



<http://www.womenshealth.gov>

1-800-994-9662

TDD: 1-888-220-5446

Most HPTs work in a similar way. Many instruct the user to hold a stick in the urine stream. Others involve collecting urine in a cup and then dipping the stick into it. At least one brand tells the woman to collect urine in a cup and then use a dropper to put a few drops of the urine into a special container. Then the woman needs to wait a few minutes. Different brands instruct the woman to wait different amounts of time. Once the time has passed, the user should inspect the “result window.” If a line or plus symbol appears, you are pregnant. It does not matter how faint the line is. A line, whether bold or faint, means the result is positive. New digital tests show the words “pregnant” or “not pregnant.”

Most tests also have a “control indicator” in the result window. This line or symbol shows whether the test is working properly. If the control indicator does not appear, the test is not working properly. You should not rely on any results from a HPT that may be faulty.

Most brands tell users to repeat the test in a few days, no matter what the results. One negative result (especially soon after a missed period) does not always mean you’re not pregnant. All HPTs come with written instructions. Most tests also have toll-free phone numbers to call in case of questions about use or results.

Q: How accurate are home pregnancy tests?

A: Home pregnancy tests (HPTs) can be quite accurate. But the accuracy depends on:

- **How you use them** — Be sure to check the expiration date and follow the instructions. Wait ten minutes after taking the test to check the results window. Research suggests that waiting 10 minutes will give the most accurate result.
- **When you use them** — The amount of hCG or pregnancy hormone in your urine increases with time. So, the earlier after a missed period you take the test, the harder it is to spot the hCG. Many HPTs claim to be 99 percent accurate on the first day of your missed period. But research suggests that most HPTs do not always detect the low levels of hCG usually present this early in pregnancy. And when they do, the results are often very faint. Most HPTs can accurately detect pregnancy one week after a missed period. Also, testing your urine first thing in the morning may boost the accuracy.
- **Who uses them** — Each woman ovulates at a different time in her menstrual cycle. Plus, the fertilized egg can implant in a woman’s uterus at different times. hCG only is produced once implantation occurs. In up to 10 percent of women, implantation does not occur until after the first day of a missed period. So, HPTs will be accurate as soon as one day after a missed period for some women but not for others.
- **The brand of test** — Some HPTs are more sensitive than others. So, some tests are better than others at spotting hCG early on.



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Q: How soon after a missed period can I take a home pregnancy test and get an accurate result?

A: Many home pregnancy tests (HPTs) claim to be 99 percent accurate on the first day of your missed period. But research suggests that most HPTs do not always spot pregnancy that early. And when they do, the results are often so faint they are misunderstood. If you can wait one week after your missed period, most HPTs will give you an accurate answer. Ask your doctor for a more sensitive test if you need to know earlier.

Q: My home pregnancy test says I am pregnant. What should I do next?

A: If a home pregnancy test is positive and shows that you are pregnant, you should call your doctor right away. Your doctor can use a more sensitive test along with a pelvic exam to tell for sure if you're pregnant. Seeing your doctor early on in your pregnancy will help you and your baby stay healthy.

Q: My home pregnancy test says that I am not pregnant. Might I still be pregnant?

A: Yes. So, most home pregnancy tests (HPTs) suggest women take the test again in a few days or a week if the result is negative.

Each woman ovulates at a different time in her menstrual cycle. Plus, the

fertilized egg can implant in a woman's uterus at different times. So, the accuracy of HPT results varies from woman to woman. Other things can also affect the accuracy. Sometimes women get false negative results when they test too early in the pregnancy. This means that the test says you are not pregnant when you are. Other times, problems with the pregnancy can affect the amount of hCG in the urine.

If your HPT is negative, test yourself again in a few days or one week. If you keep getting a negative result but think you are pregnant, talk with your doctor right away.

Q: Can anything affect home pregnancy test results?

A: Most medicines should not affect the results of a home pregnancy test (HPT). This includes over-the-counter and prescription medicines, including birth control pills and antibiotics. Only medicines that have the pregnancy hormone hCG in them can give a false positive test result. A false positive is when a test says you are pregnant when you're not. Sometimes medicines containing hCG are used to treat infertility (not being able to get pregnant).

Alcohol and illegal drugs do not affect HPT results. But do not use these substances if you are trying to become pregnant or are sexually active and could become pregnant. ■



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For More Information

For more information on pregnancy tests, contact womenshealth.gov at 1-800-994-9662 or the following organizations:

Food and Drug Administration, HHS

Phone number(s): (888) 463-6332

Internet address: <http://www.fda.gov>

American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists

Phone number(s): (800) 762-2264 for publication requests only

Internet address: <http://www.acog.org>

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Phone number(s): (800) 230-7526

Internet address:

<http://www.plannedparenthood.org>

American Pregnancy Association

Phone number(s): (800) 672-2296

Internet address:

<http://www.americanpregnancy.org>

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