatal testing performed, however it is most commonly used if:

- You already have a child with a serious disorder.
- You or the man involved have a serious disorder, which may be passed onto the pregnancy.
- You have a relative with a serious disorder, or the relative has an affected child.
- You have a family history of a disorder that only affects boys. Women may be "carriers" of the disorder.
- You are in your mid 30s or older.

It's important to remember that not all birth defects can be detected by prenatal diagnosis and a normal result cannot exclude every possible problem. Types of testing include ultrasound, Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS) and amniocentesis.

### Birthing Options

Generally within Australia, there are 3 options for birthing: in a hospital, a birthing centre, or a home birth.

### Hospital

Each hospital has different services and policies. It is therefore important to ask several questions before deciding on a hospital.

If you are a public hospital patient, you will only pay a Medicare levy but will usually have no choice over the staff attending to you during pregnancy and labour. Some hospitals have special midwifery programs which offer continuity-of-carer, so your care throughout pregnancy and birth is provided by one named carer who is part of a small team of midwives who you get to know.

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### Useful contacts (parenting)...

Australian Breastfeeding  
Association:  
(07) 3844 8977 or  
(07) 3844 8166  
24 hour breastfeeding  
information helpline. They  
can also advise you about  
local support groups.  
[www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

Women's Health Queensland  
Wide:  
(07) 3839 9988 Brisbane or  
1800 017 676 within QLD  
Information on Women's  
Health and referral to  
women's services.  
[www.womhealth.org.au](http://www.womhealth.org.au)

Community Child Health  
Service – 24 hour Child  
Health Line:  
(07) 3862 2333 Brisbane or  
1800 177 279 within QLD  
24 hour state-wide telephone  
service.  
[www.health.qld.gov.au/cchs](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/cchs)

Bubhub:  
Services Directory  
[www.bubhub.com.au](http://www.bubhub.com.au)

Parentline:  
1300 301 300  
Support and information on  
all issues facing parents.  
[www.parentline.com.au](http://www.parentline.com.au)

Men's Line:  
1300 789 978 - 24 hours  
Information, support and  
counselling for men

Playgroup Australia:  
1800 171 882  
Playgroups help parents  
meet, share ideas and  
experiences, to learn from  
and support each other  
[www.playgroupaustralia.com.au](http://www.playgroupaustralia.com.au)

As a private patient you can select the obstetrician who will be responsible for your care during pregnancy and birth, however you cannot select the midwives who'll provide care during labour. In a private hospital, your surroundings may be more comfortable, however there are seldom resident medical staff on site. The costs of private health care may be partially covered by private health insurance, with some out of pocket costs.

### Birthing Centre

In some larger cities, there are birthing centres attached to hospitals, which provide women with normal, low risk pregnancies the opportunity to make more choices in their birth and minimise unnecessary intervention. Birth Centres are mainly staffed by midwives and allow women to have more support people present during the labour and birth.

These services are in great demand because of the control they give to women during birth, and their easy access to hospital facilities in the event of complications. Therefore, it is important to book in early to have a chance to birth with this model of care.

### Home Birth

In general, homebirths are attended by midwives and place emphasis on the client having control over decision-making, the environment, and the interventions utilized. A number of studies have indicated that women who have homebirths have less medical intervention in their births and less use of painkillers than do women who give birth in hospitals.

With a homebirth, there remains the possibility that you may need to be transferred to a hospital if complications occur, and thus in your decision-making it is important to weigh up whether the risks from increased medical intervention outweigh the risks of an emergency occurring at home. When deciding on a homebirth, other risk factors should also be considered, such as a history of previous premature births, stillbirths, or caesarean sections, twin pregnancy, or active herpes.

### Parenting – when the baby has arrived

Once your baby has arrived, many choices and new decisions will also arrive. These choices will be influenced by your resources, your support network, your cultural background and individual circumstances. You and baby are both individuals and your choices will be driven by you and your baby's needs and what works best for you both.

### Useful contacts (child care)...

Child Care Information  
Service:  
(07) 3224 4225 Brisbane or  
1800 637 711 within Qld.  
Information & referral service  
about all kinds of childcare.  
Also provides guidelines for  
what to look for in a childcare  
service.  
<http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/childcare/ccis/>

Creche & Kindergarten  
Association of Qld:  
(07) 3552 5333  
State-wide info service on  
crèche and kindies in Qld.  
[www.candk.asn.au](http://www.candk.asn.au)

Family Day Care Association  
of Queensland:  
(07) 3395 7044 Brisbane or  
1800 177 253 within  
Queensland  
A state-wide information  
service on family day care.  
[www.fdcqld.org](http://www.fdcqld.org)

Riverton Early Parenting  
Centre:  
1800 177 279 or (07) 3862  
2333  
Provides family health  
information, education and  
assistance to QLD families.

## Breastfeeding

Breastfeeding is a free, natural, healthy and safe start to your baby's life. Breast milk is considered the optimal nutritional option for your baby and provides all the nutrients that your baby will need for their first 4-6 months. It also contains antigens that will protect your child against infection.

For a variety of reasons, some women choose not to breastfeed and some are unable to breastfeed. Feeding by formula is an acceptable option where instructions for use are followed carefully.

If you choose to breastfeed and you and your baby experience difficulties, or have concerns about feeding issues, you can seek advice and support from your doctor, midwife and other services about baby feeding options.

Whichever method you choose, your baby can thrive and you can both experience positive and rewarding outcomes.

## Baby Immunisation

Newborn babies have some special needs and need some extra attention to ensure that they are healthy. Generally, when babies are first born they have had limited exposure to infection (some exposure has occurred via the placental wall during pregnancy), and are therefore vulnerable to some types of infection. Immunisation is recommended to protect against some childhood diseases such as polio, diphtheria, tetanus, mumps and measles. The first immunisation is due when the baby is 2 months old, and at regular intervals afterwards. You can make informed choices.

## Sleep

The amount of sleep babies need varies between children and they will usually need regular naps throughout the day. It is also important for you to rest while the baby is asleep, as many new parents say lack of sleep is a major problem for them. Most babies will not sleep through the night until they are older. You can help to protect against SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) by sleeping babies on their backs, making sure their head is not covered, removing large toys and pets from the room, and by not smoking around your baby.

## Community Services

Attending your local Community Child Health service is a great way to learn about how to deal with teething, bathing, hygiene, feeding, and common ailments such as nappy rash and cradle cap.

## Parenting Groups

Sometimes parenting is more difficult than first expected, or we are not “a natural” at coping with a young baby or toddler. The reality is that parenting is a demanding and challenging role that needs a lot of skills. Not all people have learnt the skills for parenting and most do not know what to do in every single situation that you may find yourself in as a new parent. This is where parenting education can help. It can teach you basic skills such as nappy changing and hygiene, and other skills such as budgeting, communication skills, how to access childcare, and how to look after yourself when things get tough.

Listed on the left are some services that are able to provide you with more information on parenting.

### Useful contacts (domestic violence)...

Domestic Violence Telephone Service:  
1800 811 811 or  
1800 600 636 (Men's DV Line)  
Telephone crisis counselling and information on available refuges.  
[www.dvconnect.org.au](http://www.dvconnect.org.au)

Domestic Violence Resource Centre:  
(07) 3217 2544  
Support, education, and counselling for women experiencing domestic violence.  
[www.dvrc.org.au](http://www.dvrc.org.au)

## Childcare

Whether you are working or not, at some stage most parents will need to use some form of childcare. Childcare services can be either informal (grandparents, babysitters, family, friends or neighbours), or formal (crèches, kindergartens, family daycare centres and playgroups). Also, childcare services can range in price from free/cheap to expensive, depending on what type of service you are using, how often you use it, and whether you are eligible for some form of government rebate scheme. If you need to have formal childcare soon after the baby's birth, start making enquiries and bookings as soon as you know your due date, as the number of places available for newborns are very limited.

When looking at the various childcare alternatives, consider location, price, availability and the general atmosphere.

## Special Issues

### Domestic Violence

Approximately 1 in 4 women will experience domestic violence in an intimate relationship during their lifetime. Domestic violence includes not only physical abuse such as hitting, pushing or kicking, but also emotional abuse (name-calling and put downs), social abuse (denying contact with friends and family), financial abuse (refusing to give money or not making equal decisions regarding family expenditure) and spiritual abuse (not allowing someone to practice their chosen religion).

Pregnancy is a time of particularly heightened risk for women - nearly 42% of women who have experienced domestic violence indicate that the violence first occurred during pregnancy. Domestic violence

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### Useful contacts (post natal depression)...

Beyond Blue:  
1300 224 636  
National depression  
[www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Brisbane Centre for Post  
Natal Disorders:  
(07) 3398 0238  
Belmont Private Hospital

Women's Health Queensland  
Wide:  
(07) 3839 9988 Brisbane or  
1800 017 676 within Qld.  
Information on women;s  
health and referrals. PND  
booklet available:  
[www.womhealth.org.au/  
factsheets/pnd.htm](http://www.womhealth.org.au/factsheets/pnd.htm)

North Qld Postnatal Distress  
Support Group:  
[www.napostnaldistress  
.com](http://www.napostnaldistress.com)  
(07) 4728 1911

### Contact Details...

phone 07 3357 5570  
or free call 1800 177 725  
(within Queensland)  
fax 07 3857 6246

postal address  
PO Box 2005  
Windsor QLD 4030

street address  
237 Lutwyche Road  
Windsor QLD  
Australia

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[www.childrenbychoice.org.au](http://www.childrenbychoice.org.au)

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This information is intended as a  
general guide only. Whilst every  
effort has been made to ensure the  
accuracy of this information, we  
accept no responsibility for errors or  
omissions. This information is no  
substitute for independent  
professional advice.

during pregnancy increases the risks of miscarriage, foetal injury and early labour.

Domestic violence can have long-lasting negative effects on women and their children. Some of these effects include depression, substance abuse, general ill health, injury, and sometimes death. Other effects for young children can be sleep disturbances/nightmares, bedwetting, withdrawal, aggression, poor school performance, increased anxieties, fear, and problems with social/emotional adjustment.

Domestic violence can also impact negatively on a person's ability to parent effectively. For example, decisions may be constantly undermined, access to medical care may be difficult or patchy, there may be a lack of opportunity for normal social contact, and the provision of negative role models regarding relationships and parenting. Also, research has shown that children are more at risk for child abuse where domestic violence is present in the family.

If you think that you might be in a domestic violence situation, or even if you are not sure, there are organisations that you can talk to about your concerns. They can also provide assistance if you decide that you would like to leave.

## Post Natal Depression

While most women will feel emotional in the first weeks after birth, these feelings are usually due to the body readjusting its hormone levels, fatigue and coping with many changes. These feelings should pass quite quickly are often referred to as the 'baby blues'.

However, if feelings of depression, tiredness, and irritability continue, along with difficulties with sleeping, eating or thinking clearly, then you may have what is called post-natal depression. Post-natal depression does not usually just pass by itself, and is more serious than the 'baby blues'. It can help to get professional assistance (e.g. from a doctor or counsellor) in dealing with post-natal depression, and some women derive a lot of benefit by joining a support group for other women in the same position.

## In Conclusion

Finding out you are pregnant and choosing to parent is a time of change and challenge. Children by Choice and many other services are available to support you at this time.

