



Counselling gives you the opportunity to talk to a trained health professional in a safe and confidential environment.

What is all options counselling?

It allows you to explore your feelings, thoughts, and behaviour relating to difficult issues in your life.¹ Counselling approaches can be different depending on the theories, beliefs and approaches used by the counselor. Attending counselling does not mean that you are 'crazy' or 'weak' or 'not coping' and is an important early step in empowering women.

What is pregnancy options counselling?

Some women feel able to turn to their friends, family and partners for support. Others feel there is no-one around who they can talk to about their unplanned pregnancy.

'Pregnancy options counselling' is usually a single session counselling service that acknowledges the urgency of the situation.

It focuses on a woman's unplanned pregnancy and supports her to make her decision. It should be unbiased and non-judgmental.

Counselling empowers women's choices about a pregnancy. It aims to support women through what can be a difficult period.

Warning

Not all counselling is unbiased. Some organisations that offer 'pregnancy counselling' do not aim to discuss all of the pregnancy options in an unbiased way'.² Some pregnancy options counsellors may advise women against abortion because of their own beliefs. It's a good idea to ask questions over the phone before making an appointment so you can get an idea if they will be sensitive to your situation.³

What the Women's can offer you

Unplanned pregnancy counselling at the Royal Women's Hospital is usually in person, but can sometimes be provided by telephone.

Unplanned Pregnancy counselling:

- is optional
- provides a confidential space for you to talk through your options
- provides you with support if you think you have made up your mind but still have some feelings of concern
- explores the relevant parts of your life affecting your decision – family, relationship, violence, emotional

wellbeing, community, culture, religious and/or spiritual beliefs

- assists with your decision-making (but does not make the decision for you)
- is usually short-term

At times further counselling or support within the hospital or community may be required.

An Unplanned Pregnancy Counsellor will:

- be guided by you
- see you as the expert in your own life and help you explore options you think are relevant
- be confidential and discreet
- refer you to other agencies and professionals who may be able to assist you further.

An Unplanned Pregnancy Counsellor will not:

- persuade you that any particular decision is best, or try and talk you out of your decision
- pressure you to make a decision by the end of the session
- make a psychiatric diagnosis of you or 'your problems' (but they can refer you to other services if needed).

For more information

1800MyOptions

T: 1800 696 784

W: www.1800myoptions.org.au

References

1. Women's Information & Referral Exchange (WIRE), 'Counselling: A WIRE Information sheet', <<http://www.wire.org.au>>
2. Royal Women's Hospital, 'Submission to the Senate Inquiry Transparent Advertising and Notification of Pregnancy Counselling Services Bill 2005 (June 2006)', <<http://www.thewomens.org.au/AdvocacyforImprovementstoWomensHealth>>, viewed 2 June 2010;
3. Better Health Victoria, 'Abortion – counselling options', <<http://betterhealth.vic.gov.au>>, viewed 2 June 2010;
4. Women's Information & Referral Exchange (WIRE), 'Counselling: A WIRE Information sheet', <<http://www.wire.org.au>>.

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