

fiom:

I'm pregnant. What should I do?

Information about making a decision and coping with
the situation



This booklet describes situations and emotions of people who have been through the same experience. The information provided offers recognition, comfort and perspective. The characters mentioned in the stories are fictional and can therefore not be used to trace or identify a certain person.

The persons depicted in this booklet are not related to the content.

Colophon

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Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is intended for girls and women in the Netherlands who are faced with an unexpected or unwanted pregnancy. Boys and men may also find this booklet useful for gathering information about the available options, how to make the best possible decision and to cope with the situation.

If you are faced with an unexpected pregnancy, your life may be turned upside down. But at some point, reality kicks in and you must decide what to do. You may consider having an abortion. Even though you may not be against an abortion in general, you may still have doubts about going through one yourself. Or it can also be the other way around: you have always had objections to abortion, but now you are starting to think about having one.

The pregnancy you did not want forces you to make an irreversible decision. No matter what you choose: ending the pregnancy or having the baby, the decision you make will be a permanent one.

This Fiom booklet provides you with information about the available options, making a decision that's right for you and coping with an abortion. There are personal accounts of young women and a man who have had to deal with an unexpected pregnancy. We hope you will find some recognition in them.

Fiom is a Dutch national organization. Our website fiom.nl (in Dutch only) offers knowledge about unwanted pregnancies and questions about ancestry. Are you personally dealing with these subjects? We do not only provide you with information, but we offer online counselling as well, or you can make an appointment for a personal conversation. For professionals, there is an option for consultation and training.

Pregnant

Perhaps you have always had certain ideas and fantasies about pregnancy and motherhood. What if they do not come true? Do you want any children at all? You may have conflicting feelings about it or you are still not sure.

Pregnancy generally creates images of big bellies, eating pickles and buying baby clothes. Feelings of affection and loving emotions often go with it, too. And what about your boyfriend? Has he ever thought about pregnancy and fatherhood? Does he have fantasies about a son playing soccer, or about playing games with his daughter?

But what if the pregnancy is a big shock? If your fantasy is not at all like what you are going through now. Is your pregnancy not only unexpected, but also unwanted? A pregnancy test confirms your presumptions and marks the beginning of a time in your life in which you have to make an important decision.



Anna (aged 24): “It was really strange. And it was real. I was pregnant. I did not suffer from morning sickness or anything. In fact, I didn’t notice anything at all. After taking the test, I could not believe my eyes. Thinking back, I found out that the flue episode that recently struck me quite hard, had some extra consequences for me. I felt so stupid and tricked as well. I totally trusted the birth control pill and was very careful with it. I know the pill is not 100% safe, but it never occurred to me that this could happen.”

Anthony (aged 22): “I did not get it. I always carry condoms with me. I did not want an STD, HIV or a pregnancy! At least that’s what I thought. I did not know how to deal with it when I heard about it.”

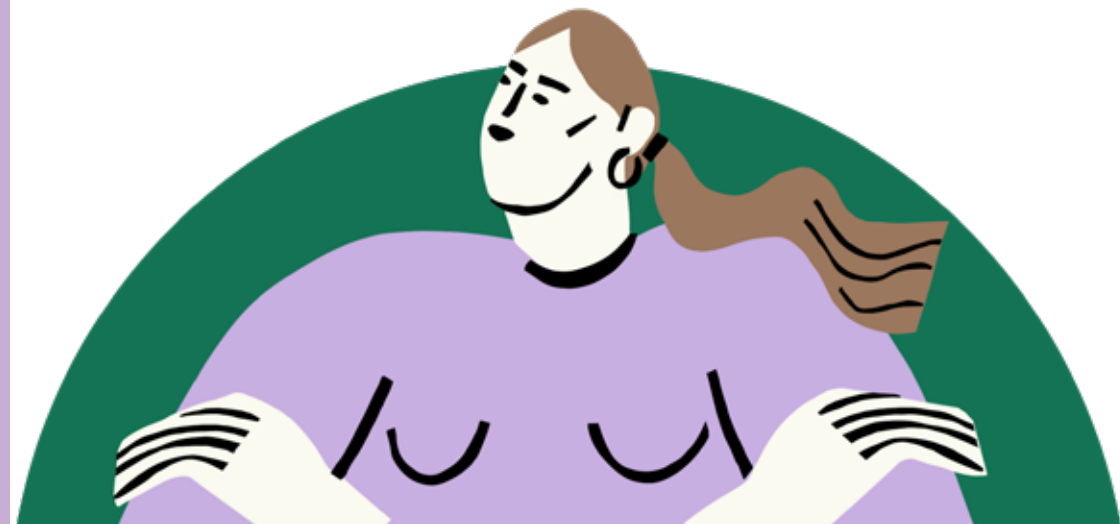
Jeanet (aged 38): “I told my partner Henk that I could be pregnant. We took the test together. The result was a long silence. We both didn’t know what to say.”

Sophie (aged 29): “It had crossed my mind. When my GP confirmed I was pregnant, it was a relief somehow. It proved I was a healthy woman and able to become pregnant. This was something I had been worrying about. When I was a girl, I was sexually abused by my father. I thought I had emotionally dealt with this. But still, some of it was “stuck” in my body. That’s how I called it. My abdominal pain and irregular menstrual cycle made me feel powerless and frustrated. And then, the nausea, the sensitive breasts: pregnant! It all made sense. But then there was doubt. What should I do?”

Naïma (aged 18): “I felt horrible going out to buy a pregnancy test. Thankfully, my friend Annie was there with me. I thought everybody was watching me. It would have been a disaster if my parents found out. I did not want to talk, just wanted it to be over as soon as possible. I did not care about how I got pregnant or what I thought of it. As long as it would be over soon.”

What should I do?

If you are considering having an abortion, it is very important that you have your pregnancy confirmed by a doctor as soon as possible, due to the legally compulsory five-day reflection period, is obligatory until January 2023. This compulsory reflection period (or wait time) starts after your first visit to your doctor and is meant to give you some time to make a voluntary and deliberate choice. From day six onwards, you can get an abortion. The doctor performing the procedure must ascertain that your decision is voluntary and well-considered. If you are more than sixteen days late, the compulsory reflection period does not apply.



What options do I have?

When you get pregnant unexpectedly, you have to make a choice about what you are going to do about this pregnancy. There are various options to choose from:

Carry the pregnancy to term and raise the child yourself

Even if you are not sure that you want to complete the pregnancy and raise the child on your own, it may be helpful to read as much information on it as you can.

What do you have to keep in mind when having a baby?

- Contact a local midwife for prenatal care, which includes ultrasounds, pregnancy monitoring and help with the delivery. More information and addresses can be found on the website www.knov.nl (Royal Dutch Organisation of Midwives, in Dutch only)
- There is a lot of online information about raising children and health on: www.opvoeden.nl (in Dutch only).
- Do you go to school or college or do you have a job? For information about studying, loans and benefits, go to www.duo.nl (Executive Education Agency). Visit the website www.uwv.nl (Employee Insurance Agency – limited information available in English) for information about work, paid leave and allowances.
- What about your finances? You are entitled to child benefit. You will find this information on www.svb.nl

(Sociale Verzekeringsbank – organization that implements national insurance schemes, in Dutch only).

- Visit www.government.nl (Dutch Government) and www.government.nl/topics/income-tax (Dutch Tax and Customs Administration) to read more about making money, welfare and allowances.
- Get your finances sorted. In order to raise a child, you need an income. Do you live with your parents or do you have your own flat/house? Do you have room for a baby? You may be entitled to a housing benefit. Go to www.huurtoeslag.nl (in Dutch only). Perhaps you can obtain a declaration of urgency that will help you find a home. This differs from one municipality to another and the procedure you have to go through is not always easy. Go to your municipal office and ask what the options are.
- If you have a job or if you go to school or college, where will your child go when you are at work or at school? You will have to arrange day care or someone who can babysit. On the website www.government.nl, there is information about day care and benefits for children.

Help and advice

If you choose to raise your child yourself, this does not mean you are alone. Find out on www.cjg.nl (in Dutch only) what services your municipality has to offer. They may organize support through the Centrum voor Jeugd en Gezin (Youth and Family Centre), sometimes via local social teams, youth teams, or via websites that offer information about raising and taking care of a child. And then last but not least: don't hesitate to ask your GP, friends, neighbours or parents for advice and support.

Carrying the pregnancy to term and placing the child in a foster family

Foster care means that a child will be living with a different family, either temporarily or permanently. An effort will be made to find foster parents as near to you as possible, maybe even in your family, or people you know. After placing the child with a foster family, it will still be possible to keep in touch with your child. The Child Care and Protection Board will determine whether this option can be considered. It will be a voluntary placement if you sought help yourself and if you agree with the placement of your child in a foster family. If the juvenile court says your child must be placed in a foster family, this is called a forced placement.

In case of a voluntary placement, there is also an option to only place

your child with a foster family for a certain period of time. This may be useful if you need some time to arrange things in your life, for example accommodation, income, etc., before you are able to look after your child. In other cases, your child can spend his or her entire youth in a foster family. You may still have the option to see your child and play a role in your child's life.

As a mother, you have parental authority of your child. You are responsible for his or her education and you are the legal representative. In some cases, you can keep parental authority. In other situations, it may be suitable to choose for partial authority and sometimes authority will be carried out by a guardian or foster parents. This depends on the type of foster care that has been chosen.

Are you thinking about foster care?

Then, [Youth Welfare Netherlands](http://www.youthwelfare.nl) and [the local foster care organization](http://www.localfoster.nl) will be involved (both websites are in Dutch only). Foster care in the Netherlands is organized per region.

Each foster care organization:

- is responsible for the care of children provided by the foster parents.
- offers different forms of care, such as weekend care, holiday care, day care, crisis care and care for either short or long periods of time.
- acquires new foster parents and prepares them for foster-parenthood.
- supports and guides foster parents and their children, foster children and their parents.

You can contact Youth Welfare Netherlands directly. They will assess your request if you are unable to look after your child yourself. They will assess which type of care is necessary. They guide children, teenagers and parents or refer you to other professional counsellors.

Carry the pregnancy to term and put the child up for adoption

If you put your child up for adoption, all legal ties between you and your child will be cut off. Your child will legally become the child of the adoptive parents, including all the rights and obligations that go with this. You no longer have any control over your child and it will receive the adoptive parents' last name. This is a drastic decision with serious consequences. That is why there is a reflection period in place of three months, starting after the birth of your child. When you register with Fiom during your pregnancy, we will bring you into contact with a counsellor as soon as possible. You will both take a look at your situation and the counsellor will provide you with information about adoption and other options. If you have a partner, he will be involved in the process if possible.

Three-month reflection period after giving birth

If you think about giving up your baby, the child will first go to a temporary foster family. For a period of three months after the birth, you may go

and see the child a couple of times if you want. You will also have a conversation with a Fiom counsellor during this period. You can either go together or go alone to this meeting. This counsellor helps you to process your emotions and thoughts. He or she can tell you all about the procedure of an adoption. You can get information about, for example, the pros and cons for you and your baby. It may be clear that you want to give up your child, but sometimes, you may just not be sure. In the three months that your child is placed with the temporary foster family, you will have the time to find out how you feel about permanently transferring your child to someone else's care. Perhaps your feelings have changed after giving birth and you will have the time to reflect on all the available options. About three months after giving birth you will decide (either together or alone) if you really want to give up your child for adoption.

What happens after you've chosen for adoption.

If, after the reflection period of three months, you have decided to give up your child for adoption, the baby will be transferred to the adoptive parents. Together with you, the Fiom counsellor will go through your wishes and preferences as far as an adoptive family is concerned. The judge will remove you from parental authority of your child and a guardian of a youth care institution or the adoptive parents are granted custody.

At the point that they have cared for your child for at least one year, the adoptive parents can officially apply for the adoption. The court is the official body that arranges this. During this period, the judge will want to hear from you if you still support your decision. Your child will be at least one year and three months old when the judge finally determines the adoption. You will become a mother who relinquishes the rights to her child and the adoptive parents officially become the parents. Your statutory ties with your child have been broken: the child will get the adoptive parents' last name and he or she will be legally integrated into their family.

Even though you no longer have any rights to your child when you give it up for adoption, it may still be possible to receive information about the child every year. This depends on what the adoptive parents think is in the best interests of the child. The adoptive parents are obliged to tell their child

about the adoption. When it becomes of age, the child may start searching for you.

Would you like more information? Please visit www.fiom.nl (in Dutch only). You can download the booklet 'Giving your child up for adoption, information for women/parents who consider giving their child up for adoption'.

Opting for an abortion

If you are faced with an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy, and you do not want to carry it to term, you can choose to end your pregnancy. This booklet offers more information about making the decision that's right for you, about abortion and how you cope with the situation.



Sophie: 'At times, I felt panic. I became totally insecure, having nightmares after which I would wake up, sweating. At other times, I felt the opposite: I was calm, trusting myself that I would make a good decision. The paralyzing helplessness I used to know, came back to me. I lost my balance. My god, what did I have to do with the situation?'

Jeanet: 'Henk wanted to have an abortion. We already had three children and did not want a fourth one. I had some doubts. It was unexpected, but well.. I am thirty-eight now. This could be the last chance of ever having a baby.'

Naïma: 'I didn't have to think about it. I didn't want to be pregnant any longer. Have it go away. It just couldn't be. My parents would hurt me if they knew.'

Anna: 'I was four weeks late. I wanted to make the decision as fast as I could. I did not want to give the baby up. I just couldn't. The thought of somebody else raising my child and me not knowing anything about it, seemed so incredibly difficult. I was not pregnant for a long time and my motto is: everything or nothing. There were two options for me.'

Anthony: 'First, I thought: "she has to decide for herself. It is her body. What have I got to do with it?" But well, if she decided to carry out the pregnancy, I was the one who would become a father. Then I am allowed to have an opinion, aren't I?'

What should I do?

When you know all about the options you have in your situation, you are able to make the best possible decision. It may be helpful to gather all information about the subject in a special folder. This way, you do not have to remember everything and you can read everything again when you need it. It will help you streamline your thoughts if you write down what you feel, think and go through.



How to reach a decision

Your world can be turned upside down after you've discovered you are pregnant. Suddenly, nothing seems to make sense any more. What will be the impact on the life as you know it? What about your relationship? What are your dreams and wishes for the future? To what extent does your faith or your religion influence your life? What do you think is important in your life?

The reasons for making such an important decision is different for everybody. Perhaps you react based on your feelings and your partner or others may judge the situation with their minds. Or the other way around. Moreover, feelings may change all the time.

If you need to make a decision about such an important matter, it will be useful to think about finding assistance; who can help you decide? Who can help you when you've made the choice? Can't think of anyone to share it with? Have a look on www.fiom.nl (in Dutch only) and find out if online counselling is something for you.

Tips that may help you:

- Do not get overwhelmed by emotions. Try to look at the situation from a distance.
- Try to gather as much information as you can about your options.
- If you can, ask advice from friends, family or a counsellor.
- If you can, ask advice from people who are not involved in your choice.
- Think about your emotions.

- Think about what somebody would do who means a lot to you.
- It does not help to worry about it; let it go for a while.
- Consider all options and think about their long-term and short-term consequences.
- What dilemmas do you encounter?
- What do your feelings say? And what does your mind say?
- What will your future be like?
- Realise that it is a decision you make at a specific moment, taking into account the things you know, think and feel now.

The way in which people go about making the final decision varies from one person to the next. Some aspects that can play a role are:

Your personality

Do you have an open personality? You will make contact easily. You share your experiences that are difficult for you. You are an open book, so to speak. It is really like you to react impulsively. Your personality allows you to not become isolated very quickly. Other people know what you think and feel and they can support you in this. The downside of this character trait can be that everyone has their own opinion and listening to all these different ideas can be confusing to you.

If you have a closed personality, other people won't know what's going on in your mind. You are on your own most of the times in difficult situations. You are not likely to jump up to take care of things. You really benefit from thinking about your thoughts and feelings and sorting them out. You can also find yourself swirling around in circles that contain the same thoughts over and over again. However, this is not getting you anywhere. You can also have a personality in which you are both open and closed, depending on the situation you are in.

Your thoughts

What were your thoughts on abortion before you got pregnant? If you had a positive approach towards abortion before you were pregnant, you may now discover that you have doubts about it. If any other woman would choose to have an abortion due to her age, work and the fact that she's single, you may not have any problems with it. But when it comes to your own situation, choosing to have an abortion may be much more complicated. It's no longer about the other person, it is about you.

Your feelings

Do you feel pregnant? What do you feel when you notice physical changes? You can be scared of the treatment, or about whether or not you can get pregnant in the future. You can feel guilty or ashamed. You can feel happy one moment and sad the next.



Your partner/ the biological father

You ultimately determine what goes on in your body. This means that you get to decide what you want. There may be confusion about this. You decide, so you fix it. That's how some people think. But the fact is that you did not get pregnant on your own and the question is what your partner/ the biological father can do in this situation. How does he feel about your pregnancy? Does he feel powerless because he cannot control the situation? Did he react strongly? Does he force you to do what he wants? Or does he leave the decision to you, because he respects your choice? You may want to solve things together, but he makes you feel alone, because he deals differently with the choice. You want to talk about things, share your feelings and he thinks there has been enough talking and wants to take action. If your relationship is good, you can support each other. You can pay attention to the similarities and differences between men and women in areas such as decision-making, dealing with stress, dependence and independence, power and powerlessness, success and failure, asking for help and offering it, working and caring, reaching goals in life.

Dealing with choices in a different way can also offer support. You can supplement each other. He may, for example, help you gather information and make an overview of the options and the consequences of each of

them for you and for him. You, in turn, can help him speak his thoughts and feelings about whether or not having an abortion.

Your family and friends

Secrets have an impact on people and relationships. By hiding important events in your life, you isolate yourself. You prevent the other person from supporting you during an important time in your life. Living with a secret is not easy. Find someone you can confide in. This will help you get support for your choice, whatever you decide. After all, there's someone who listens, gives you advice and who can put their arm around you.

Culture, religion and society

What is allowed and what isn't? What moral values are to be taken into account? In 1984, the Termination of Pregnancy Act (Wet Afbreking Zwangerschap) came into effect. From that year onwards, having an abortion is no longer illegal, provided that specific requirements are met. The doctor must ascertain, for example, that the woman took the decision voluntarily and that she has thought it through. In addition, a statutory reflection period of five days (obligatory until January 2023) has to be taken into account, unless the woman's health or life is at stake due

to the pregnancy. An abortion in the Netherlands is allowed before the child is viable. In the Netherlands, a pregnancy term of 24 weeks is considered. The clinics observe a limit of a maximum pregnancy of 22 weeks and 3 days, because ultrasound equipment cannot determine the exact duration of the pregnancy.

A doctor can only terminate a pregnancy of more than 24 weeks for serious medical reasons. For example, when the child is not viable. Doctors must adhere to due diligence requirements when terminating a pregnancy at a late stage.

The regulations surrounding abortion have been laid down in the law. This is an applicable norm. From an ethical point of view, things may be different. These rules are called values. The culture you live in or you are coming from has its own moral values as far as abortion goes. A family from rural Groningen, a wealthy family from Wassenaar, a family with Surinam, Turkish or Moroccan roots, they all have their own views on abortion. Religion may also influence your decision.

If you have been raised religiously, what values do you have based on your Christian, Islamic, Buddhist (or other) religion? Do you feel support from your religion or does it put more pressure on you?



The language

Often, people talk about 'committing an abortion'. This comes from the time that abortion was considered a crime and crimes are committed. People who commit crimes are criminals. Using the word 'commit' absolutely does no justice to women who choose to have an abortion. After all, when the requirements are met, abortion is no longer a crime.

Myths and prejudices

There are numerous myths and prejudices about abortion. They are all false, they twist the truth and are often offensive:

- you become infertile after you've had an abortion

- women choose for an abortion when they want to go on holiday
- abortion is killing a child
- a woman is a bad person when she's had multiple abortions
- if a woman suffers from hurt and pain, she is overreacting: she wanted it herself
- if a woman considers having an abortion and she has a miscarriage, her problem is solved; she no longer has to worry about it
- abortion is a matter dealt with by women only.

Anna: "I come from a family with three girls; I am the middle one. I get along great with my sisters. We used to be a close-knit girl's club, always joking around, but also supporting each other through thick and thin. We still greatly value the contact between us, sisters. No matter what boyfriend or husband would come along, we would still get together as always.

I never told them about my pregnancy. My oldest sister was seven months pregnant at the time and was so happy she could shout it from the rooftops. She desperately wanted a baby and it took her a year of trying before she finally got pregnant. I was so happy for her, but I was very sad at the same time. I tried listening to her stories she told in such an excited way. Inside, my feelings were divided into two. I lost a piece of freedom and authenticity. Her stories constantly confronted me with my secret. Each regular remark about a baby induced extra implications in me. What would it be like if I were to carry the pregnancy to term? Would my child also...It seemed the best to me to make a decision about an abortion as soon as possible, although this was not easy. I tried to hold on to whatever I could get my grip on to make me decide what the best solution would be. Above all, it had to be my decision.

The importance of making the decision on my own also had to do with my unstable relationship with Maarten. Why would I tell him? We were separated at the time. The pregnancy was a bad surprise. The pill failed to work when I was down with the flu and I had vomited a lot. I never thought this could happen. No, I did not want to talk to Maarten.

To make it easier on myself I confided in a good friend, so that I would not be quite on my own. She is a very good listener and I had written down my doubts. My practical and down-to-earth approach helped me to choose in favour of an abortion. The most difficult thing for me was comparing my situation now with the situation that included a baby. I would have to find new accommodation, there would be financial problems, I would have to quit school. Ironically enough I was studying pedagogy. Everything in my life revolves around children, I love them, I have always done so from a young age. And yet, from a practical point of view, it would be problematic.

I could not envision myself guiding a child into adulthood. Ultimately, not being able to offer a child a stable home was the decisive factor for me to say: 'I can't. Not now.'



Jeanet: “I longed back to the old days. You did not have to think about any of this. Children were born and the more the better. Even if there was a late addition to the family, your family would step in and everything would be arranged. But... this was not the case for us. We had to choose.

My husband Henk was right; we did not want a fourth child. Our youngest child was twelve years old. There would have been a huge age gap.

And by the time this child would reach the age of twelve, I would be fifty years old. I always enjoyed being a young mother; I loved romping around with the children. At the age of fifty, it would be physically harder to play along. I would become a different type of parent. I had thought to be a grandmother by then.

I did not care much for the treatment. Nobody likes to go through medical procedures, but I did not want to do it at all. I want to avoid hospitals and doctors as much as I can. I requested some information about the procedure. I thought the hardest part would be the fact that you are left with nothing. If everything goes well, you have a child after a delivery. After an abortion, you have nothing at all. If I had another child, my life would change completely.

As the children grew bigger, I took up my volunteer work and I have a part-time job now. I am very proud of that. Everything in my life was going in the right direction. Henk had a clear opinion. He did not want the child. What were we supposed to do? It is not desirable for the child, either, knowing that you are only half-welcome. A child can sense that I think.”

Sophie: “I walked around for a week knowing I was pregnant. After that, I told my boyfriend Matthijs. He had to know too. In the end, we were both responsible, even though things were happening in my body. Matthijs was very sweet; he said we would work it out together. I got to decide and he would be behind me, no matter what my decision was. It was a stressful time. Matthijs was going to go to India in five months’ time to work there for a year. If that went well, he would be offered a permanent job and I would go there, too. We had never really talked about having children. There was plenty of time.

My mind said it could not happen; it was not practical, not the right time. My feelings said something different. I always felt very attracted to Oriental philosophies and a belief in reincarnation. How should I interpret this? What life’s assignment was hidden in this pregnancy?

I had oppressive dreams in which I desperately tried to find my way through a maze. The distance between my feelings and reason remained a gap that could not be bridged. While thinking about it, I decided that I did not want to have any children at that moment in my life. I did not think I was capable of raising a child. I was too impatient, still searching for my own balance. Above all, Matthijs was going to leave and I would have been alone the first few months. My feelings were a mix-up of emotions.

One moment I was happy and I was sad the next. Fear, guilt, powerlessness. I could not watch tv, read the newspaper, or even walk outside without being faced with babies, children and parents. My courage often failed me and in the meantime, time went by. I could make my decision one day, and then change it the next. Nothing felt right.”



Anthony: “Wow, this is hard. What a difficult situation. Life was so easy before. Now, my thoughts gave me a headache. I talked about it with my best friend. He argued that it was my girlfriend’s business and that I had to stay out of it. I disagreed. I want to take my responsibility. The thing I thought was most difficult, was that my girlfriend was about to decide about my future. Was she going to decide if I would become a father or not? Look, if she wouldn’t have been pregnant, there would not have been a problem. But now, could I be a father? My mother and father had split up in an awful way. I do not want to go through that. I wanted to do things in a good way. But now I am in a situation I don’t want. My girlfriend figured out that I did not support the pregnancy. There were fights and arguments, what a mess. I wanted to help her, but I knew I did not want to be a father. The two could not be combined. One week, she did not respond to my calls, so I went to see her.

I knew we had to find a way to deal with things. She was glad I had not just run away from the situation. It helped telling her I felt powerless, because she would eventually make the decision. I accepted the situation and I wanted to help, even if a child

would be born. My girlfriend told me that only then she was able to think about what she really wanted. She knew my intentions and that I would not leave her.”

Naïma: “Our family lived according to the rules of the Koran. And me? I don’t know. I was somewhere in between, I think. I lived different lives inside and outside my home. I had a hard time dealing with my father and brother telling me what I could and couldn’t do. They meant well, you know. They did not know better. When I was at school, I talked with friends and I was able to say what I wanted. I could not come home and tell my family that I was pregnant. It would be a great shame. My father would have been so angry. He would have wanted to know whose child it was and... I did not want to think about it. It just could not happen. I told my friend Annie, though. She helped me, went along with me to the clinic. I was afraid that she would tell my story to her family and that everything would be revealed anyway. I wanted this to be over with.”

What should I do?

It is very good to know how you make choices in other situations. Are you used to making decisions based on your emotions? Do you attach more value to what you think? Are practical matters important to you? What is that like for you now? You can write down, possibly together with your partner, the pros and cons of carrying the pregnancy to term and the pros and cons of an abortion. You give yourself the opportunity to streamline your thoughts and it prevents you going around in circles. When you’ve done this, you can rank the importance of the pros and cons. You can put the list somewhere you can easily access it or save it on your computer to make subsequent additions if necessary.

Example

Carrying the pregnancy to term

Pros

- becoming a mother
- experiencing a pregnancy

Cons

- less freedom
- child will grow up without a father

Abortion

Pros

- no longer pregnant
- finish school

Cons

- fear to undergo treatment
- empty feeling

An additional step to this exercise: Indicate how heavy the pros and cons weigh for you. Give a mark of one to ten, where one is the least important and ten the most. It is possible that four pros from your list weigh less than two cons (or the other way around). This may be something you did not expect.

When you think the list is finished, what are the results? Do the scales tip to one side? To which side? You should realise this is only a snapshot of the moment. It does not mean you can add things up. This is nothing more than an aid in sorting your thoughts and feelings.



Here is another three-day exercise

Day 1:

Think about a day on which you decided to complete your pregnancy. Pretend you have given birth to a baby. From the moment you wake up until you go to bed at night. Take notes about your thoughts and feelings during the day. What does a day with a child look like? What do you have to do? And what do you have to let go of? What do you like about it and what feels uncomfortable? For example: You normally get up at eight. But today, you wake up early, because your child needs to be fed at six o'clock. If you work or go to school, what is your schedule now? Or: You are always up early and you feel alone. But now you have a baby.

Day 2:

It is wise to include a day on which you do not think about anything that has to do with the pregnancy. Otherwise, the exercise would become too heavy.

Day 3:

Now do the same thing as on day one. Instead, you pretend to have chosen for an abortion. You are not pregnant anymore. What are you thinking? Write down again your thoughts and feelings. Example: You go out at night and come back late; you don't have to think about arranging a babysitter for a child. Or: You see a child in a baby stroller and you feel...

When you envision yourself in both situations as accurately as possible, it can give you additional information about which of the two options may work out for you. It can help you make a decision.

If you think the exercise is too difficult, or you cannot do it, don't think you are failing. The purpose of the exercise is to help you. If this does not work, it may not be the right way for you to sort things out.

Conclusion

Did you choose an abortion? You may benefit from writing down what made you decide and what aspects played a role in it. What did you experience in this period? What were your thoughts and feelings? Later, your situation may be different. It may then be helpful to read back the arguments that seemed important to you at the time for ending the pregnancy.

Abortion

Facts and figures

You are not the only woman who thinks about having an abortion, nor the only one who has had one. Over the past few years, around 30,000 women have had an abortion treatment in the Netherlands. Current figures can be found in the 'Jaarrapportage wet Afbreking zwangerschap' (Annual Report of the Termination of Pregnancy Act) by the Dutch Health Care Inspectorate, www.igj.nl (search for the term 'jaarrapportage abortus', in Dutch only).

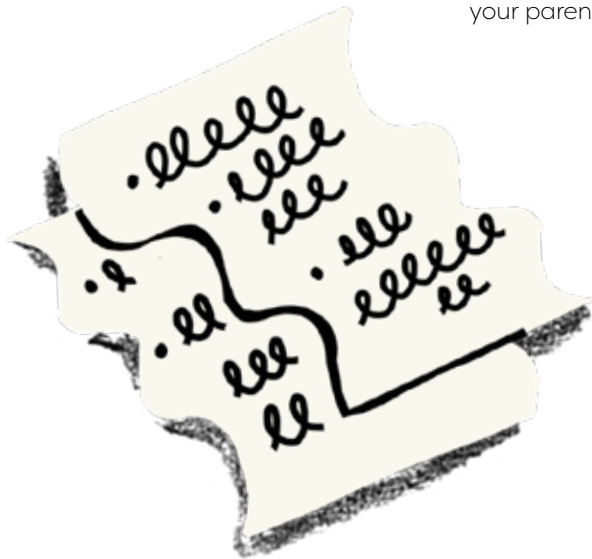
Abortion treatment

As mentioned before, ending your pregnancy is one of the four options you have when you are faced with an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy. The way a pregnancy is terminated depends on your age and how far your pregnancy has advanced.

Your age

Your age is important in determining the number of possible choices. The law states that minors are not allowed to take their own decisions regarding medical treatments and legal matters, such as custody.

Are you considering an abortion treatment? In this case, the law determines if you need permission from your parents or guardian.



Are you younger than 12?

You need permission from your parents to have an abortion treatment.

Are you between 12 and 16 years old?

You need your parents' permission as well. If this were to cause great problems to you and your doctor thinks you can oversee the consequences of your choice, this requirement can be deviated from.

Are you between 16 and 18 years old?

You don't need your parents' permission. Sometimes, if a doctor thinks you are unable to determine what's right for you, your parents' permission may be required.

If you are aged 18 and over:

You are of age and therefore able to take your own decisions regarding medical treatments.

What to do after you've had unprotected sex?

- You can take the morning-afterpill within 72 hours (3 days) of having unprotected sex. These pills are available at your local chemist's or with abortion clinics. For young people up to the age of 21, the GP can prescribe the morning after pill free of charge.
- A doctor can place a morning-after coil within 120 hours (five days) after having unprotected sex.

How far along are you?

If you consider terminating your pregnancy, it is important to know how far along you are. The options for terminating a pregnancy are:

- If you are 16 days late or less (counted from the day you should have had your period), you can choose for an early abortion. This is the same procedure as an abortion (suction curettage). You can also have your pregnancy terminated by means of an abortion pill. The five-day statutory reflection time does not apply to this pregnancy term.
- Up to 9 weeks after the start of your last period, you can choose the abortion pill or the suction curettage procedure, whether or not under sedation or general anaesthetic.
- From 9 weeks up to 12 weeks and 6 days after the first day of your last period, the only option that remains is the suction curettage procedure. In some clinics you can ask for sedation or general anaesthetic.
- For pregnancies from 13 weeks up to and including 22 weeks and three days after the first day of your last period, you can choose for an abortion treatment. These treatments carried out in the second trimester are only performed in a limited number of clinics.

- You can have an abortion up to the moment the child would be able to survive outside its mother's womb. In the Netherlands, a term of 24 weeks pregnancy is considered, though the clinics observe a limit of a maximum pregnancy term of 22 weeks and 3 days.
- Are you more than 24 weeks pregnant (counted from the first day of your last period)? Then an abortion is not possible anymore. You will have to consider [raising the child yourself](#), or to ask for a [temporary or permanent foster family placement](#), or to [have your child put up for adoption](#) (these links provide information in Dutch only).

Information about abortion treatments and its conditions can be found on www.ngva.net

Statutory reflection period

Are you more than 16 days late? A statutory reflection period of five days applies (obligatory until January 2023). The abortion treatment may be performed from the sixth day after the first consultation with a doctor. Did you go to your GP first to talk about an abortion? The reflection period starts on the date you went to see your doctor. The statutory reflection period is there to protect you from taking a hasty decision that you might regret later. The attending physician must ascertain that you made your choice voluntarily and deliberately. If you have doubts on what the

best choice may be for you, go to <https://fiom.nl/ongewenst-zwanger/zwanger-wat-nu> for more information (in Dutch only).

Can I have an abortion straight away?

Only if you're sixteen days late or less. 'Late' means the number of days calculated from the day you should have had your period. You can contact an abortion clinic without intervention of your GP and there is no statutory reflection period.

Can I bring somebody with me?

Yes, you can. It can be very pleasant to have somebody with you to support you.

Do I have to pay for an abortion?

An abortion is free of charge for anyone according to the Dutch Long-term Care Act (Wet Langdurige Zorg). This means that anyone legally living or working in the Netherlands is insured. You do not have to pay for it yourself if you are staying in the Netherlands legally. If you are not an official Dutch citizen or if you do not have medical insurance in the Netherlands, (for example, because you work abroad), you will have to pay the costs. The maximum treatment rates have been determined by the Dutch Health Authority (Nederlandse Zorgautoriteit). The clinics can give you more information about current fees.

Can I remain anonymous?

An abortion treatment in a clinic will be paid for by the government through the Long-term Care Act and your anonymity will be guaranteed.

There are other rules for an abortion treatment in a hospital. For example, it requires a referral from a physician and the costs will be paid by your health care insurance company. These costs can be viewed on the payment overview of your insurance company.

Where can I go?

You can find a list of clinics on the website of the Dutch Association of Abortion Specialists (Nederlands Genootschap van Abortusartsen): [Klinieken - NGvA](#). Some clinics only perform an abortion if you are less than thirteen weeks pregnant. The clinic can provide you with information about the treatment they offer.



Sophie: “I went to the abortion clinic on my own. The waiting room was crowded. I thought this was a bit strange. You never hear people talk about having an abortion and yet there were so many women there. I had some doubts, so I talked to a psychologist beforehand. It was good to talk about my life after the abortion. I never want to go through this anymore. My periods were always very irregular, so I found out I was pregnant quite late. I was going to make sure this could never happen again. I felt I had an obligation towards this unborn child to make sure this would not happen anymore. I chose to have a full anaesthetic.

It was good for me that I did not have to go through the treatment in a conscious state of mind. I tried to combat the powerlessness of the sexual abuse I went through in the past with ‘my plan of action’. I made an agreement with myself that I no longer had to hide my feelings and let things happen. No, this time, I was in control of what happened. Matthijs came to pick me up after the treatment. He was very caring and happy he could do something for me. I felt pleased with the way it happened, but I felt sad at the same time.”

Anna: “I did not have to think long about deciding for an abortion clinic. After all, these clinics have a lot of experience and I did not think there would be people judging me. I was right. The doctor listened to my story, examined me and gave information. My friend went along to the intake interview and she was there for me during the abortion treatment as well. She spent the whole day with me afterwards. There is at least one person I can talk to, who knows what it was like there and how the treatment went. The treatment itself was not very nice. You are just lying there waiting for what’s coming. Knowing what’s coming is different than experiencing it yourself. The pain was not so bad. I felt relieved and a little bit guilty, too.”

Anthony: “I offered to go with her to the abortion clinic. She said I did not have to go; she’d rather have a friend go with her. This emphasized for me that it was her decision, her body and that I was not part of it. The next day, I went to see her to talk about it. We decided to take a break together and spend some time to relax.”

Naima: “It hurt, my stomach. When I think about it, I can still feel it. The treatment was done on a Friday afternoon. I had the afternoon off from school and afterwards, I went straight home. I told my mother I had a stomach-ache. That allowed me to stay in bed and do nothing all weekend. It was done. Over and finished.”

Jeanet: “I have never been so torn between my emotions. Henk and I decided after all to carry the pregnancy to term. Due to my age, we had an amniocentesis. The results were not good. I thought my heart stood still. I wanted to scream, and yell and hit everything around me. It was like life tricked me in the most horrible way. We then decided to end the pregnancy after all. I was put under general anaesthetic. When I came to, all I could do was cry. Henk was having a hard time, too. The hospital’s gynaecologist knew me, he had helped deliver two of my children. That was a familiar feeling; he insisted that we find help together.”



What should I do?

You can make an appointment at a clinic even before making a final decision. Try to find someone you can confide in and take this person with you, if this is possible. If you want a female doctor, ask for one. For women who have experienced sexual violence, feelings of powerlessness and being surrendered to someone else's hands may be traumatic. Try to determine as much as you can what you want and how you want it. It is good to think about what you would like once the procedure is over. Do you want to be at home by yourself or do you want some company? Is somebody taking care of you or is there a friend you can talk to? Do you want some peace and quiet? Are you taking time off from work or school?

No matter what decision you make, it is a decision that suited you at the time you made it. You made your choice based on what you know now, what you can handle and how you see the future. There are no good or bad choices.

New life events and life stages may, however, confront you again with the decision you made. A new relationship can make you feel differently about having a family. Now, you have chosen to end your pregnancy, but in the future you may want to have a child. That's why it's important to write down your thoughts, feelings and ideas during the decision-making process, so you can read these again at a later stage.

Men coping with an abortion

Are you a man facing an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy? Or are you a woman wanting to know more about the way men cope with an abortion? You will find more information on this subject in the next chapter.

Is abortion a women's affair?

It is a widespread misunderstanding that abortion is an affair that concerns women only. If there is an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy, many men and women hope they can decide together on carrying the pregnancy to term, or not. Reality may be different, though. According to the law, a woman has the right to determine what happens to her body. Therefore, she is the one who has the final say in determining what happens to the pregnancy. As a man, you can arrive at a situation in which you do not have any control over (an important part of) your life.

It is the woman who decides if you will become a father or not. This may bring about certain feelings:

- Feelings of powerlessness and loss of control.
- Either positive or negative feelings about the pregnancy.

You may have questions, such as:

- Do I want any children (now or in the future)?
- What do I expect of becoming a father?
- Am I ready to become a father? This subject particularly applies to boys/teenagers.

- How do I know for sure that I am ready to become a father? What do I have to do to find out?

Making a decision about this pregnancy may reveal unsolved underlying issues: relationship problems, for example, or the loss of a loved one.

Being involved in the decision

The discovery of an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy can be quite a shock. It can bring about feelings of disbelief, panic, sadness, hopelessness and anger. As a man, you may not always be involved in a decision about ending a pregnancy. Sometimes, a man is no longer in the picture or a woman decides not to tell him about the pregnancy. If men are aware of the pregnancy, they often feel co-responsible for taking a decision.

The following considerations may play a role in taking a decision:

- Are the conditions right (finances, accommodation, age and phase of life)?
- Am I willing to give up my freedom and plans for the future?
- How much impact does a child have on the relationship?
- What do I have to offer a child (in both material and emotional sense)?
- Am I willing, able or do I dare to take on the responsibility at this moment?
- I do not want any children yet and I don't see myself becoming a father.
- I want my child to have a better childhood than me.

When you are in a relationship and you are faced with an unwanted pregnancy, the main focus will often be on maintaining the relationship. As a man, you may be wondering about the child that may or may not come into your life and the conditions under which it will be born. Most of the time, the pregnancy itself seems remote to you, while it has a huge impact on the woman, both emotionally and physically.

Most men want to make a decision immediately to get some clarity in the situation. Considerations based on common sense (rather than emotions) often seem to be the decisive factors. Women tend to have doubts for longer, because ultimately, they are the ones who are pregnant and who have to make the final decision. Although the woman eventually makes the decision, Fiom recommends to involve the man in the decision as well – if possible.

Dealing with the abortion

You can feel very powerless as a man. To prevent that the powerlessness takes over, you can find out what it is that you can do. The way you handle things can provide some support in making you feel less powerless. For example:

- Do I need help? Who can help me?
- What can I do to support her?

Men process life-changing events differently than women. This also goes for coping with an abortion. After the abortion, most men just go on with their everyday lives. They often don't talk about it, or only after they have dealt with the situation. Men are used to solve problems on their own and are therefore less likely to seek help.

An abortion may have a long-term impact on a relationship, especially if you disagree about the decision. There may be unspoken reproaches. Even after a decision you took together, the need to talk about things and to process the events, may be very different. Men and women experience emotional events in a different way. It can be difficult for you to deal with these differences.



Struggles after abortion

Once you've had an abortion, you may experience problems with your faith, your vision of life or the life lessons you've learned in your youth.

Some men find themselves in a process of grieving: they were about to become a father and now this road has been blocked. An abortion may also result in a loss suffered in the past to come to the surface again. Issues you may struggle with shortly after the abortion or some while afterwards are:

- Physical problems.
- Sexual problems.
- Problems in your family, at work or at school/in college.
- Emotional issues, such as regret and guilt.
- Relationship problems.

Men often struggle with issues that have to do with making the decision: was the abortion a joint choice or did the woman take a decision that you did not have any influence on?

What should I do?

You can find more information, exercises and statements for men who are faced with abortion or opting for an abortion on <https://fiom.nl/ongewenst-zwanger/zwanger-wat-nu> (I'm pregnant. What should I do?) (in Dutch only).

The book 'Man & abortus' (Man & abortion) by Basti Baroncini provides information and personal accounts of men about making the choice, the medical procedure and processing the abortion. It may offer you support and recognition.

Accepting the situation

Many women often feel relieved and do not experience any problems in coping with an abortion. They have a positive feeling about the decision. Women who do experience problems in accepting it, describe the period of making the decision as a rush: a stressful time with little sleep, confusing emotions and thoughts.

Sometimes, memories about that time are fuzzy or blurred. A clear decision will help accept the consequences of a choice. This also goes for your decision about the abortion. The more you know it was your own decision, the less likely you will have problems coping with it. You will be able to better accept the situation.

Aspects that may play a role during the emotional process

Your expectations

Did everything go as expected? If you expected to feel relieved, and you did, this can be a confirmation that you made the right decision. It was the right thing to do. If your expectations were not met, it may be useful to spend some time thinking about them. What else did you expect, what was different?

This does not mean that you made the wrong decision. A feeling of sadness you did not expect may be the result of an emotional reaction to your changing hormone level.

Your environment

The more support, the better. When you are not able to share your experiences with anyone, you can feel very lonely. If you were to talk with people who have been through the same, you will recognize many of their stories and you can support one another. You are not alone.

Your sexuality

It can be stressful to have sex, because you may be scared to get pregnant again. It may also bring memories of the abortion to the surface. Sometimes, it will take some time before you become sexually active again and are comfortable to have sex.

Choosing a type of birth control that suits you will help, as well as talking with your partner when you're afraid. You can do physical exercises (possibly together) to reconnect with your body and find out what you like now.

Your emotions

Guilt

Guilt can play a part if you are convinced that you did something wrong. You may feel guilty because you could have made a different decision. It is important to realize that making a decision about an unwanted pregnancy is never easy. You made a choice you thought was the right one in this particular time of your life. You may also have feelings of guilt because you find it hard to allow yourself to grieve over the irreversible decision you've made.

Regret

The decision to have an abortion is a final one. It cannot be undone and the fear of regretting your action is understandable. The consequences of a decision to have an abortion cannot be overseen for a 100 %. After the abortion treatment, you can have feelings you did not see coming. 'I wish I had never done it.' This is a statement you can only make afterwards. 'If I had known, I'd...' Also a post-treatment statement. Most of the time the things you use to complete the sentence 'if...' are very painful. The word 'if' is usually followed by a nice fantasy. There is a healthy baby and you feel good; there is money, a house, you and maybe your partner will sort things out. Family and friends will be there to help. It is an imagination of what may have happened. But you don't know if things would have worked out this way. It could have been different: you suffer a lot of pain during labour; the baby

may be sick or you for that matter. It doesn't have to be this way, it is merely a possibility. You would just not know what's next after the word 'if'... When you realise this, it will help you accept the choice you've made.

It is also possible that you will feel regret because, looking back, you would have wanted to make a different decision, but you cannot turn back time. It may be good for you to find out, possibly with the help of a counsellor or using [Fiom's online abortion processing module](#) (available in Dutch only), what it is exactly that made you change your mind and how you can cope with the feelings of regret.

Sadness

There are no wrong or right choices. New life events and life stages may, however, confront you again with the decision you made. A new relationship can make you feel differently about having a family. Now, you have chosen to end your pregnancy, but in the future you may want to have a child. You can feel sad about this. If this is the case, go and find somebody you can talk with. A relative, for example, or a good friend you can confide in. Someone who does not judge you and understands what you are going through. A counsellor can help you when you feel confused or have questions. You can also use Fiom's [abortion processing](#) module (available in Dutch only).



Saying goodbye

Women choose to have an abortion in a desperate situation. If you have trouble coping with the abortion, it is not unusual to experience feelings of grief, anger and helplessness. These feelings are associated with suffering a loss; no child was born from this pregnancy. It is important to take this feeling of grief seriously, because it will help you recognise the desperate situation you were in when you had to decide.

This opens up the way for accepting this period in your life. While you are thinking about these feelings, you could pay attention to the thought of eventually becoming a parent after all. Do not punish yourself thinking that you can never be a good mother. As a part of you accepting your past, it may be useful to symbolically say goodbye by writing a letter, making a drawing or another way that suits you when you think about saying goodbye. It can also help to pay special attention to your due date and the date of the abortion.

Changes in relationships

It is said that in times of need, you get know to your friends. It is a completely different thing to talk about abortion in general or about your own decision to have an abortion. You become more vulnerable and powerful emotional responses or rejections may result in changes in friendships. You ask yourself who is worthy of your trust, which means you are judging your

friends. This may create a distance in itself. Who was there for you and who wasn't? If your partner was involved or knew about your decision, how do you move on together? Perhaps he deals with it differently than you. You can support each other by being respectful and listening to one another. Accept there may be a difference in the way you both deal with the situation.

Finding a new balance

Choosing to have an abortion and dealing with an abortion is not a road that takes you directly from A to B. It is a process that teaches you a lot about your strengths and weaknesses, about the way you deal with the final choice and what matters to you in life. You can learn to cope with conflicting feelings and you may find that there is a balance between your emotions and common sense. It is a process of growth that makes you stronger.

Jeanet: "I was in the bookshop. I wanted to read a book about abortion, but I could not find one. So, I asked one of the employees if she knew a book on the subject. She walked with me and took a book from the shelf. It was about miscarriages. There was an awkward silence. The lady realized the mistake she'd made. I felt a wave of emotions rising up through my stomach. I wanted to scream out loud that I could not help it. I had an abortion, but I could not help it. My baby was not viable. She did not respond. How did I have to tell the lady what I had been through? She could not have understood the extent of it. I walked away without looking back. At home, I sat down on the sofa and cried my eyes out.

My clever 16-year old daughter gave a new dimension to the event. She strongly supports women's rights. She showed me that I should not pay attention to what other people think. This is easier said than done, but she was right anyway.

I wanted the lady in the bookshop not to judge me, but instead I was the one judging myself. I discovered that I used the fact that my baby was not viable as an apology to prevent my being judged. I could not do anything about it, after all. Then, all of a sudden, it hit me. No woman choosing to undergo an abortion should ever have to apologise for what she's done. It was such a relieve and then I became furious. The pressure I had felt, about the abortion being a bad thing, almost strangled me. I thought: "I will teach them a lesson". Henk recognised the pressure I felt; he suffered from it, too and he did not talk about it with other people. It brought us closer together and we decided to take action. We no longer wanted to hide. We used every possible opportunity to explain to people what it is like to have had an abortion. It helped me accept my decision: I was able to help others!"

Anthony: "My life was up and running again. Yet, something had changed. I could have been a father. My life would have been so very different. I realised this and I became more careful.

We went away together for a few days. That was wonderful. We discussed all aspects of the experience again. We know that we are there for each other, even though it may seem at first that we disagree."

Anna: 'It was a good decision, no doubt about that. But this does not mean I never think about it. The abortion took place two and a half years ago. Next week will be my due date again. This is a special day. I look at other children and find myself 'comparing' them. They are about the same age and I think it could have been my child. I see parents and children laughing and playing together. I know things are not always like this. But still, the nice things are the most striking. Coping with my abortion was all about forgiving myself. After the abortion, I was relieved and I felt guilty, too. I had the feeling that what I did was bad. I understand that you choose to have an abortion after being raped, but I was not raped. For months, I felt down and I thought about what I had done.'

Sometimes, there were awkward situations. Not everybody knew about it and people did not understand why I was so down. My schoolwork was running behind schedule. But how could I explain why I was not able to focus? For me, the turning point was when I met other women who had been through an abortion. I got in touch with them through a friend of mine. That was a huge relief. They told my story, felt what I felt. We formed a group that got together once a month. We recognised a lot in each other's stories, for example about feelings of guilt, the treatment itself and the impact it has on you as a person. It was good to talk with each other and to share the experience. We have been meeting on a regular basis for 18 months now. Talking about the past has become less important, although we will never forget.'

Sophie: "I was struggling to reconnect with my own body. I no longer wanted to have sex. I was also furious. Together, we went to see a counsellor. The tensions in our relationship were incredibly high. Before Matthijs was to leave for India, something had to happen. That's how we both felt. It soon became clear that these conversations did not lead anywhere. Mentally, we knew we had done the right thing. My mind said I was satisfied with the way I had dealt with the situation. Emotionally, this was a different story. The tension was so high; it took over my body, I was trembling with anger and I was making an enormous effort to keep myself in control. That was quite scary. I felt hopeless. Finally, I went into a body-focused therapy. I was nervous about it, but I decided to take on the challenge. Looking back, this was a good decision. Very slowly and with the help of individual and couple exercises, there has been some improvement. Last week, Matthijs left. I am peace with it now. I am on the right path."

What should I do?

There is no ready-made recipe for dealing with an abortion. It is important, however, that if you are single, you try to break through isolation by confiding in someone. Moreover, make sure you respect yourself. Don't worry about the pace in which you deal with thoughts and feelings. Accept that you are not in the right place yet and that this takes time. It may help to find out what bothers you the most, what makes you down or angry. If your partner is involved in your decision, this also goes for him, although it may be more difficult for him to talk about feelings of failure, sadness, helplessness and anger. Talking to a professional counsellor may provide insight into the situation and help you determine what is necessary for you to accept this experience in your life. People who have been through the same thing can offer support. They understand what you are going through.

What Fiom has to offer

It is very important to Fiom that, in case of an unwanted pregnancy, you have the freedom of choice. One that suits you and your life, your values and your future. For more than 87 years, Fiom has been offering qualitative, impartial information and assistance. Making a decision about your pregnancy can be very difficult. In a very short time, you have to decide what you want to do with your life. Sometimes, you may know exactly what you want, but after a while you can start having doubts about your choice. It is important you know about the options available to you. You can find information and online help on fiom.nl (in Dutch only).

I'm pregnant. What should I do?

'Zwanger, wat nu?' (I'm pregnant. What should I do?) is Fiom's online counselling programme. You will receive more information about the available options if you are faced with an unwanted pregnancy. You can read stories about the way other people came to reach a decision and you can find information about different subjects that can play a role in making the right choice.

You can also get online help in making a decision. You can do exercises by yourself or with the help of a counsellor.

We provide a safe and anonymous online environment, free of charge. Would you like to have a conversation with a counsellor, please call +31 (0)88 126 4900.

Want to know more?

Go to www.fiom.nl/zwangerwatnu (information is available in Dutch only).

Would you like to know more about facts and figures, history and publications concerning unwanted pregnancies? You can find this information in our [knowledge collection](#) (in Dutch only).

Fiom's programme for dealing with an abortion

Have you had an abortion in the past, and are you struggling with your emotions? Or would you like to know more about help and counselling following an abortion? Visit fiom.nl (in Dutch only) to find more information about these subjects (in Dutch only). You can read stories of other people and apply for the [online counselling programme](#) (in Dutch only).

Fiom offers free and anonymous [online counselling](#) to Dutch women of 16 and over suffering from physical or emotional issues following an abortion. The first step of the online counselling is an intake interview. Based on your answers to the questions,

a counsellor will find out if online counselling is suitable in your situation. Do you prefer personal counselling rather than internet-based? Please contact Fiom and ask about the options for making an appointment with a local counsellor.

Want to know more?

Go to fiom.nl/abortusverwerking (in Dutch only).

Want to know more about facts and figures? What does Dutch law say about abortion? How many women choose to have an abortion each year? You can find this information in our knowledge collection.





Who we are

Fiom offers specialist help in case of unwanted pregnancies and for questions about ancestry.

Fiom promotes the freedom of choice for women who are faced with an unwanted pregnancy, so they can make an informed decision that suits their life, values and future. In addition, Fiom wants to offer people the option to find their biological family and information about their ancestry, because everybody has the right to know where they come from.

Our website offers knowledge about unwanted pregnancies and provides information on questions about ancestry. Are you personally dealing with these subjects? We do not only provide you with information, but we offer online counselling as well, or you can make an appointment for a personal conversation. For professionals, there is an option for consultation and training.

By subscribing to the [Fiom newsletter](#), you can stay up-to-date about current developments in the field of unwanted pregnancies and questions about ancestry, as well as about Fiom activities, like conferences.

Fiom

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because you are not alone