

Pregnancy Tests

If you think you may be pregnant, taking a pregnancy test as soon as the first day of your missed period can help you get the care and support you need. A home pregnancy test can tell whether you are pregnant with almost 99% accuracy, depending on how you use it. If a pregnancy test says you are pregnant, you should see your doctor for another test to confirm the pregnancy and talk about next steps.

Q: How soon can I use a home pregnancy test?

A: Some home pregnancy tests are more sensitive than others and can be taken before your missed period. But you may get more accurate results if you wait until after the first day of your missed period.

This is because the amount of the pregnancy hormone, called human chorionic gonadotropin, or hCG, in your urine doubles every 48 hours. The earlier you take the test, the harder it is for the test to detect the hCG.

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

A: If a home pregnancy test shows that you are pregnant, you should call your doctor right away. Your doctor can use a blood test to tell for sure whether you are pregnant. Seeing your doctor early in your pregnancy also means you can begin prenatal care to help you and your baby stay healthy.

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

A: Yes, it is still possible you could be pregnant. It is possible to be pregnant and to have a pregnancy test say that you are not pregnant.

If your test says you are not pregnant, take another pregnancy test in a few days. If you think you are pregnant but more tests say you are not, call your doctor.

Q: How do I use a home pregnancy test?

A: All home pregnancy tests come with written instructions. Depending on the brand you buy, the instructions may vary:

- You hold a stick in your urine stream.
- You pee into a cup and dip the stick into it.
- You pee into a cup and then use a dropper to put a few drops of the urine into a special container.

Different brands instruct you to wait different amounts of time, although most are around 2 minutes. Depending on the brand of the test, you may see a line, a plus symbol, or the words “pregnant” or “not pregnant.” A line or plus symbol, no matter how faint, means the result is positive.

Most tests also have a “control indicator” in the result window. This control line or symbol shows whether the test is working properly. If the control line or symbol does not appear, the test is not working properly.

Q: How accurate are home pregnancy tests?

A: Most home pregnancy tests claim to be up to 99 percent accurate. But the accuracy depends on:

- **How you use them.** Be sure to check the expiration date and follow the instructions. Wait up to 10 minutes after taking the test to check the results window.

- **When you use them.** The amount of hCG or pregnancy hormone in your urine increases with time. The earlier you take the test, the harder it is for the test to detect the hCG. Most home pregnancy tests can accurately detect pregnancy after a missed period. Also, testing your urine first thing in the morning can 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. Your body makes hCG after implantation occurs. In up to 10 percent of women, implantation does not occur until after the first day of a missed period. This means home pregnancy tests can be accurate as soon as 1 day after a missed period for some women but not for others.
- **The brand of test.** Some home pregnancy tests are more sensitive than others. For that reason, some

tests are better than others at spotting hCG early on. Talk to your pharmacist about which brand may be best for you.

Q: Can anything affect home pregnancy test results?

A: Yes. If you take medicine with the pregnancy hormone hCG as an active ingredient, you may get a false-positive test result. A false positive is when a test says you are pregnant when you are not. Some examples of medicines with hCG include certain medication for infertility. If you are taking medicine to help you get pregnant, you may want to see your doctor for a pregnancy test.

Most medicines should not affect the results of a home pregnancy test. This includes over-the-counter and prescription medicines such as birth control pills and antibiotics. Also, alcohol and illegal drugs do not affect pregnancy test results.

For more information...

about pregnancy tests, call the OWH Helpline at 800-994-9662 or contact the following organizations:

Food and Drug Administration (FDA), HHS

888-463-6332 • www.fda.gov

American Pregnancy Association

972-550-0140 • americanpregnancy.org

Planned Parenthood Federation of America

800-230-7526 • www.plannedparenthood.org

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