



AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR REPRODUCTIVE MEDICINE

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PATIENT'S FACT SHEET Adoption

Many infertile couples choose adoption rather than infertility treatments, or they decide to adopt after infertility treatments have failed. If you are considering adoption, you have many options from which to choose, including private, public, domestic, or international adoption. Each type of adoption has different requirements, but some issues are common to all types. Below are some general guidelines to help you learn about adoption. Familiarizing yourself with the issues unique to adoption will help you make the best decisions each step of the way.

- If you are about to begin an infertility evaluation, you should explore your feelings about adoption early in the evaluation process.
- If you decide to consider adoption rather than infertility treatments, or after infertility treatments have failed, you should allow yourself plenty of time to become emotionally prepared to adopt.
- Adoptions may be arranged through a private adoption agency, county or state public agency, or independently and usually involve an attorney or other intermediary such as a counselor, physician, or adoption facilitator.
- Adoption laws vary significantly from state to state. An attorney should be able to explain the laws in your state.
- For an international adoption, couples should explore rules and regulations for the specific country being considered. Many airlines offer discounted fares for an international adoption.
- Adoption costs vary widely. Public agency adoptions are often less expensive than private agency or independent adoptions. Private adoptions may take less time.
- All adoption fees, along with an explanation of the costs involved, should be obtained in writing prior to proceeding.
- Many employers provide parental leave for their employees, and adoption should qualify parents for this benefit.
- Some employers offer a cash adoption benefit that can be applied to the adoption costs.
- Although confidential (anonymous) adoptions were once standard, the exchange of some information and contact between the birth and adoptive parents has become quite

common, though the information exchanged is usually non-identifying.

- Disclosure of adoption to the adopted child is generally recommended; however, this remains a personal choice.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE ADOPTION PROCESS

1. **Consider the type of child you want to adopt** (race, age, special needs). This will help you determine the type of adoption you want to pursue (public or private agency, independent, international) and the degree of openness you want during the adoption process. Read all of the information you can about adoption agencies, attorneys, support groups, and laws in your state. Attend adoption seminars and support groups and ask questions of those who have adopted. Inform your family, friends, and others in your community that you want to adopt as they may assist you in your search.
2. **Contact an adoption agency to learn about the requirements and submit an application.** You may wish to contact several agencies to find the one that is right for you.
3. **Prepare for a home study.** A social worker will visit your home to meet you and better assess you as potential adoptive parents (physically, emotionally, and financially). The social worker may also offer guidance in preparing your home for a new child.
4. **Placement of a child/filing for adoption.** When a child is placed with you, the agency/intermediary will assist you in legally filing for adoption.
5. **Post-placement follow up.** A social worker will visit your home again after the child has been living there for a certain period of time.

As with any means of creating a family, adoption is a lifetime commitment with lifelong challenges and rewards. Read, study, plan, and prepare as much as possible before initiating the adoption process. Many states offer or even require training sessions to help prospective adoptive families learn about adoption and prepare for their adoptive children's needs. No matter which type of adoption you decide to pursue, you'll discover that adopting a child can be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life.

The American Society for Reproductive Medicine grants permission to photocopy this fact sheet and distribute it to patients.