

Rape and Pregnancy

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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 as an incidental result of rape by a partner, or a deliberate attempt by a man to impregnate his spouse to get her to remain in the relationship, or to return to it.

But it doesn't really matter what the statistics or settings are, it does happen, and it can be a terrifying and isolating thing to face. If you are facing rape-related pregnancy, 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](#).

If you want access to the morning after pill to stop possible conception from the rape, it's important that you act quickly. 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 could feel numb, or absolutely terrified and losing sleep. Both reactions are completely understandable. It might be hard for you to feel comfortable about talking to somebody, 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

Sensitive, non-judgmental treatment from doctors and other medical staff is your right. However, some of them might hold ignorant, victim-blaming opinions about rape. But this does not mean that there is anything wrong with you - what is wrong is certain errant social attitudes about rape. If you don't feel you have had equitable treatment, please find out about avenues of complaint.

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 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 attitudes, from fear to confusion and numbness. It is perfectly fine for you to take time, and have support, as you think about what you need to do. It is something that many people around you may have 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.

Be careful of people with agendas: 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. Unless you're very clear from the outset about what you wish to do, you might be confused. There is nothing wrong with seeking help from others, but watch for their biases. People with a pro-abortion, pro-life or pro-adoption position may use language about what is right for you and your baby that can feel coercive. Some people I told immediately raised "lovely childless couples who want to adopt" practically before the words were out of my mouth! Do NOT listen to people who want to suggest that you're being selfish and not thinking about the baby. 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. In my experience, to have done what everybody around me felt was right would have been more damaging. Many women have been scarred further because others overrode them or forced decisions upon them. Please don't you be one of them.

A quick look at options:

Termination - If you are thinking about terminating the pregnancy, time might be a factor. You can get counselling from rape crisis, or from family planning about termination. Please check these links out:

[National Women's Health Organization USA](#)

[Bowen Hills - Planned Parenthood of Australia Group](#)

Some women do grieve after termination - regardless of the circumstances of conception. 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>

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:

Birthmother Resources and Support Information

Adoption Puzzle - includes an Adoption Support Directory?

*Women who have terminated their pregnancies, or relinquished their babies for adoption, may know that these were the right choices for them. 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, you'll know what I mean. Please get support - again look at the above links.

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 such as what if the baby looks like the rapist or whether the reminder will be too hard, may arise. 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 here at Pandora's Aquarium. If you are in a relationship and have other older children, this may

present more issues around keeping the child. Many sexual assault counselling services offer help to immediate family of the victim - if yours does not, ask if there is anybody they can refer you to.

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 are frightened of the rapist seeking access to your child, you may want to see a legal service. Check this article out too: [Rapists Who Seek Access To Children Conceived by Rape: A Legal Perspective](#)

If you are considering having and keeping the child, I can attest that as a woman who made

this choice, fears and problems can be successfully resolved.

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

Pandora's Aquarium (you are here!) - 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 absolutely heartbroken by this. 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.

It is not a punishment, but please have somebody you can talk it through with.

People who know of the conception might suggest that the loss was fortunate, or for the best. However, this could be at odds with how you feel - if so, you deserve somebody who can hear your pain.

Please have a look at these support links:

[Miscarriage Support Group](#)

[Empty Cradles: Grief Support for Miscarriage, Stillbirth](#)

Pandora's Aquarium - the Pregnancy forum has a subforum for women who experienced miscarriage and stillbirth. You can ask for and receive support

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

Relationships are unfortunately the most common setting for sexual violence. If you have been raped by the person you are, or like me, were in a relationship with, you are entitled to the same legal protection, and support as if it was a stranger. Please visit [Aphrodite Wounded](#) for information about partner rape. It 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, 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

Nobody knowing is not ideal, especially if you are pregnant because first, if you're continuing the pregnancy, it will become obvious to others and second, you deserve as much support as possible. 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. Please believe me when I say you will feel better for sharing, and, once again you have nothing to be ashamed of. Please speak to somebody. Please - 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.](#)

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.

Here are a couple of options:

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 birth-mother, you might find you need people who understand not just about rape, but about the process of adoption too. Please see these links: [Jigsaw - National Adoption Support Groups](#)
[Birthmother Resources and Support Information](#)

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. Some of you write and tell me that although you are hurting badly, you don't want to add to what your mother has experienced by admitting to that pain. 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
and [Stigma Community Message Board](#) with open discussions.

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

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