

# Unplanned Pregnancy

**Will an unplanned pregnancy be a problem to you someday?**

Pregnancy should be a fantastic and exhilarating experience, that bonds the couple and makes a meaningful addition to the family.

Instead, if it happens, when not planned it becomes a major issue for the couple. They may try to cope up with the unplanned pregnancy in different ways and a hasty and uninformed decision may lead to very dangerous consequences, sometimes even death. The couple may decide positively to continue with the pregnancy, overcoming the difficulties they encounter or they may take the dangerous path and attempt to abort the foetus. In countries like Sri Lanka where abortion is restrictive, all abortions done illegally, are considered to be unsafe and life threatening.



## How to prevent an unplanned pregnancy and there by prevent an abortion

- The couple should discuss among themselves and decide when it is best to have a baby
- If present time is not the best time get advice on family planning from Public Health Midwives, family planning clinics or Family Planning Association
- Acquire proper knowledge on all the methods of contraception
- Decide on a method of your choice and use it correctly and consistently
- Be aware of the ways in which a method may fail and avoid these
- If you had an unexpected sexual encounter and had no opportunity to use a preplanned method, it is best to use an emergency contraception as early as possible but within 120 hours

## How to plan a pregnancy

The term family planning is used to include planning of when to have children and how many to have, and the use of contraceptive methods and other techniques to implement such plans. There are many options for family planning, each one has different effectiveness ratings, and some are more acceptable for some people than others.

- Condoms - Is a barrier method placed over the man's penis. If used correctly more than 97% effective
- Oral Contraceptive Pills - A pill containing the female hormones - Oestrogen and Progesterone, which can be taken daily. 99% effective if taken properly

- Injection - Depo Medroxy Progesterone Acetate (DMPA) is an injection given to women every 3 months. It has an effectiveness of 97%
- Intra Uterine Devices (IUD) - An IUD is inserted into a woman's uterus. Can be used for 10 years. Effectiveness is 99%
- Implants - One or two rods inserted under the skin of the upper arm. Can be used for 3-5 years. Effectiveness more than 99%
- Sterilization - Male and female sterilization is available. It's a permanent method of contraception. Effectiveness more than 99%

### **Benefits of Family planning**

- Improve and maintain the emotional and physical health of men, women and children
- It will reduce problems like, low birth weight of infants and reduce deaths of mothers and infants
- This will help couples to determine the number of children they desire so that every child is intended and loved
- Decrease the incidence of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI)
- Reduce the cost for the government - Cost for giving Family Planning is 60 times less than treating complications following unsafe abortions

### **Places where contraceptive services can be obtained**

1. Medical Officer of Health (MOH) clinics
2. Family Health Bureau - 231, De Saram Road, Colombo 10
3. Family Planning clinics in Government Hospitals
4. Gynaecological clinics in Government Hospitals
5. Reproductive Health Clinics
6. General Practitioner / Family Health clinics
7. Private Hospitals
8. Centre for Family Health (CFH) -  
The Family Planning Association Sri Lanka

## Situational Analysis in Sri Lanka

Unfortunately many couples who face unplanned pregnancies appear to be resorting to the dangerous practice of unsafe abortion. Although accurate data collection on abortion is difficult, it is estimated that around 550 - 750 abortions are performed in the country daily.

It is estimated that around 240,000 abortions occur per year compared to 370,000 live births

If these estimates are accepted this would mean that for every 3 babies born, 2 fetuses are aborted in the country.

## Complications of unsafe abortion

### Immediate complications

- Bleeding from the womb which may even lead to death
- Infection and sepsis (severe infection that has spread to the blood stream)
- Injuries to the womb & cervix (neck of the womb)
- Incomplete evacuation, causing continued bleeding endangering life
- Abnormal connection between the vagina & the bladder (fistula)
- Damage to other internal organs

### Late complications:

- Subfertility - difficulty in getting pregnant, when they actually want a baby later on
- Chronic lower abdominal pain
- Chronic infections in the internal organs
- Increased risk of premature delivery in subsequent pregnancies
- Pregnancy outside the womb, often in the tube which is life threatening
- Recurrent spontaneous abortions
- Psychological effects, such as guilty feelings on mother leading to depression

## What is meant by the term abortion?

The term abortion is used to mean the expulsion of the foetus naturally by the body of the mother or intentionally removing a foetus artificially before the fetus is mature enough to survive outside the womb. The actual period at which the baby is able to live outside the womb depends on the supportive facilities available to look after very small babies. In Sri Lanka it is considered to be 28 weeks.

Abortion can occur either spontaneously (occurring on its own/naturally) or intentionally (terminated on purpose). A spontaneous abortion can be due to a known cause or without a cause. The products of conception can be expelled completely or incompletely. As induced abortions are restrictive in Sri Lanka nearly all induced abortions are done in unsafe and dangerous conditions by unskilled providers.

## Law on abortion

Induced abortions or abortions performed to intentionally remove the pregnancy are restrictive in Sri Lanka except when performed to save the life of the mother if her life is in danger because of the pregnancy. In that event confirmation by two specialists stating that there is a threat to the mother's life is needed, before a legal abortion can be performed.

Sri Lankan law does not consider a pregnancy with an abnormal baby as a legal reason to perform an induced abortion. Performing an abortion for any reason other than to save the life of the mother is a criminal offence and is punishable by imprisonment to varying terms for both the mother and the abortionist.

**Prevention is always better than dealing with subsequent consequences**



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## Centre for Family Health

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Closed on

Weekends, Poya and Mercantile Holidays

## Happy Life Contact Centre



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இங்கு குறிப்பிட்டுள்ள எந்தொரு முறையிலும் பெற்றுக்கொள்ளுங்கள் முடியும்

*Obtain information, medical advice or counseling services on reproductive health using these methods*