**The decision is yours**
If you are pregnant you have three options:
- continue the pregnancy and become a parent
- have an abortion to end the pregnancy
- continue the pregnancy and consider adoption or alternative care
Whatever you decide, the choice is yours. It’s important to understand the issues involved in each option before you make your final decision. You may want to talk it over with people you are close to, or someone experienced in this area, before you decide. A social worker, nurse, doctor or counsellor can provide this information and support. You can contact SHINE SA for advice and support.

Abortions are most commonly performed in the first 14 weeks of pregnancy.

**How is an abortion done?**
In South Australia there are two methods available, medication and surgical. Both methods are safe and effective.

Medication abortion involves taking medication to cause a miscarriage. This causes cramping and bleeding like a period. This method needs follow-up with blood tests and/or an ultrasound scan to check it has worked. In about 2% of cases an operation may be required if the pregnancy hasn’t completely come away.

Surgical abortion is done in hospital under anaesthetic. It does not need an overnight stay. There may be some cramping and bleeding afterwards.

**When can I have an abortion?**
Medication abortion can be done up to 9 weeks after your last period.

Surgical abortion can be done simply up to 14 weeks. It can safely be performed after 14 weeks to approximately 22 weeks but it requires more involved medical intervention than an earlier abortion. For this reason, later abortions are mostly done at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre.

**Which method should I choose?**
There are different reasons for choosing between medical and surgical abortion. There is no ‘right’ method for every person.

Reasons for choosing a surgical abortion might include:
- it can be performed later in the pregnancy
- the procedure is over quickly
- there is no need for a follow-up test to confirm the pregnancy has ended
- it is done under anaesthetic

Reasons for choosing a medical abortion might include:
- it is more ‘natural’ and non-invasive
- there is no need for anaesthetic
- there is more privacy than a surgical termination
- you are at home

Your options can be discussed in more detail at the abortion service.

**Who has to know about the abortion?**
All information about you will be treated in confidence by the health care staff involved in your care, unless child abuse or sexual assault is suspected. You don’t need a referral from a GP to access abortion services in Adelaide; some regional services may need a referral. You may find it comforting to confide in a friend, family member or partner regarding your decision, but you don’t have to if you don’t want to.

You may need someone to go home with you and be with you for 24 hours in case of emergency. If you do not have such support, you may be able to stay in hospital instead.
Is abortion legal?
Abortion can be legally accessed in South Australia.
A medical assessment is needed to meet legal requirements. Partner or parental consent is not necessary for an abortion if you are 16 or over. If you’re under 16 and feel you cannot talk to your parents or guardians about the pregnancy, then you can discuss this with a doctor, social worker or counsellor. Abortion can be provided under the age of 16 without parental consent if certain requirements are met.

Where can I have an abortion?
Abortions performed before 14 weeks of pregnancy are available at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre and most public hospitals, including some country hospitals. A doctor’s referral is not needed for the Pregnancy Advisory Centre or most public hospital services.
Abortions later than 14 weeks of pregnancy are mostly provided at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre.

How much does it cost?
If you have a Medicare card, surgical abortions are free at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre and public hospitals.
There is a small cost for a medication abortion. You will need a Medicare card and a health care card (if you have one).
If you are an overseas student with Overseas Student Health Cover, abortions may be covered. You will need to check with your insurer.

What are the risks?
Most abortions are done with no complications. Abortion done before 14 weeks of pregnancy is a simple, safe procedure. As with any procedure there are some risks and it is important to be aware of these.
Bleeding (retained tissue)
The uterus may not be completely emptied, causing heavy bleeding and cramping pains. This is more common with medication abortion and in a small number of people further treatment may be required.

Infection
There’s a small risk of infection, which can be simply treated with antibiotics. Signs of infection are abdominal pain, fever and unpleasant smelling vaginal discharge.

Other risks
Damage to the uterus or cervix is very uncommon. Continuing the pregnancy (incomplete abortion) is rare. Reaction to anaesthetic drugs is also rare.
If you have any concerns, get medical advice immediately.
There are no long-term health issues after having either a medication or surgical abortion. There is no effect on future ability to become pregnant.

What happens after the abortion?
Most people recover quickly after an abortion. A routine follow-up appointment 2 weeks after the abortion is recommended to ensure you are feeling well and to discuss any concerns. This service is available at your doctor, SHINE SA, Pregnancy Advisory Centre or the hospital.
Ongoing contraception may be organised at the time of the abortion or at the follow-up appointment. It is important to know that you can get pregnant again if you have unprotected sex as early as 7 days after an abortion, so you should use condoms or avoid sex until you have effective contraception.
If you have any emotional concerns, counselling and self-help information is available at the Pregnancy Advisory Centre and SHINE SA.