

# Sex Work & Pregnancy



When sex workers become pregnant they have the choice to keep working or stop working. It's important to know the choice is up to the woman who is pregnant. It is her body, her baby and her decision. She should be supported and her decision should be respected. This fact sheet will provide information on issues to consider if working while pregnant.

## How you became pregnant:

Some sex workers become pregnant by a client from a broken condom, condom slippage, having sex without a condom, through rape or just because condoms are not effective 100% of the time. Or it is a planned pregnancy.

This may bring up certain feelings or issues. In this situation it can also be difficult to discuss the pregnancy with other sex workers or friends because people may fear being judged or having the validity of the pregnancy questioned.

Refer to the end of this fact sheet for counselling services. Becoming pregnant to a client can also be scary because you don't know the clients, their medical history, or if they have an STI.

The most important thing to know is you are not alone.

## Unexpected pregnancy:

Another issue, regardless of how you became pregnant, is that the pregnancy may be unexpected. This can create issues with your sex working career your other career and any study you may be doing.

Some sex workers are concerned they won't be able to keep working as a sex worker when pregnant and worry about how they are going to manage to go back to work once they have had the baby. There are choices to help deal with any unexpected pregnancy.

## Having sex while pregnant:

If you have a healthy pregnancy, it is safe to have sex throughout your pregnancy. What a 'healthy pregnancy' is and if your pregnancy is at any risk, is important to discuss with your clinician.

Your baby is protected by the amniotic sac and the strong muscles of the uterus and pelvis, and a penis does not come into contact with the baby while having sex.

In healthy pregnancies having an orgasm cannot harm your baby; however, if you get cum inside you, remember that semen contains a chemical that can bring on contractions in the later stages of pregnancy, which is something to be aware of.

An ultra sound in the 1<sup>st</sup> trimester will give you a good idea of how your pregnancy is progressing.

## Things that make it unsafe to have sex are:

- having unprotected sex, because STIs can harm you and your baby
- allowing a client to blow air into your vagina because it can cause an air embolism that can be fatal for mum and baby (insufflations)
- vaginal bleeding, cramping or discharge, in which case you should discuss this with your doctor before having any more sex
- a change of sexual partners in you private life
- swimming in spas over 36 degrees – only go in up to your thighs

(These points were referred by Sexual Health Services Townsville)

### **Comfortable sex positions:**

For the first part of your pregnancy, if you have a healthy pregnancy, having sex in the missionary position is safe and can remain comfortable as long as the client is able to bear their own weight on their arms and doesn't lie on top of you.

As you get further along however, you'll need to find new positions that are comfortable for you. These positions will vary depending on where the baby is positioned, how you feel on the day, the body shape of the client and the size of his penis.

### **Your client base while pregnant**

Many sex workers find their regular clients like to see them for their warmth, personality and the feeling of friendship they have established. Many of these clients will probably stick with you through your pregnancy and continue to see you either right through your pregnancy or up until your final trimester. During your pregnancy other clients might appear that are particularly attracted to pregnant women.

### **Security and pregnancy**

It is a lot harder for a sole operator to put in safety measures to protect her self through out a pregnancy because, legally you are allowed to employ a licensed security guard, yet it can be extremely expensive.

It is also illegal have another person in the unit while seeing a client. For this reason, some ladies may prefer to work in a brothel during their pregnancy; however, not all brothels support the idea of having a pregnant sex worker on roster. If this is the case, you may want to work at a brothel for as long as you can, and then if you don't feel safe working alone reassess if you can continue working.

Ways of being safer when working alone include not answering private phone calls, ringing a friend when a client arrives and telling them what time you are expected out (in front of that client so that they know someone knows you are with them), installing a security camera in your hallway or only seeing clients who you already trust.

### **What to tell your clients**

It's up to you whether you choose to tell your clients you're pregnant and when you tell them. If you don't want your clients to know, when you start showing and can't hide it anymore it might be a good time to finish up.

Some workers find that clients will tip them to help out with the baby and the expenses.

Other sex workers may prefer to blog, or put up a baby registry on the internet. Either way it is up to the individual.

### **What if you need to stop working and don't have the finances to do so?**

You may not want to work while pregnant. If this is the case, you can get benefits to tide you over until you can go back to work again or until you can get another job.

Generally speaking, Centrelink will expect you to work until the last 6-8 weeks of your pregnancy, so it is a good idea to make an appointment to see a social worker or a case manager at Centrelink to get the most sympathetic reception and up-to-date information.

You should be able to find health professionals who will support you with what you need to qualify for benefits. There are also women's centres and women's community services that are able to help you with support letters and filling out forms. Or contact one of the Respect Inc offices.

You may want to consider applying to Housing and Homeless Services (the former Department of Housing) for subsidised rental properties or housing in one of their units or houses.

It is a good idea to approach a women's service that specialises in assisting people in filling out these forms because it is a complicated process and you may need support letters from doctors, counsellors and other services to get you housed as soon as possible.

A women's service may be able to help you with women's housing co-ops and other affordable housing services as well.

It is also a good idea to start investigating the benefits you will be entitled to after you have your baby and child care options so you can plan for returning to work if you need to.

Once again it's a good idea to speak to Centrelink about this or a women's service that will be able to help you explore this issue as well as housing and financial payments you may be entitled to.

### **Returning to work after your baby is born**

After you've had your baby, it's your choice of when to return to work. If you have made plans for child care with your extended family, partner or an outside childcare facility this may be easier for you to negotiate and achieve sooner.

When you return to work, you may find many of your old regulars will want to see you. There may also be the clients who will want to see you because they have a lactating fetish.

In Queensland it is unlawful to have unprotected sex where body fluids will be exchanged without a prophylactic.

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### **Other options**

There are of course alternative options to having or keeping a baby. Some of these options include terminating the pregnancy, adoption, fostering and giving guardianship to an extended family member. These are all completely valid and no one should frown on you or tell you which option you should choose. If you would like to explore any of these options, including keeping the baby, below are some contact details of people you may find helpful:

## **Counselling Services**

### **Lifeline**

13 11 14

**Children By Choice** (non-judgmental and supportive, able to talk through all options—have termination lists)

07 3357 5377 (Brisbane)

1800 177 725 (outside Brisbane and free call)

### **Centrelink – Family Assistance Office**

13 61 50

13 12 02 (for non-English speakers)

**Housing and Homeless Services QLD** (use to be Department of Housing QLD)

1300 880 882 (or check website for your local offices contact details)

### **Child Support Agency**

13 12 72

### **Family Assistance Office**

13 61 50

### **Financial Counseling Services**

07 3257 1957

### **Tenancy Advice and Advocacy Service**

07 3358 3951

### **Women's Infolink (Brisbane)**

1800 177 577

### **Women's Information and Referral Centre (Cairns)**

07 4051 9366

### **Migrant Settlement Services (Cairns)**

07 4041 7699

### **Immigrant Women's Support Service**

07 3846 5400

### **Homeless Persons Information Queensland (HPIQ)**

1800 474 753

### **Women's Legal Service (Legal Advice)**

07 3392 0670

1800 677 278

### **Child Protection Crisis Care, Department of Child Safety**

1800 811 810

### **Mensline**

1300 789 978

### **Parentline Queensland and Northern Territory**

1300 30 1300

### **Telephone Interpreting Service**

13 14 50

**Disclaimer:**

All material in this fact sheet is provided for your information only and may not be construed as legal, medical or health advice or instruction.

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**Respect Inc contacts:****Brisbane Office**

28 Mein Street  
Spring Hill QLD 4000  
07 3835 1111 (phone)  
07 3835 1122 (fax)

**Gold Coast**

4 Bay Street  
Southport QLD 4215  
07 5657 0857 (phone)  
07 5564 0929 (fax)

**Cairns Office**

7/24 Florence Street  
Cairns City QLD 4870  
07 4051 5009 (phone)  
07 4051 0009 (fax)

**Townsville Office**

118a Charters Towers Road  
Hermit Park Townsville QLD 4812  
07 4724 4853 (phone)  
07 4724 1122 (fax)

[www.respectqld.org.au](http://www.respectqld.org.au)

[info@respectqld.org.au](mailto:info@respectqld.org.au)