



American Pregnancy Association Promoting
Reproductive & Pregnancy Wellness



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QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

When considering whether to not to place your child for adoption, many Birth Mother's ask themselves the following questions to aid them in their decision making:

- Am I able to give a child what he/she demands and needs
- Would I have to count on my parents to help me out?
- Can I raise a child and meet my own needs? To finish school? To start a career?
- Am I ready to become a parent on my own?
- What do I want to achieve in life and to experience out of life? Could I manage a child and a job and/or school at the same time?
- Am I ready to give up the freedom to do whatever I want whenever I want?
- An example of something I would have to give up by having my child with me would be?
- Am I willing to cut back on having fun and staying home while my friends go out? Would I miss my free time and privacy?
- Can I afford to support a child? How will I pay for rent, clothing, food, diapers, and other living expenses?
- Do I want to raise a child in the neighborhood that I live in now? Where do I plan to live?
- Am I expecting my child to make my life happy and to love me?
- When I am around small children for a while, what do I think or feel about having a two-year-old around ALL the time?
- How would I treat a child If I lost my temper or became angry?
- How would I discipline a toddler?
- How would I take care of my child's health and safety?
- Do I enjoy teaching others?
- How will I feel knowing my child is with someone else? Would I be comfortable with someone else raising my child?

BENEFITS OF ADOPTION

Adoption benefits everyone in the adoption triad. Many of these benefits are helpful to the birthmother and birthfather. Other benefits are directed at the child who is being placed for adoption and/or the adoptive parents.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS FOR THE BIRTHMOTHER:

- Housing assistance may be available during the pregnancy
- Counseling and support
- The opportunity to fulfill your dreams whether educational, travel, or career
- The opportunity to make the dreams you have for your child come true
- Prenatal and delivery expenses paid as needed
- You get to choose a family for your child that you like best, and can get to know them personally
- A support group of birth mothers who will share their experiences with you

- Members of your family may also receive counseling/support services
- All legal expenses and attorney fees will be paid for you
- The opportunity to bring happiness to a family wishing to adopt that could not occur without you
- The comfort that comes with knowing that the adoptive parents know you love this baby enough to ensure his or her happiness.

BENEFITS FOR THE CHILD:

- The love and support of adoptive parents who are emotionally and financially ready to parent
- A desirable home and family life
- Resources and provisions that might not otherwise be available
- Access to readily available educational resources.





BENEFITS FOR THE ADOPTIVE FAMILY:

- Receive the joy and blessing of adding a child to their family.
- Ability to fulfill dreams of raising a child

OPEN ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES

Open adoption occurs when the birth parents and prospective adoptive families have personal interaction with one another. In this type of adoption, the identities of all parties are shared with each other. The Interaction may be different for each family and may include letters, e mails, telephone calls, or visits. There are several potential advantages to an open adoption for the birth parents, the adoptive parents, and the adopted child.

OPEN ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES FOR BIRTH PARENTS

The open adoption experience is different for each person. Here is a list of potential advantages with open adoption:

- Sense of control - Having the ability to review, interview, and select the parents to place your baby with, usually provides birth parents with a sense of empowerment and control.
- Reduced uncertainties -Most birth parents experience a sense of comfort knowing about the child's well-being through interactions and updates with the adoptive family.
- Improved mourning - Being able to visit and talk with the adoptive family and the adopted child often provides an increased ability to deal with the grief and loss.
- Reduced fear - When there is on-going communication with the adoptive family before the birth and following the adoption, it often helps reduce the fear about what is going to happen to the child.
- Relationship with the child - With an open adoption, there is the potential to develop a healthy relationship with the child as he or she grows.
- Relationship with the adoptive family - There is an opportunity for you to develop a relationship with the adoptive family. For some birth families, the adoptive family may feel like a part of their own extended family.
- Reduced guilt - With an on-going relationship and communication about the wellbeing of the child, you may experience less guilt about making a decision to place.

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OPEN ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILY

The open adoption experience is different for every family. Here is a list of potential advantages that you might encounter with an open adoption:

- **Reduced fear** - When there is on-going communication with the birthmother or birth families before the birth and following the adoption, it may help reduce the fears one might have about the birthmother's Intentions because her desires are known.
- **Medically informed** - A medical history is provided prior to the adoption; however, with an open adoption there is an ability to seek additional medical Information as things may change as the child develops.
- **Relationship with the birth families** - There Is an opportunity to develop a relationship with the birthmother or birth families. For some adoptive families, the birthmother or birth families may feel like a part of their own extended family.
- **Affirmation** - You may experience a sense of empowerment or encouragement knowing that you were chosen as the adoptive family.
- **Understanding and confidence** - An open adoption provides a greater understanding of your child's history making It easier to answer the questions: "Who am I?" and "Where did I come from?"

OPEN ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES FOR ADOPTED CHILD

The open adoption experience is different for every child; however, there are many advantages that an adopted child might experience with an open adoption:

Identity and self-confidence - Open adoption provides adopted children with direct access to birth families for information about family history and family trees. This often makes it easier to answer the questions: "Who am I?" and ""Where did I come from?"

- **Protection against a sense of abandonment** - Having the opportunity to communicate with the birth family and learn the reasons behind the adoption can help prevent the child from experiencing a sense of abandonment.
- **Absence of the need to search** - The potential need to search to find the birth families is removed.
- **Medically informed** - A medical history is provided prior to the adoption; however, with an open adoption there is an ability to seek additional medical Information that may become necessary with the onset of medical symptoms in adulthood or questions about genetics with future family planning.
- **Relationship with the birth families** - There is an opportunity for the adopted child to develop a relationship with the birth mother or birth families. For some adopted children, the birthmother or birth families may feel like a part of their own extended family.
- **Support Network** - The birthmother and birth families have a genuine concern for the well-being of the child which often makes them advocates for the child and serves as additional support to the child.

The open adoption experience is different for each adoption. The most important thing for all parties involved in the adoption process is communication. The more communication about wishes, desires, and expectations, the more comfortable each party will be in the adoption process.

OPEN ADOPTION DISADVANTAGES



Open adoption occurs when the potential birthmother and prospective adoptive families have personal interaction with one another. Through this type of adoption, the identities of all parties are shared with each other. The interaction may be different for each family and may include letters, e-mails, telephone calls, or visits. With open adoption, there may be potential disadvantages that should be considered for the birth parents, the adoptive parents, and the adopted child.

OPEN ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGE FOR BIRTH PARENTS



The open adoption experience is different for each person and agencies are prepared to help each person work through the following concerns should they arise.

- Abuse of trust- The relationship with the adoptive family opens the door for trust to be abused. The adoptive family may use the trust you place in them to manipulate the situation.
- Potential disappointment- With the opportunity to interact and observe the adoptive family as the child develops, there is the potential for disappointment when the adoptive family does not meet all expectations or needs.
- Feelings of obligation -A birth mother may feel a sense of obligation to place the child for adoption because of the financial and emotional investment made by the adoptive family.
- Changed Mind- The adoptive family can choose to halt or terminate the process at any time. This could leave the child in a state of limbo and possibly lead to the child being put in foster care until new arrangements can be worked out.



OPEN ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGE FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILY

The open adoption experience is different for every family; however, here are some potential disadvantages that you might encounter with an open adoption:

- Additional pressure-The adoptive family may be interested in a closed or semi-open adoption. The birthmother or birth family may want a greater level of openness. The adoptive parents may feel pressure to accept certain expectations of openness from the birth family or fear not getting the child.



- Unstable relationships- The adoptive family may discover that their relationship with the birth family results in a relationship with an unhealthy or emotionally disturbed birth family member.
- Additional support- The adoptive family may feel the need to be the emotional support system for the birth family.

OPEN ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGE FOR ADOPTED CHILD

The open adoption experience is different for every child; however, there are some potential disadvantages that an adopted child might encounter with an open adoption:

- Reduced ability to assimilate into family-interaction with the birth family may present barriers for the child to fully assimilate into the adoptive family.
- Sense of rejection- If the contact stops between the birth family and the adoptive family, the adopted child may develop a sense of rejection.
- Peer communications- With continual interaction with the birth families, the adopted child may struggle with ways to communicate the various relationships to his or her peers.
- Power struggles- The adopted child may use the adoptive family and the birth family as pawns playing one against the other.
- Identify confusion- There is a chance that a teenage child may struggle more with Identity because of the extent of family history and genealogy information.

The open adoption is experienced differently In each situation. The most important thing for all parties involved in the adoption process is communication. The more communication about wishes, desires, expectations, the more comfortable each party will be in the adoption process.

SEMI-OPEN ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES

A semi-open adoption occurs when the potential birthmother or birth families experience non-identifying interaction with the adoptive families. In some cases, the interaction is facilitated by a third party, usually the adoption agency or adoption attorney. Through this type of adoption, the identity of alt parties is usually kept from one another In many cases, the interaction includes letters or cards: however, in some cases, there may be non-identifying e-mails or visits hosted by the adoption professional. There are several potential advantages to a semi-open adoption for the birth parents, the adoptive parents, and the adopted child.

SEMI-OPEN ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES FOR BIRTH PARENTS

The semi-open adoption experience Is different for each person; however here is a list of potential advantages that you might encounter with a semi-open adoption:

- Sense of control - Having the ability to review, interview and select the parents you place your baby with usually provides birthmothers with a sense of empowerment and control.
- Privacy - Interaction between you and the adoptive family that is facilitated through the adoption professional provides a sense of privacy.
- Reduced uncertainties - Most birthmothers experience a sense of comfort knowing the child's well-being through the interactions and updates provided through the adoption agency or adoption attorney.
- Improved mourning - Receiving updates on the child's well-being, and letters from the adoptive family often provide an increased ability to manage feelings of grief and loss.
- Reduced fear - When the adoption professional facilitates on-going communication between the adoptive and birth families before the birth and following the adoption, it may help reduce fears about what is going to happen to the child.
- Reduced guilt - Through the updates and letters from the adoptive family provided through the adoption agency, you may experience less guilt about making a decision about placing for adoption.

SEMI-OPEN ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILY

- The semi-open adoption experience is different for every family, however these are potential advantages that you might encounter with a semi-open adoption:
- Reduced fear - When the adoption professional facilitates on-going communication between you and the birthmother or birth families before the birth and following the adoption, It usually helps you reduce the fears you might have about the birthmother's intentions.
- Medically informed - A medical history is provided prior to the adoption; however, with a semi-open adoption there is the potential to go through the adoption agency or attorney to seek additional medical information as things may change as the child develops.
- Affirmation - As an adoptive family, you may experience a sense of empowerment or encouragement knowing that you were 'chosen' as the adoptive family.
- Roles clearly defined - With a semi-open adoption It is easier to manage the roles of each party involved than It would be with an open adoption.
- Understanding and confidence- Even though there is less access to birthparents than in open adoption, adoptive parents may address questions about the child's history through the adoption professional.

SEMI-OPEN ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES FOR THE ADOPTED CHILD

The open adoption experience is different for every child; however here is a list of potential advantages that an adopted child might encounter with an open adoption:

- Identity and self-confidence - Semi-open adoption provides adopted children access to birth families through the adoption professional, enabling them to acquire information about family history and family trees. This often makes it easier to answer the questions: "Who am I?" and "Where did I come from?"
- Protection against a sense of abandonment - Having the opportunity to receive communication from the birth families and receive the reasons behind the adoption can help prevent the child from experiencing a sense of abandonment.
- Absence of need to search - The potential need to search to find the birth families is removed.
- Medically informed - A medical history is provided prior to the adoption; however with an open adoption there is an ability to seek additional medical information that may become necessary with the onset of medical symptoms in adulthood or questions about genetics with future family planning.

The semi-open adoption experience is a different experience for each adoption. The most important thing for all parties involved in the adoption process is communication. The more communication about wishes, desires, expectations, etc., the more comfortable each party will be in the adoption process.

SEMI-OPEN ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGES

A semi-open adoption occurs when the potential birth mother or birth families experience non-identifying interaction with the adoptive families. In most cases, the interaction is facilitated by a third party which is usually the adoption agency or adoption attorney. Through this type of adoption, the identity of all parties is usually kept from one another. In most cases, the interaction includes letters or cards; however in some cases there may be non-identifying e-mails or visits hosted by the adoption professional. When considering semi-open adoption, there are several potential disadvantages for the birth parents, the adoptive parents, and the adopted child.

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SEMIOPEN ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGES FOR BIRTH PARENTS

The semi-open adoption experience is different for each person; however, here is a list of potential disadvantages that you may encounter with a semi-open adoption:

- Loss of relationship- Since the communication between the birth families and the adoptive family occurs through the adoption professional there is the potential loss for a direct relationship with the adopted child.
- Increased grief- During the initial years following the placement of your child there is a greater potential for heightened grief without the opportunity to observe how the child is doing with the adoptive family.
- Interruption in contact- If the adoption professional changes or leaves there is the potential to have communication interrupted, at least temporarily.
- Feelings of obligation- As the birth mother, you may feel a sense of obligation to place the child for adoption because of the financial and emotional investment made by the adoptive family.

SEMIOPEN ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGES FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILY

The semi-open adoption experience is different for every family; however, here is a list of potential disadvantages that you may encounter with a semi-open adoption:

- Limited relationship- Because all communication goes through the adoption professional, there is an absence of a deeper and more genuine relationship with the birth family.
- Limited Information- Since communication is dependent on the adoption professional, there is potentially less information acquired regarding medical histories, family genealogies and family histories.
- Delayed responses- If questions arise from the adoptive family or adopted child, there is a potential for delayed answers because the questions have to go through the adoption agency or adoption attorney.

SEMIOPEN ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGES FOR THE ADOPTED CHILD

The semi-open adoption experience is different for every child; however, here is a list of potential disadvantages that an adopted child may encounter with an open adoption:

- Negative perceptions- Because the birth family is kept away from the adoptive family, the adopted child may develop a perception that it is unsafe or wrong to interact with the birth family directly.
- Postponed or avoided reunions- Negative perceptions about the birth family may result in the adoptive child postponing or avoiding altogether seeking to reunite with the birth family.
- Identity confusion -There is a chance that a teenage child may struggle more with identity because of the limited communication with the birth families or because of the additional family history and genealogy information.
- Preoccupation with adoption issues- A child in a semi-open adoption may be slightly more prone to experience a preoccupation with adoption issues.
- The semi-open adoption is experienced differently in each adoption. The most important thing for all parties involved in the adoption process is communication. The more communication about wishes, desires, expectations, the more comfortable each party will be in the adoption process.

CLOSED ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES

Closed adoption refers to an adoption process where there is no interaction of any kind between the birthmother and the prospective adoptive families. There is no identifying information provided to either the birth families or the adoptive families. Non-Identifying Information such as physical characteristics and medical history may be provided to both parties.

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CLOSED ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES FOR BIRTH PARENTS

The closed adoption experience is different for each person; however, here is a list of potential advantages with a closed adoption:

- Sense of closure- Some birthmothers and birth families report that having a closed adoption provides a sense of closure and enables them to move on with life.
- Privacy- Placing a child for adoption is an extremely sensitive and vulnerable choice. Having a closed adoption creates an opportunity for a stronger sense of privacy.
- Reduced fear- Some birthmothers are concerned about explaining their choice, and a closed adoption serves as a way to prevent them from a confrontation with a child placed for adoption.

CLOSED ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILY

The closed adoption experience is different for every family; however, here are potential advantages that you might encounter with a closed adoption:

- Family Freedom- If the birth families are not involved, the adoptive family is free to have their family time without restraints of visitations and on-going communication.
- Absence of fuzzy boundaries- There is no danger or risk of birth parent interference or co-parenting concerns.

CLOSED ADOPTION: ADVANTAGES FOR THE ADOPTED CHILD

The closed adoption experience is different for every child; however, here is a list of potential advantages with a closed adoption:

- Absence of fuzzy boundaries- There is no danger or risk of birth parent interference or co-parenting concerns.
- Protection from unstable birth families- A closed adoption protects the adopted child from an unstable or emotionally disturbed birth parent or birth family member.

The closed adoption is a different experience for each adoption. The most important thing for all parties involved in the adoption process is communication. The more communication about wishes, desires, expectations, etc., the more comfortable each party will be in the adoption process. In a closed adoption, this communication takes place through the adoption agency or adoption attorney.



CCETN ADOPTION SERVICES

CLOSED ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGES

Closed adoption refers to an adoption process where there is no interaction between the birthmother and the prospective adoptive families. There is no identifying information provided to either the birth families or the adoptive families. Non-identifying information such as physical characteristics and medical history may be provided to both parties. When considering a closed adoption, there are a number of disadvantages that need to be thought through carefully for all parties involved.

CLOSED ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGES FOR BIRTH PARENTS

The closed adoption experience is different for every family; however here are potential advantages that you might encounter with a closed adoption:

- Dealing with grief - Some birthmothers and birth families report that having a closed adoption makes the grieving process more difficult because there is a lack of information on the child's well-being.
- Dealing with denial - Placing a child through a closed adoption may lead you to deny that the child was born and placed for adoption.
- Dealing with guilt - Since there is no opportunity to communicate with the child about why you placed him other for adoption, it may be easier for feelings of guilt to develop.
- Dealing with abandonment -Some birthmothers report that they feel like they are abandoning their baby. Without the ability to communicate with the child, you may be more vulnerable to experience this type of emotion.
- Dealing with lack of information - An absence of information about the child's well being combined with denial or guilt may make you more susceptible to depression.

CLOSED ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGES FOR ADOPTIVE FAMILY

The closed adoption experience is different for every family; however, here is a list of potential disadvantages that you may encounter with a closed adoption:

- Increased denial - The closed adoption may encourage the family to have a sense of denial on "adopted family" or "fertility" status.
- Increased fear - Adoptive families commonly fear that the birth mother will change her mind and want the baby back. Fear commonly increases for adoptive families without the communication with the birth families and knowledge of their true intentions.
- Limited medical history - Although a medical history is provided prior to the adoption, there is no means for acquiring additional information if something medically changes or develops for the child.
- Less control- In a closed adoption you have less control as you are relying on the agency to communicate on your behalf with the potential birthmother.



CLOSED ADOPTION: DISADVANTAGES FOR ADOPTED CHILD

The closed adoption experience is different for every child; however, here is a list of potential disadvantages that an adopted child may encounter with a closed adoption:

- Identify confusion - There is a chance that a teenage child may struggle more with identity because of the absence of communication with the birth families.
- Preoccupation with adoption issues - A child in a closed adoption may be slightly more prone to experience a preoccupation with adoption issues.
- Limited information - Whether it is medical histories, family genealogies or family histories, a child of a closed adoption has limited access to information about things that most people take for granted. This lack of information may leave the child with unanswered questions.

The closed adoption is experienced differently in each adoption. The most important thing for all parties involved in the adoption process is communication. The more communication about wishes, desires, and expectations, the more comfortable each party will be in the adoption process. In a closed adoption, this communication takes place through the adoption agency or adoption attorney.

TERMS AND DEFINITIONS:

Adoption Decree:

A legal order that finalizes an adoption to the adoptive parents.

Adoption Plan:

An arrangement made by the birthparents stating their expectations and preferred circumstances. (i.e. open or closed adoption and level of involvement)

Adoption Triad:

The child, birthparents, and adoptive parents

Birthfather:

The biological father who has consented in the adoption plan

Birthmother:

The biological mother placing the child of adoption

Finalization:

The adoptive parents appear in court, asking to become the child's legal parents. The judge grants the request if all is in order.

Home Study:

Assessment of the adoptive parents' ability to provide a safe and healthy home. This provides information on the couple's health, home life, financial standing, background information, and even about their extended families. The assessment is done by a trained adoption specialist and submitted to the agency and court as part of the adoption decree.

Relinquishment Papers:

Legal documents that the birth parents must sign, showing that they choose to place their child for adoption and that they terminate all legal rights to the child. These papers are signed no earlier than 4 days after the child is born.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



How involved can I be with my baby, and will my child get a chance to contact me years from now?

At the time of adoption, the birth parents can choose whether or not they would be open to being contacted one day by the child placed for adoption. The level of contact between you, the adoptive family, and your child are you and the adoptive parents' decision.

How do I know my baby will be safe with someone else?

Adoption agencies set standards for adoptive parents, which gives assurance that the child placed in an adoptive home will be safe. You also have the option to choose a family by reading profiles, phone conversation, and even meeting the couple face to face.

What are my baby's father's rights in adoption?

The birthfather's rights in adoption are the same as the birthmother's unless determined otherwise by a court system.

Will my baby be confused if I choose open or semi-open adoption?

Confusion depends more on the extent of communication that occurs between the child and the adoptive family. Actually, closed adoption may create more confusion or frustration for adopted children because of the unknowns.

How much can I find out about an adoptive family for my baby?

Potential adoptive families provide profiles to look through with information on them, most of them have several pictures. Some couples even present their profile in the form of a scrapbook. This information may consist of the size of their family, where they live, what they do for a living, as well as others things such as how long they have been married, how they met, what their pets' names are, and what their health history is. They can even include what their religious views are, and will most likely include some photos of them and their lifestyle.

What will the adoptive parents of my baby have to know about me?

The adoptive parents will want to know all they can about you. They will probably be interested in your medical history, your healthcare, your age, and your interests. You may provide any additional information you would like them to have.

Will I be able to see my baby when it's born?

Yes, you may choose whether or not you would like to see your baby, and how long you want to be with him or her. Surrender paperwork is not signed until 4 days after the child's birth and a birth mother has 3 additional business days to revoke that decision should they choose to do so.



GUIDELINES TO CHOOSING AN ADOPTION AGENCY

Choosing an adoption agency and/or an attorney is a task in which there may be several opportunities. It is important to select the adoption professional that best meets your needs. Here is a list of suggestions to help birthmothers and birth families make the right choice for their adoption professional.

Suggestions:

Get referrals from friends or others that have adopted or have placed their child for adoption.

Ask how long the attorney or agency has been working in adoption.

Find out what services they provide before and after the adoption.

Find out If there are any costs of the adoption that you must cover if needed, ask if the agency places minority or biracial children.

Ask the adoption agency for a list of referrals.

Determine if the adoption professional works with open or closed adoption and the attorney's views and experience with both types.

Inquire about the availability and credibility of counselling.

Learn about the adoption plan, contract, and decrees.

See what the procedures are on finding out the health and stability of the adoptive parents.



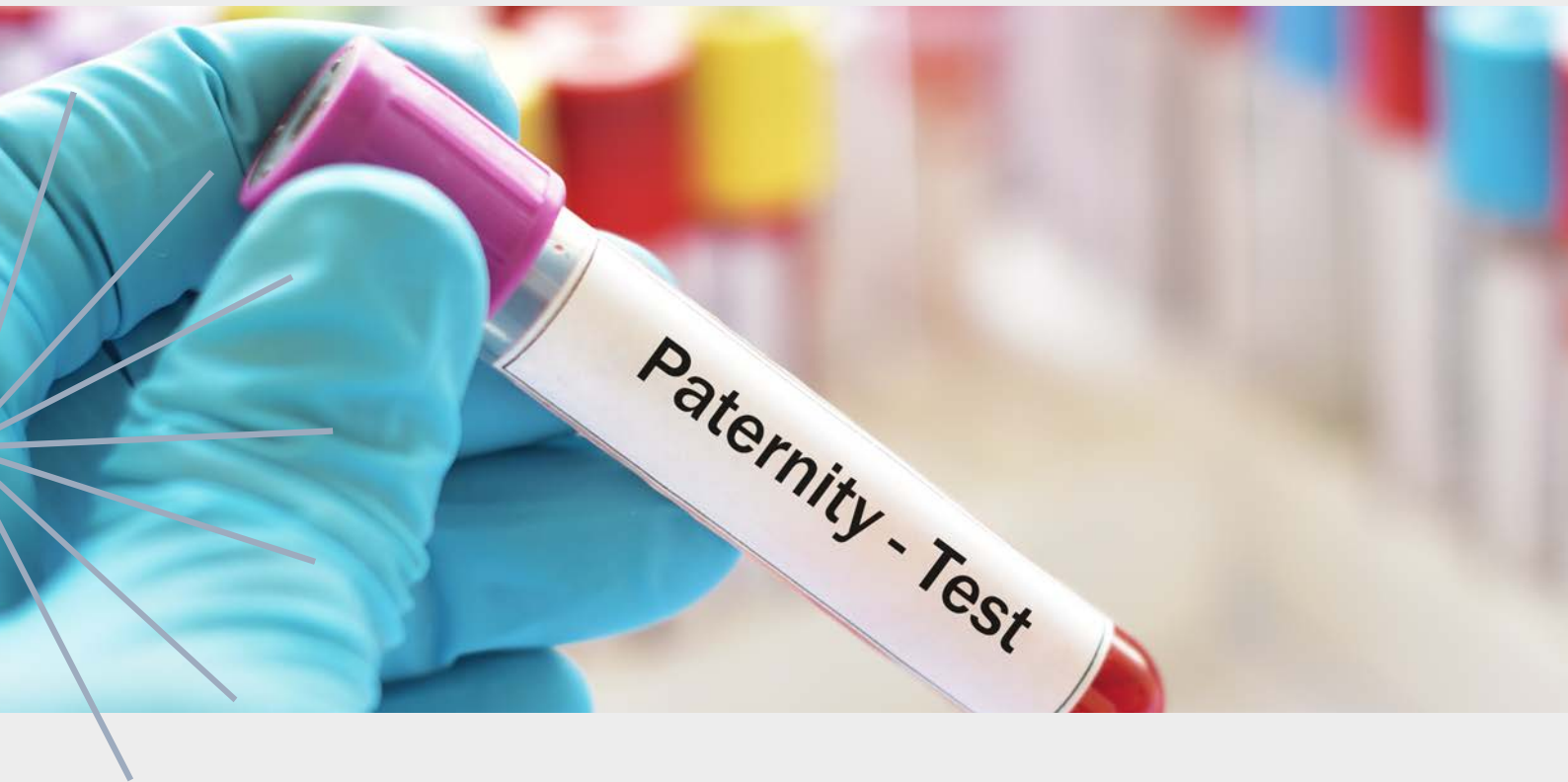
GUIDELINES TO CHOOSING A FAMILY

Questions to Ask:

There is no doubt you have a picture of the best home and family for your child. Adoption creates an opportunity to make that picture a reality, by providing you with an opportunity to select the family you want to give your baby. The following questions will help spark other important issues that may be Important to you in selecting the best home and family for your child.

- How long have you been married?
- What makes your marriage work?
- How many other children do you have, or plan to have?
What led to your interest in adopting?
- Do you have any pets, and if so what kind?
- Where do you live, and is that close to the country, city, ocean, lakes, and what's it like there?
- What is the community like?
- Do you have plans to move?
- What Is your denomination and view of religion?
- How much contact do you expect to have with me?
- What is your educational background?
- What do you do for a living?
- Will both of you work after you adopt?
- What will make you excellent parents?
- Tell us about your extended family. How much contact do you have with them?
- With whom will your child be spending the most time?
- What connections through family and friends do you have with adoption?
- What are your hobbies, Interests, and dreams for the future?
- What type of education would you want for your child?
- Do you have a savings plan for your children's college plans?
- How do you handle conflict?
- What are your beliefs about discipline?
- What kind of future do you see for your adopted child?

PATERNITY TESTING



If you have had more than one partner, it is natural for you to want to know who the father of your baby is. Different reasons to establish paternity include the need to collect support financially or emotionally, or simply for the peace of mind that accompanies knowing for sure.


Questions about Paternity, call 1-800-798-0580

Paternity testing from an accredited laboratory typically costs between \$400.00 and \$2,000.00, depending on the area in which you live in and the type of paternity testing you choose. The American Pregnancy Association recommends paternity testing from a testing facility that has been accredited by the AABB (formerly American Association of Blood Banks) such as DNA Diagnostics Center. Results are usually available to the patient in 5 business days or less.

WHY IS ESTABLISHING PATERNITY IMPORTANT?

Most states have laws that require an unmarried couple to fill out an Acknowledgment of Paternity (AOP) form to legally establish who the father is. If the couple is unmarried and the mother has not been married in the last 300 days, then no father will be listed on the birth certificate until this legally binding form is filled out. The AOP is sent to the states Bureau of Vital statistics, is recorded, and the father listed becomes the legal father.

If there is a question on who the father is, then paternity testing should be done as soon as possible. After the AOP is signed, couples have 60 days to request a DNA paternity test to be done and amend the AOP, or the father previously listed on the AOP could be held legally responsible for the child even if he is not the biological father.



Either biological parent would need to take action in court to establish true paternity. During the time that no father is listed as legal father, the baby's rights are not fully protected. Naming a legal father is vital in ensuring that the baby is eligible for child support, and benefits such as social security, veterans benefits, and health care.

For more information regarding naming a legal father and filing an AOP, contact your state attorney generals office.

TYPES OF PATENITY TESTING:

- Postnatal (after your child's birth) DNA testing:
- Blood collection and testing
- Buccal swab (cheek swab) collection and testing
- Umbilical cord collection and testing
- Other sample collection and testing (semen, tissue, hair, etc.)

Prenatal (before your child's birth) DNA testing:

a Amniocentesis: This test is performed in the second trimester, anywhere from the 14th-20th weeks of pregnancy. During this procedure, the doctor uses ultrasound to guide a thin needle into your uterus, through your abdomen. The needle draws out a small amount of amniotic fluid, which is tested. Risks include a small chance of harming the baby and miscarriage. Other side effects may include cramping, leaking of amniotic fluid, and vaginal bleeding. A doctor's consent is needed to do this procedure for paternity testing.

b Chorionic Villus Sampling (CVS): This test consists of a thin needle or tube which a doctor inserts from the vagina, through the cervix, guided by an ultrasound, to obtain chorionic villi. Chorionic villi are little finger-like pieces of tissue attached to the wall of the uterus. The chorionic villi and the fetus come from the same fertilized egg, and have the same genetic makeup. This testing can be done earlier in pregnancy from the 10th-13th weeks. A doctor's consent is needed to do this procedure for paternity testing.


FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How soon can we start the testing process?

DNA testing can be done as early as the end of the first trimester of pregnancy, starting in the 10th week by the CVS procedure.

Are test results kept completely confidential?

It is a rule of most DNA laboratories to keep your results completely confidential. Speak with each laboratory individually on their policies concerning confidentiality.



What risk does DNA testing pose to the mother and the developing baby?

Testing conducted after a baby's birth involves no known risks, Prenatal DNA testing done in conjunction with other prenatal testing involves some risk associated with how the testing is conducted, whether amniocentesis or CVS. These tests are often discouraged for the sole reason of seeking paternity because of the increased miscarriage risks.

Can an exact date of conception be determined accurately without a paternity test?

Many women have questions about the date of possible conception, and unfortunately figuring this out is not always so easy. The assumption is that if a woman has pretty regular menstrual cycles, then she will be ovulating during a certain time of the month. Ovulation is the time when conception can take place because that is when an egg is made available.

The problem is that most women do not ovulate on an exact date each month, and many women have a different ovulation day from month to month. If you also take into account that sperm can live in the body 3-5 days after intercourse has taken place, this can make figuring out conception very difficult.

Most doctors use the first day of the last period (LMP) and ultrasound measurements to gage the gestational age of a baby and determine when the baby was conceived. But these are just tools used to estimate the dates-it is very hard for anything to tell what the exact date of conception really is. Most people do not realize that ultrasounds can be offered up to 5-7 days in early pregnancy and up to a couple weeks off if the first ultrasounds are done farther into the second trimester or beyond.

Due dates are not an accurate tool for determining conception since they also are only an estimation date (only 5% of women give birth on their due dates).

If you are seeking the estimated date of conception for paternity reasons, and intercourse with two different parents took place within 10 days of each other, we strongly encourage that paternity testing be done; this testing can be done during pregnancy or after the baby is born. This is the only way to accurately know who the father is.

How much does it cost to establish paternity?

Costs will vary dependent on which type of procedures are performed. Prices can range from \$400.00 to \$2,000.00. Prenatal testing is often more costly than testing done after a baby is born because of the additional doctor and hospital-related fees. Some testing sites offer lower cost testing that is non-court-approved, or "curiosity testing". Most centers offer payment plans and will require full payment before they release the results to you.

Who do I call for Paternity Testing? There are a number of DNA and paternity testing facilities around the country. You want to make sure you use a facility accredited by the American Association of Blood Banks (AABB). You may be interested in comparing different testing facilities.

DNA Diagnostics Center is the official paternity testing organization of the American Pregnancy Association. They are actively involved with the AABB and receive APA's endorsement for their quality services.

You can visit DNA Diagnostics Center for more Information or call 1 -800-798-0580.