

# Your Health, Your Rights

**If** you're a teen in California, you have rights. And that's what this booklet is about—your right to privacy and reproductive health care. It has lots of information about different things that may come up in your life.

But first, the most important things you need to know are:

## **IF YOU ARE UNDER 18 YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO:**

- Birth control, including emergency contraception
- Testing and treatment for STIs/STDs
- Pregnancy testing and prenatal care
- Abortion services
- HIV/AIDS testing

You do not need anyone's permission, including your parents or guardians, or your boyfriend or girlfriend

It's your right to get these health services confidentially—the clinic or doctor cannot tell anyone why you were there—unless you say it's okay

The rest of this booklet answers specific questions about these rights and how they affect you. Keep this booklet so if you have questions, you can get some answers. At the end is a list of places you can go for help or advice (pages 4 - 5).

Get answers to these questions and more....

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### WHOSE PERMISSION DO I NEED TO GET BIRTH CONTROL?

NO ONE'S. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO MAKE YOUR OWN DECISIONS ABOUT USING BIRTH CONTROL AND KEEP IT PRIVATE. Birth control is legal in California, for everyone, and no one has to know if you're using it. Also, no one can force you to use birth control if you don't want to. If you plan to have sex and don't want to get pregnant, you have choices.

There are many different kinds of birth control, from condoms, to the Pill, to the Shot. Talk to your doctor,

go to a family planning clinic, or check out the web sites in this brochure (on pages 4-5) to learn more about your birth control choices.

### WHERE CAN I GET EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION?

Pharmacies, clinics and doctor's offices. In California, you can get emergency contraception without having a prescription, but only at some pharmacies. Call 800-521-5211 or 888-NOT-2-LATE or go to [www.not-2-late.com](http://www.not-2-late.com) to find out about pharmacies near you.

## **WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW: EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION (MORNING-AFTER PILL)**

### **WHAT IS EMERGENCY CONTRACEPTION?**

Sometimes called morning-after pills or EC, emergency contraception can keep you from getting pregnant if your condom broke or if you didn't use any birth control during sex. Emergency contraception only works during the first five days after having unprotected sex—and the sooner you take it, the more likely it is to work. It prevents pregnancy and isn't a type of abortion. If you're having sex and don't want to get pregnant, use regular birth control—emergency contraception really is only for emergencies.

### **IF I GET A PREGNANCY TEST, WILL THEY TELL MY PARENTS?**

IT'S YOUR RIGHT TO GET A CONFIDENTIAL PREGNANCY TEST. This means you can have a test and get the results without anyone else finding out. But if you use your parent's or husband's health insurance to pay for the test, you may not be able to keep the information private—talk to your doctor or insurance company about their privacy policy.

### **IF I'M PREGNANT, WHAT CAN I DO?**

You can stay pregnant and become a parent, place the baby for adoption, or end the pregnancy by having an abortion. The earlier you know that you're pregnant,

the more choices you have so you should take a pregnancy test right away. If you want to have the baby, you can get prenatal care to stay healthy and have a healthy baby. Or if you want to have an abortion, it's easier early in the pregnancy.

### **CAN ANYONE MAKE ME HAVE AN ABORTION?**

NO. IT'S YOUR RIGHT TO STAY PREGNANT and have the baby, even if you're under 18 or not married. No one can force you to have an abortion or place the baby for adoption. If you decide to give birth, you will need medical care while you're pregnant and after you have the baby. Some state programs will pay for the care you need if you can't afford it. There are also places that can help you if you're under 21 and can't live at home (see pages 4-5).

### **DO I HAVE TO CHANGE SCHOOLS IF I'M PREGNANT?**

IT'S YOUR RIGHT TO KEEP GOING TO SCHOOL WHILE YOU'RE PREGNANT AND AFTER YOUR BABY IS BORN. It's against the law for schools to treat you differently because you're pregnant or a parent. Some schools have special programs for teen parents. But you do not have to change schools or classes just because you're pregnant.

### **WHAT ABOUT MY JOB?**

Most working women in California have the right to take maternity leave. It's also illegal for most companies to fire you or discriminate against you in other ways because you're pregnant.

## **WARNING: ALL CLINICS ARE NOT ALIKE**

Some clinics pretend to offer family planning services, but will not tell you about all of your options. They call themselves "Crisis Pregnancy Centers" or "Pregnancy Resource Centers" but sometimes they use other names. Some of them give misleading information to try to keep you from having an abortion. The numbers and web sites in this booklet (on pages 4-5) will help you find a clinic that will tell the whole truth and give you all your options.

### IF I KEEP THE BABY, DOES THE FATHER HAVE TO HELP OUT?

YES. If you decide to raise your child yourself, you have a right to some “child support” from the father, even if you’re not married to each other. But the courts decide how much, and it can be hard to collect.

### CAN I PLACE MY BABY FOR ADOPTION?

If you aren’t ready to be a parent, but don’t want to have an abortion, IT’S YOUR RIGHT TO PLACE YOUR BABY FOR ADOPTION. Adoption means giving up your legal rights as a parent, as well as your responsibilities.

### WHAT IF I CHANGE MY MIND AND WANT TO KEEP THE BABY AFTER ALL?

Until all the final papers are signed, you still have the right to change your mind. After that, the adoption is permanent.

### DOES THE BABY’S FATHER HAVE TO KNOW ABOUT THE ADOPTION?

Sometimes. Call the adoption numbers in this booklet (on page 5) to find out more.

### WHAT IF I DIDN’T MAKE ADOPTION ARRANGEMENTS AND DECIDE THAT I CAN’T KEEP THE BABY?

Don’t panic. The law lets new parents leave their baby at a hospital or other safe places like fire stations, up to three days after birth, without getting in trouble or having to give their names. Then they have two weeks (14 days) to change their minds. You can also choose to place the baby for adoption, even if he or she isn’t a newborn anymore.

### CAN I GET AN ABORTION IF THAT’S WHAT I WANT?

Abortion is legal in California, both for teens and adults. YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO GET AN ABORTION until a doctor decides that the fetus could live outside of your body—usually about six months after you

become pregnant. After that, if the pregnancy puts your health or life at risk you can still get an abortion. (See pages 4 and 5 for more about where to get advice and abortion services.)

### DO I HAVE TO GET MY PARENT’S PERMISSION TO GET AN ABORTION?

NO. YOU DO NOT NEED ANYONE’S PERMISSION, AND THE LAW PROTECTS YOUR PRIVACY. No one else has the right to know or do anything about it—not your parents, your boyfriend or partner, or your husband. Even if you are married or under 18, the decision is up to you. But it is very important for you to have someone who can support you like a parent, counselor or friend.

### WHERE CAN I GET AN ABORTION?

You can get an abortion at many family planning clinics and some doctor’s offices. The numbers in this booklet (page 4) will help you find them.

Even though abortions are legal, doctors and nurses do not have to offer them. For example, some hospitals and clinics that are owned by churches refuse to do abortions.

If someone at a clinic or doctor’s office tells you that you cannot get an abortion, make sure they’re telling you the truth. Get another opinion by calling one of the numbers listed in the “Where to Get Help” section on page 4.

### I HAD SEX WITHOUT A CONDOM AND NOW I’M WORRIED ABOUT DISEASES. CAN I GET TESTED?

IT’S YOUR RIGHT TO GET CONFIDENTIAL TESTING AND TREATMENT FOR STDS AND HIV. This means you can get tested for sexually transmitted diseases or infections, including HIV, without getting permission from anyone if you are at least 12. You can also get treated and the clinic or doctor can’t tell your parents or guardians. (See *Where to Get Help* on page 4.)

## I WANT TO GO TO THE CLINIC, BUT HOW CAN I PAY?

IN CALIFORNIA YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO FREE OR LOW-COST MEDICAL CARE.

If you don't have insurance or don't want to use your parents insurance, and can't pay on your own:

- Family PACT pays for many sexual health services like pregnancy tests, prescription birth control, STD testing and treatment, and counseling. It does not pay for abortions, prenatal or maternity care. The services are confidential. You can sign up for Family PACT at the doctor's office. To find a provider call 800-952-1054 or go to [www.familypact.org](http://www.familypact.org).
- Medi-Cal pays for pregnancy-related care, including abortion, if your income is very low. If you're under 21, Medi-Cal only counts the money you earn for yourself, not what your parents earn. Medi-Cal services are confidential. To sign up for Medi-Cal contact your local County office.
- Some clinics have "sliding fee scales:" they charge less to people who have less money.

If you have health insurance:

- It probably pays for prenatal care, maternity services, and abortions. You will have to check your policy or call the company to make sure.
- Either through your job—or your parent's or husband's job—and it covers prescription drugs, then it should cover prescription birth control like pills, shots, and diaphragms
- If you use your parent's or husband's or insurance, or go to a family doctor, your family could find out. If you don't want them to know, ask ahead of time about confidentiality (what they will or won't keep private).
- If you don't think your family doctor or insurance company will keep your information confidential, you can use the resources listed above.

## WHERE TO GET HELP

### WHERE CAN I GO FOR SEXUAL HEALTH SERVICES?

**ACCESS:** 800-375-4636 (Spanish 888-442-2237)

The ACCESS hotline has counselors to help women and teens understand their options, and find free or low-cost services they need.

**Emergency Contraception:** 888-NOT-2-LATE or [www.not-2-late.com](http://www.not-2-late.com)

Call this free hotline for the names and phone numbers of places where you can get emergency contraception, or "the morning-after-pill."

**Family PACT:** 800-942-1054 or [www.familypact.org](http://www.familypact.org)

Family PACT can help you find a provider who can sign you up for this way of paying (see page X). You can also find medical providers on their website. Just type in your zip code and it will list all the health care providers in your area who take Family PACT.

**Planned Parenthood:** 800-230-PLAN or [www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org)

You can get affordable and confidential health care at Planned Parenthood health centers across the state. They offer a wide range of services for both teens and adults. Call to connect with the nearest center and make an appointment, or just ask a question. You can also find your local center by typing in your zip code.

## HELP FOR IMMIGRANTS

If you're not a U.S. citizen, you may be able to get help that will not cause your immigration status to be revealed to officials. For more information, contact your local immigrant's rights organization.

## WHERE CAN I FIND OUT ABOUT ADOPTION?

To learn more about adoption in California—how it works, what your options are, and where to get help—check out these two organizations:

**Adoption Connection**, [www.adoptionconnection.org](http://www.adoptionconnection.org), 800-972-9225

**PACT**, [www.pactadopt.org](http://www.pactadopt.org), 800-750-7590

## PROTECTING YOUR RIGHTS

These groups help protect your right to make your own decisions about pregnancy and birth control. Call them if you think your reproductive rights have been violated:

■ **The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)**

o in northern California, 415-621-2493

o in southern California, 213-977-9500 (Los Angeles) or 619-232-2121 (San Diego)

■ **NARAL Pro-Choice California**, 415-890-1020

■ **Planned Parenthood Affiliates of California** 916-446-5247

If you have questions about maternity leave or think you've been treated unfairly at school or at work, because you're pregnant, here are some places to get advice and legal help.

■ **California Women's Law Center**: 213-637-9900, [www.cwlc.org](http://www.cwlc.org)

■ **Equal Rights Advocates**: 800-839-4ERA, [www.equalrights.org](http://www.equalrights.org)

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

For honest, reliable information about sex and your health, some great places to start are:

■ [www.itsyoursexlife.com](http://www.itsyoursexlife.com), sexual health information for teens by MTV

■ [www.iwannaknow.org](http://www.iwannaknow.org) for information about sexually transmitted diseases just for teens

■ [www.sxetc.org](http://www.sxetc.org) lots of sexual health information by and for teens and young adults

■ [www.teensource.org](http://www.teensource.org) for sexual health information specifically for teens

■ [www.teenwire.com](http://www.teenwire.com), by Planned Parenthood especially for teens; you can ask questions, get information and see what questions other teens have asked

■ [www.youth-guard.org](http://www.youth-guard.org) on-line support for gay, lesbian, bisexual and questioning teens

■ [www.youthline.org](http://www.youthline.org) or 888-977-3399, a free confidential phone service for youth by youth providing information, support and crisis intervention; they are open 12 p.m. to 10 p.m. every day of the year

You do have rights as a teen. There are laws that protect you. You can make your own decisions and you do not have to tell anyone about them. The organizations listed in this book are here to help you. If you have any other questions, get in touch with one of the groups and they will help you find the health care you need—it's your right. *December 2006*

