

# Chapter One

## Is She Pregnant?

Do you suspect that your daughter is pregnant? Are there signs and suspicions that won't go away? Are you worried about what's going to happen to her future?

If the answer to these three questions is 'yes', you need to carefully work through these issues with your daughter, knowing that along the way there are going to be tears and strong emotions.

It can be a shock to even *suspect* that she may be pregnant. This is your daughter. You may feel she is little more than a child herself and be unsure of what to do or say.

### So what is the answer?

Simply put, you have to learn as much as possible about the whole process. Arm yourself and your daughter with knowledge so that you can establish firm lines of communication for the coming months, knowing then that she will be able to turn to you with any fears and concerns and won't try to hide them away or do something alone that she may later regret.

You must remain as calm as you can, even if you feel like exploding with anger. It's not going to help anyone if you lose your temper, and it certainly won't encourage your daughter to talk to you. She's going to be scared enough, without you losing your rag. This is not to say that you don't have a right to be upset and angry. Of course you do. It's probably not what you wanted for your daughter, but you're going to have to contain these strong emotions until moments when you are not with her.

**'Pregnancy tests are available from Brook Centres, family planning clinics, your daughter's GP and chemists.'**

## Early pregnancy symptoms

- Cessation of periods.
- Nausea and/or vomiting.
- Tender breasts.
- Frequent urination.
- Mood swings.
- Tiredness.
- Strange taste in the mouth.

## How to find out for sure

First you need to know for certain. You have your suspicions but you now need proof. If your suspicions are correct, the earlier your daughter receives good medical care, the better – no matter what she decides to do.

She may already have approached you with her concerns, in which case you are lucky. Many young girls in the same situation ignore the signs, honestly thinking that if they ignore them then it might all go away, or it isn't really happening. If she has come to you, you should feel fortunate that you have such a good relationship.

Some girls may be afraid of their parent's reactions, worried that they might be letting them down in some way or that they may be furious.

The last thing you want is for your daughter to worry about this on her own, so open up and encourage her to communicate with you.

If she hasn't come to you, you might be tempted to ask her directly, especially if you're feeling angry, shocked or let down. A better way might be to open up a general conversation, somewhere private like her bedroom, and work it round to your worries and suspicions.

Just remember, no matter how you feel about it, she will be feeling just as scared and anxious as you. Take a few moments to breathe deeply and stay calm. Shouting and yelling angry remarks will not help and may make things worse.

You are the adult. Show her that you care (even if you're furious) and that you want to help. Ask her what symptoms she's had, whether she's seen a doctor and if she's taken a home pregnancy test.

### **Are home pregnancy tests reliable?**

The answer is 'yes'. The tests are very accurate and there is very little risk of a 'false positive' result. It is always best to purchase a kit that contains two tests, so that if the first is negative, a second test can be performed a week later to confirm the correct result.

Home kits work by detecting human chorionic gonadotrophin (HCG) which is produced in the body when a pregnancy implants in the lining of the womb. HCG can be detected in a blood test as early as six days after conception, but for a home pregnancy testing kit, which relies on your daughter producing a urine sample, you have to wait two to three weeks after conception or on the first day of your missed period. The more sensitive the pregnancy test is, the earlier it will show a positive result.

### **OK. It's definite. What do we do now?**

If your concerns are confirmed then you need to take your daughter to a GP who will give her a general health check and test for pregnancy, if she hasn't used a home test herself. Remember that some early symptoms of pregnancy can be due to other medical conditions.

It may take a day or two for the results to come back, depending upon the doctor's method of testing, but you can use this time effectively to talk with your daughter. See how she feels, what her immediate thoughts are and if there is anything she needs. She may even tell you who the baby's father is and what his role in this might be.