

## Home Pregnancy Tests

The currently used method to confirm pregnancy depends on the detection of the hormone human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG), which is present in the blood and urine of a pregnant woman. The hCG hormone is produced by the placenta in increasing amounts within 10 days after fertilization. The home pregnancy test kit detects this hormone in the urine of the pregnant woman.

An absence of a menstrual period in a sexually active female is usually the first reason to do a pregnancy test. Many women may experience some symptoms and signs of pregnancy as early as 5 to 6 weeks after the first day of their last menstrual period, provided she has a regular menstrual cycle. These may include:

- nausea, with or without vomiting.
- need to urinate more often (frequent urination).
- tender, swollen breasts.
- lethargy
- mild lower abdominal cramping/discomfort without bleeding
- abdominal bloating with a change of appetite
- mood changes
- light-headedness
- low back pain

Some tests claim to be able to detect pregnancy as early as a few days after a missed period (menses). Generally, home urine pregnancy tests (UPT) are highly accurate. Many manufacturers of these tests claim it to be 99 % accurate. However, this will depend on several factors, such as the users' technique, the interpretation and the quality of the test kit itself. If the test shows a negative result, a repeat should be done in a few days or 1 week later if the woman still thinks that she is pregnant. The hCG levels are generally not useful for estimating gestational age due to the wide normal range.

### Type of home urine pregnancy test kits

There are many home UPT tests that are available without the need for a prescription. The result is usually available within a few minutes. Interpretation depends on the presence of double bands/lines or single band/line. A positive test will show two bands/lines, while a negative test only shows one band/line. Some test kits have a read-out display that shows "yes" or "no" or "pregnant" or "not pregnant" on the screen. Medications usually do not interfere with the results. Only those containing hCG can affect the results and this type is not commonly used.

### Instructions

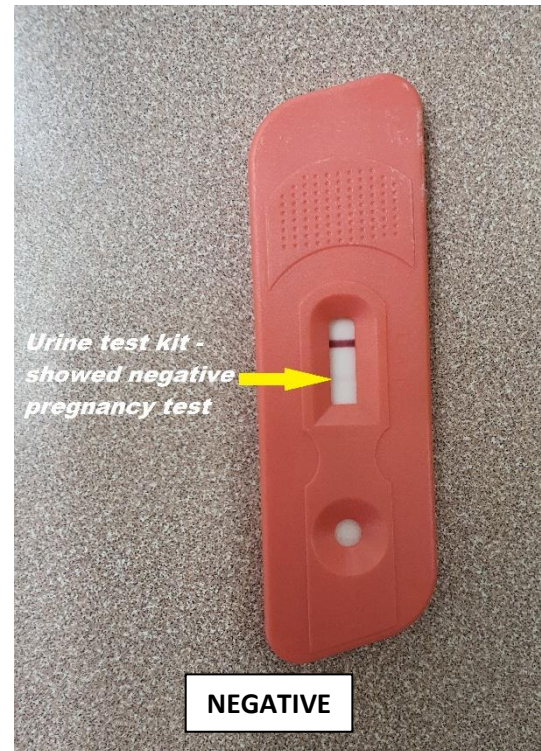
- A good time to do the test is in the morning when you first wake up, especially when your period is only a few days late. Otherwise, you can do the test anytime of the day.
- Check the expiration date. You should not use an expired one.
- Follow package instructions about how to store them at home.
- Read the instructions carefully on how to use the test. Don't skip a step. If you are unsure, do not proceed. Clarify with your pharmacist first until you are confident to do the test accurately.
- Note any special precautions before using the test.
- Note what to do if results are positive, negative, or unclear.

- Keep a record of the test results, the date, and the brand name of the test in case your health care provider ask you for it.
- Discard all the used materials as instructed.

## Negative result

If the test is negative and the woman still suspect pregnancy, she should wait a few days or up to 1 week before repeating the test again. Do it first thing in the morning. Go through the instructions thoroughly again to make sure that there is no mistake in performing the test. If the second test is negative and there is still no menstrual period, she should consider seeing her health care provider.

A false-negative test can occur, meaning that the woman is pregnant despite the home UPT showing a negative result. This may be due to either a faulty test kit, or not doing it correctly or the woman is indeed pregnant but has yet to produce enough hormone for it to be detectable at that point in time. It may also occur in molar pregnancy due to the high level of hCG hormone which the test kit cannot detect.



## Positive result

If the test kit shows a positive result, the woman should schedule an appointment to see the health care provider to confirm that the pregnancy is in the correct location (intrauterine pregnancy) and to check for viability. It is important to exclude ectopic pregnancy (pregnancy located outside the womb or uterus). False positive is uncommon and may be due to a tumour or growth in the body which produces the hCG.



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