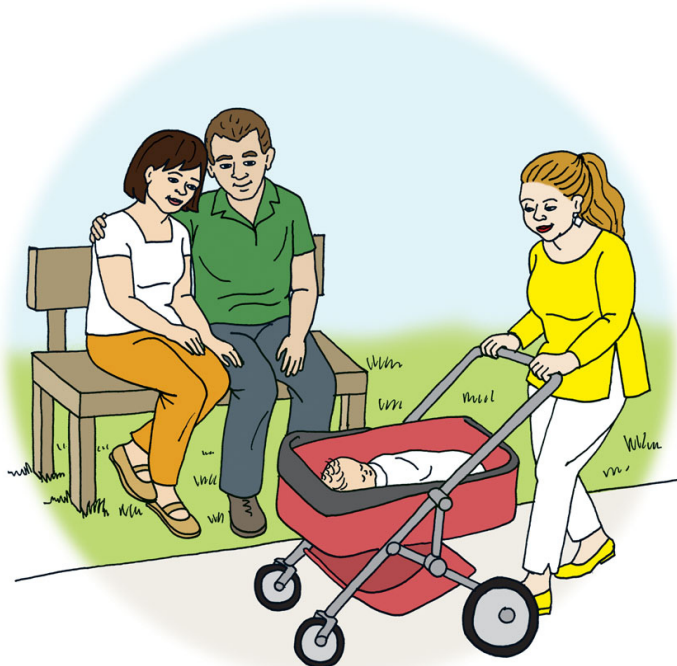


DECIDING TO BECOME A PARENT



Choices

Deciding to become a parent is a big decision. Some women want to have a baby and some women don't. Some women want to have a baby but they can't get pregnant.

Having a baby and looking after children is an important job. It can be rewarding but it is a big responsibility. It is a lot of work and can be very hard.

Before you start trying to get pregnant think about how being a parent may affect your life. Talk to your partner because it will affect him too. Talk with family, friends and maybe your support worker about what you are thinking.

Babies grow up to become toddlers, bigger children and then teenagers. Everyone needs help to look after children. Parents with an intellectual disability need extra help to make sure that they and their baby stay healthy, safe and happy.

If you decide not to be a parent, you can still have babies and children in your life. For example you may have nieces and nephews, you may work or volunteer to work with children.

DECIDING TO BECOME A PARENT

If you become pregnant but you do not want to be a parent you should speak with someone you trust and your doctor as soon as you can. They will talk with you about what choices you have.

Questions to think about before getting pregnant

- Do you like babies and older children?
- Have you ever looked after children before?
- Is your body healthy enough to have a baby?
- Where would you and your baby live?
- Do you have enough money to look after a baby? If you don't have enough what would you do?
- Would you have to stop work to look after your baby?
- Who would help you to look after the baby?
- Would you need help to do the shopping and cooking for your family?
- Who could help look after your baby if you need a rest or get sick?
- What sort of things would you and your baby do during the day?
- Who would you call if you were worried about your baby or if they were sick?
- What are the services where you live that help parents?

You can talk to a doctor about the chance your baby might be born with a disability. You can have some tests. You can make your own choice about the tests.

DECIDING TO BECOME A PARENT

Staying healthy

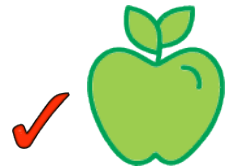
Stop smoking before you get pregnant. Smoking will hurt the health of your baby. Your doctor can help you quit. No-one should smoke near your baby or near you when you are pregnant.



Do not drink alcohol when you are trying to get pregnant or when you are pregnant. Drinking alcohol can hurt your baby as it is growing.



Eating good food will keep your body healthy and in the best condition to be pregnant.



Before you get pregnant both you and your baby's father need to make sure you are healthy. You need to see your doctor who will take some blood tests and talk to you about taking special vitamins to help the baby.

The doctor will also talk to you and your boyfriend/ husband about what medicines you are taking. You may also need some needles (immunisations).

Some medicines and vitamins can hurt a baby as it is growing. Always talk to your doctor about all the medicines and vitamins you are taking. You might need time to change some of your medicines before you get pregnant.



DECIDING TO BECOME A PARENT

Where can you find out more

Healthy Start For Me and My Baby

A book for women with learning difficulties.



9351 9510



www.healthystart.net.au

Other fact sheets in this series you may want to read

ASKING QUESTIONS ABOUT YOU

BEING PREGNANT

BEING HEALTHY

HEALTHY EATING