

# Rape and Pregnancy

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**By Louise**

*Please note that the links in this article have been carefully selected for their objectivity which means they are unlikely to contain pushy philosophies about what you should do. However, no claim is made for the complete accuracy of information contained in links, and you are encouraged to ask any further questions you may have. Importantly, if you think you may be pregnant by rape, you are advised to seek professional help as soon as possible.*

## **Rape Related Pregnancy: How Common is It?**

Some statistics report that conception as a result of rape occurs in less than one percent of cases, while other studies indicate higher figures such as 4.7% (see this page). Rape-related Pregnancy may be more widespread than we know - many women are understandably reluctant to talk about it. Common contexts for conception in rape are war, and in domestic violence settings.

However, if you are here because you're facing a rape-related pregnancy, it doesn't really matter what the statistics or settings are, it can be a terrifying and isolating thing to face. It's most important that you know you don't have to face it alone.

## **If You Have Just Been Raped: Support Numbers and The Morning After Pill**

If you have been raped, please consider calling the police. If you don't want to press charges, you can still have a hospital check, and get the support of a rape crisis worker in doing so. For rape crisis numbers, please go [here](#). Here, also, is a page providing further information on [what to do if you have been raped](#).

If you want access to the morning after pill to stop possible conception from the rape, it's important that you act quickly. In some places, it can be purchased over the counter, or you can ask the attending doctor about it - and any possible risks. A rape crisis worker should advocate for you about this if you are not offered it. For information on the morning after pill, what it is and how it works, please see this link: [Morning After Pill](#)

PLEASE, IF YOU HAVE JUST BEEN RAPED, GET HELP NOW. YOU DESERVE IT.

### **Missed Your Period and Scared?**

You may be in a position where you were raped recently, and have not yet menstruated. You might have considered that you are pregnant and feel numb, or absolutely terrified and losing sleep. Both reactions are completely understandable. If you have not confided in anybody about the rape, you may be afraid of doing so, but please try to reach out - this isn't going to go away. You have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of - the rape was not your fault under any circumstances .

If you don't feel that you have a friend or family member you can go to, please call a counsellor, who can talk to you about the fear you face. They can also support you as you find out whether you are pregnant. Go here for numbers for rape crisis

Home pregnancy kits can be purchased from a pharmacy quite cheaply - please check directions and other information regarding reliability. Again, you might wish to have a support person who can be with you as you find out, and support you when you get the results.

Please do see a doctor shortly after if the results are positive. Also, even if it is negative, be aware that kits are not infallible.

### **You've Found Out You're Pregnant By Rape - Decisions and Resources**

Again, you might feel a range of emotions, from fear to confusion and numbness. You may, like I did, also deny that you are pregnant, or that the pregnancy could be a result of the rape. You may be wondering what on earth you're going to do. If you are not already clear about what you wish to do, it is perfectly fine for you to take time as you think about what you need to do. Please engage good support as you weigh up your options.

*Be careful of people with agendas:* You may have noticed that rape-related pregnancy is something that many people have strong opinions about. You might hear advice that, though well intentioned, is not what is suitable for you and your life. It is absolutely okay for you to disregard what does not feel right for you. The choice is ultimately yours, and you do not need to justify it. In being raped, you have had choice taken away from you. It's very important that you are empowered to make the best choices for yourself now. While you are encouraged to seek help from others, watch for their biases. People with a pro-abortion, pro-life or pro-adoption position may use language about what is right for you that can feel coercive and pressurizing. Sometimes, too, biases can be concealed - for example, an organisation calling itself a "crisis pregnancy support service" may actually hold a strong anti-abortion position that it does not openly disclose until women attempt to use the service. So, in seeking out such services, don't be afraid to ask for their position on all options, or have a friend sound them out for you. Do NOT listen to people who want to suggest that you're being selfish and only thinking about yourself - they may be only thinking about their own bias!

Of course, many people who hold definite positions are also able to be respectful of other's opinions and beliefs without imposing their own, it's just something else for you to be aware of. You are looking for people who will listen as you weigh up the different aspects of your dilemma and make a decision. Many women have been scarred further because others overrode them or forced decisions upon them. Please don't you be one of them.

## Options

What you choose is likely to be subject to different factors such as your values, your age, what you believe you can cope with and other life-circumstances such as whether you have other children. Before we go onto discussing options, here is a useful page that may also be helpful: [Making a choice: A woman-centered approach to looking at pregnancy options.](#)

*Abortion* - If you are thinking about terminating the pregnancy, time is a factor. You may want some counselling about this, and we'll look at that below. Be sure you are fully informed about procedures, costs and other. Check the following links out, and definitely ask your doctor for clarification of any issues or questions you may have:

- [Family Planning USA](#)
- [Marie Stopes Centre Australia](#)
- [Family Planning Association UK](#)

It is to no degree your fault or responsibility that you are pregnant, so if *you* are not morally opposed to termination, others should not make you feel bad about using this option. Nobody has the right to force their values onto you. The same is true in reverse - if you have religious or other grounds for not wishing to have an abortion, this needs to be respected and your choice supported - abortion in the case of rape-related pregnancy isn't always the no-brainer that it is often assumed to be. Either way, just remember that this isn't about other people's values.

If you do terminate, it may be a very emotional time, requiring you to have good supports, including non-directive pre-abortion counselling. If you are not completely sure about terminating, non-directive counselling - which means counselling that will help you explore uncertainties without pushing for a certain outcome, is available at most abortion clinics. It may be best not to

wait until the day of your appointment. If you are thinking about terminating but you want counselling, please ask the clinic what they offer *before* the day of your appointment. While many clinics offer counselling, for some this means they have a team-member trained in psychology who will see you before the day of the appointment and more than once if desired, and for others it may mean half-an-hour with a clinic nurse on the day of the appointment. If the clinic does not offer counselling services that feel adequate to you, ask what else they recommend.

Of course, for some women, terminating a rape-related pregnancy is not something they are in much doubt about, and they don't feel the need for counselling. This is absolutely fine - in most places you are not required to have counselling; it is just important that if you do want it, you get it and that you feel you have adequately explored doubts you may have.

While survivors of rape do feel relieved after a termination, some women may grieve - regardless of the circumstances of conception. Or, you may feel a mixture of both relief and sadness. If you are experiencing grief after abortion, here is a link to a group recommended as an excellent source of support: <http://www.afterabortion.com> (site is politically neutral and not religion-based). Also, you can ask the clinic you're attending about post-abortion counselling support.

*Adoption* - This is an option for some women who have conceived in rape. There will be many considerations for you in this, and there is help available. You will need a lot of sensitive, gentle care as you work through any concerns you have. Please look at these links:

- [Adoption Support UK](#)
- [Kinship Center USA](#)
- [Children by Choice Association Australia - Adoption information and links](#)

Women who have relinquished their babies for adoption, may know that this was the right choice. If so, that's great. But even where they know it was the right thing to do, there might still be grief issues. If you have experienced this, please get support - again look at the above links. This decision must be yours - supported but not foisted upon you by others. For example, nobody should ever try to persuade you that your rape and the pregnancy have the "purpose" of giving a "gift" to childless couples (when it happened to me, some people whom I had told immediately raised that there were "lovely childless couples who want to adopt" practically before the words were out of my mouth!) . If that is the sense *you* make of what has happened to you, that's okay, as long as you know that *your* well-being is a priority and that it is certainly not incumbent upon you to go through a pregnancy and birth to provide a baby for other people.

*Keeping the Child* - You may wish to keep the child. You could have uncertainties about how you will manage this in light of the conception. Questions may arise, like what if the baby looks like the rapist, whether the reminder will be too hard, or what to say if the child asks questions. It's a good idea to have somebody you can explore those fears with; again, I suggest counselling. You can also talk your fears over with other mothers at [Pandora's Aquarium](#). People often seem to be of the opinion that keeping the child is an impossible proposition. But, where such a decision is not forced on the woman, it *is* an option - neither inferior nor superior to other choices, but a very real choice. It must be acknowledged that some women do want to keep rape-conceived babies. Those of us who have made this choice quite often find that problems can be worked through with the right help. We have very loving relationships with our children. Please see a mother's story [here](#). Also be aware that this in no way dismisses women - or their children - who have found the difficulties overwhelmingly traumatic. If you are going to continue the pregnancy and keep the child, it is most important for both of you that *you* have support and space to metabolise the trauma of the rape.

If you choose to continue with the pregnancy, please ask your sexual

assault/rape crisis centre if they know what supports are available for rape-related pregnancy. Many women find after rape, that they don't feel very good about their bodies. If you continue the pregnancy, self-care is especially important. Please make sure you talk with a physician, or women's health nurse, about the best ways of ensuring this.

### **If you'd like others to share with at this difficult time:**

[Pandora's Aquarium](#) - We have a forum for you to ask for and get support from other women who have been or are pregnant from rape, and who terminated, relinquished or kept the child. Please don't be afraid to use it.

### **Miscarriage and Stillbirth**

Some women decide to go ahead with a rape-conceived pregnancy, but experience miscarriage or stillbirth. I have known women who were heartbroken by this. People who know the baby was rape-conceived might suggest that the loss was fortunate, or "all for the best." However, this may not be how *you* feel - if so, you deserve somebody who can hear your pain. Some women feel that loss of the baby is a punishment i.e. it happened because they may have had doubts about wanting the child. Of course it isn't a punishment, but again, please have somebody who will validate your grief to support you.

[Here](#) is a list of international miscarriage and stillbirth support links. You can also join [Pandora's Aquarium](#) - the Pregnancy forum has a subforum for women who experienced miscarriage and stillbirth, and many of whom understand the impact that loss of a rape-conceived baby can have. You can ask for and receive support there.

### **My Rapist Was My Partner - Can He Make Me Have This Child?**

Relationships are unfortunately the most common setting for sexual violence, and pregnancy as a result of partner rape is frequent. Please visit [Aphrodite Wounded](#) for information about partner rape, and see [this page](#) on forced or coerced pregnancy. This site contains links to domestic violence, and other hotlines. You can also seek help from a rape crisis service.

You are still entitled to choose what your future regarding a rape-related pregnancy will be, but please, do get all the information you can. Domestic Violence services will point you to legal services who can better inform you of your status.

### **I Don't Want Anybody to Know I Was Raped**

It is not ideal for nobody to know, primarily because you deserve support. If you are pregnant and you're continuing the pregnancy, it will become obvious to others. Although it is up to you how much you choose to tell people (how you got pregnant is nobody's business unless you want to tell them) I do strongly urge you to think about whom you have in your life that you can confide in.

If you are a woman in a married or other relationship, you may not wish your partner to know you were raped, or you may be a young person who is pregnant by incestuous abuse, and are frightened of the consequences of telling. You really do need to speak to somebody as soon as possible, and you may feel relieved. You may choose to start with a rape counsellor - go [here](#) for numbers.

### **Whose Baby Is It?**

If you are a woman who is in a married or other relationship, you may not know whether the child you carry is that of your partner, or the rapist. This could have bearing on what you want to do. DNA testing to help you determine

paternity may be an option - please see this link for more information: [DNA Testing in Pregnancy](#).

### **It's in The Past, But I'd Like To Share With Others**

My journey through fifteen years was largely a very lonely one, and I would dearly have loved to find people who understood what it was like, to share with. Regardless of your decision, you could feel the same way. Ask your sexual assault service if they know of anything available for support. One option is joining [Pandora's Aquarium](#) for the company of other women who have been, or are, pregnant from rape, and who terminated, relinquished or kept the child there is a very successful forum for these issues.

### **If You Are A Person who was Conceived In Rape**

You could feel very, very sad, and question your right to be here. You do have that right, friend. Just as somebody else's abusive behaviour was not your mother's fault, neither in any way is it yours. Please believe me when I say that YOUR feelings, YOUR pain, are not less valid than anybody else's. You also deserve support, respect and care.

The Stigma group for people conceived in rape is staffed by very kind, caring people. Please follow these links to join: [Stigma's Mailing List](#) - That part of the group is strictly for those conceived by rape/incest, or the mother or adoptive parent of a child in this situation. [Stigma Community Message Board](#) has open discussions.

### **Some Useful Links**

- [Know More, Say More](#) - excellent site focusing on coercive reproduction and rape/domestic violence - also for teenage girls. You can get advice and read stories there.
- [Rape Related Pregnancy Factsheet](#) - Good medical and other advice

- [Pregnancy following rape](#) - Article by Centre Against Sexual Assault (CASA) Victoria
- [Rape-Related Pregnancy and Pregnancy Loss](#) - Margie's beautiful and expansive site

Content originally posted at: <http://www.pandys.org/pregnantbyrape>

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