



Complete pregnancy test guide

Which, how and accuracy

By

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Am I pregnant? The suspense created by this question is killing you. The question can be triggered by many events and incidents. You had an unprotected sex. You have not used any [contraception methods](#). Your periods are missing. Your body is behaving differently than usual. You are experiencing [early pregnancy symptoms and signs](#). This question brings anxiety, curiosity, excitement and sometimes stress too. You want to get the answer as soon as possible.

This guide gives details about all the tests including home pregnancy test, clinical urine pregnancy test, pregnancy blood test, and ultrasound / sonography scan test.

How does the pregnancy tests work?

Except for ultrasonography test, all these tests work on detecting the hormone called human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG). This hormone is only found in the body during pregnancy. About six to twelve days after fertilization, a fertilized egg attaches to the wall of a woman's uterus. The cells of fertilized egg produce hCG which builds up rapidly in your body. It doubles every 2 to 3 days in the first few weeks of pregnancy reaching a peak level by 8-12 weeks. Pregnancy tests detect this hormone in urine and blood.

When should I take the pregnancy test?

You can take a test any time after your period is late - that's when they work the best. You'll likely get accurate results from a pregnancy test one day after your first missed period. However, it's best to wait at least a week after your missed period, to be sure that you get the most accurate test results. The Pregnancy test is done before a missed period usually gives less accurate results. Sometimes a pregnancy test can find pregnancy hormones in your urine as early as 10 days after unprotected sex. But these results aren't super reliable, and you may get a false positive or false negative test result. In case if you have done the pregnancy test early or not sure about the results, [consult a pregnancy doctor](#).



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Home pregnancy test

After missed periods, after unprotected sex, if you have not used any [contraception methods](#) you want to know if you are pregnant. You probably do not want to tell this to the world but what you need is just a confirmation that you are pregnant or not. Home Pregnancy Test (HPT) is a quick and easy way to find out if you are pregnant or not. This test works on detecting the hCG hormone in your urine (pee). This hormone is generated in your body only if you are pregnant.

How to do the home pregnancy test?

You can get the test kit from most of the medical stores. These kits are usually not that expensive. You can also get the test kit from your doctor. For the most home pregnancy test, you either hold a test strip in your urine stream or you collect your urine in a cup and dip your test strip into the cup. If you are pregnant, most test strips produce a colored line, but this will depend on the brand you purchased. To know how to use the specific kit, read the instructions for the test you bought and follow them carefully.

When to conduct the home pregnancy test?

The test result is accurate when you take them after you've already missed your period, or when your period is late. Doing the test on the day of your missed period will give you the accurate results, but it's advised to wait for a week after your missed period to get results with good accuracy. Few test kits say they work a few days before a missed period, but the result accuracy is usually less. Sometime a home pregnancy test can find the pregnancy hormones in your urine as early as 10 days after unprotected sex. But these results aren't super reliable, and you may get a false positive or false negative test result. If your periods are very irregular, or you don't



get periods at all for one reason or another, your best bet for accurate results is to take a pregnancy test 3 week after sex.

What is the accuracy of home pregnancy test results?

To get test results with good accuracy, it is recommended using midstream urine, which means peeing first into the toilet and then into the cup to collect the sample or on to the pregnancy test strip. You can improve the accuracy of the result by using your first-morning urine for the test. If you are pregnant, it will have more hCG in it than later urines. The accuracy of pregnancy test will be less if it's expired or if you don't use it the right way. So, for good accuracy, always check the expiration date on the package, and carefully read the directions that come with your kit.

What are false positive and false negative results?

In some cases, you might be pregnant, but your test results are negative. This is called false negative. This may happen if you have not used the test properly, or you have done the test too early. In this case, if your period does not arrive after a few days, repeat the test after a few days or [consult pregnancy doctor](#). In some cases, you might not be pregnant, but the test results are positive. This is called false positive. This may happen if you have used the test kit past its expiration date or if you have given an hCG injection during infertility treatment. A false positive pregnancy test result may also be seen in some cancers and other medical conditions that may produce elevated hCG levels.

If your results are positive, or you have some confusion about the outcome, [consult pregnancy doctor](#) to confirm the test results. The doctor might ask you to repeat the urine pregnancy test at a clinic or may suggest the pregnancy blood test or other options to confirm your pregnancy. Always confirm your home pregnancy test result with the pregnancy doctor.

What is the clinical urine pregnancy test?

A clinical urine pregnancy test is not different than a home pregnancy test and is not necessarily more accurate. However, [pregnancy doctor](#) at the clinic will help eliminate any possible errors that might affect the accuracy



of the test results. Based on the outcome of results, you can [consult pregnancy doctor](#) about further steps and options.

Home Pregnancy Test (HPT) is qualitative in nature and will tell you only if you are pregnant or not. This will not tell you how long you have been pregnant. The results are most accurate if you take the test a week after your missed period and when use midstream first-morning urine. For reliable results, it is advised to repeat the test twice. Always consult a pregnancy doctor to confirm the test results.

Blood pregnancy test

You have not used any [contraception methods](#), you think you might be pregnant, but you are not sure about the results and reliability of home pregnancy test, or you want to know if you are pregnant, but it is too early for a urine test, you may consider the pregnancy blood test. These tests are taken at doctor's clinic. A laboratory tests your blood to detect hCG. These tests are more sensitive than the home pregnancy test. Pregnancy blood pregnancy test can pick up the low concentration of hCG compared to a home pregnancy test and helps to identify pregnancy status, baby health, and problems.

Types of pregnancy blood test

There are two types of pregnancy blood tests. Qualitative hCG blood serum tests check to see if hCG is present in your blood or not. A positive result means you are pregnant, and a negative result means you are not pregnant. It just gives "yes" or "no" answer about your pregnancy. Quantitative hCG blood serum tests check both the presence and quantity of hCG present in the blood. It detects even very low level of hCG which helps to determine whether the pregnancy is normal and healthy, and problems like ectopic pregnancy may be detected with this test.

Home test or pregnancy blood test?

Like many of fertility and pregnancy questions, there is no straightforward answer to this question. Both determine if you are pregnant or not, but the



choice might depend on factors like convenience, expense, accuracy, and your fertility history. When deciding if you should use a home pregnancy test or have a pregnancy blood test done at the lab, there are few items to consider like convenience, cost, and accuracy. Many times, the pregnancy blood test is preferred to remove uncertainty in home pregnancy test and acts as a confirmatory test to detect pregnancy. In case of fertile histories like miscarriage or ectopic pregnancy in the past, the doctor generally monitors hCG levels closely in first several weeks of pregnancy. If hCG levels do not rise appropriately in those very early days, it can signal a problem with the pregnancy. Neither a qualitative blood test nor an HPT allows this type of monitoring, as they do not reveal exact amounts of hCG, and cannot determine if levels are increasing appropriately.

Pregnancy blood tests have a 99% accuracy rate, so they are almost always accurate. Relatively, they are more accurate than a home pregnancy test. The qualitative test only answers "yes" or "no", while the quantitative test measures quantity of hCG and help to identify the pregnancy status and problems if any. In many cases, the choice between blood and urine pregnancy test is based on convenience, cost, and accuracy. The pregnancy blood test helps to monitor and detect pregnancy problems.

Pregnancy ultrasound / sonography scan test

What is pregnancy ultrasound / sonography scan test?

It is a diagnostic medical procedure that uses sound waves to produce images on a screen, which allows viewing internal structures of the body. Ultrasonography / ultrasound is a safe diagnostic medical procedure where sound waves are introduced into the body using a transducer. The sound waves bounce off the bones and tissues in the body and produce a black and white image on a monitor. The procedure is safe because it does not use ionizing radiation like an x-ray or CAT scan, which should be avoided in pregnancy.



How does ultrasonography / ultrasound work?

The ultrasound image is produced by sending sound waves of 1-10 million hertz through a transducer by placing it over structures of the body. The sound waves are either absorbed or bounce back to crystals in the head of the transducer. For example, sound waves go through areas that are hollow or fluid-filled, such as the bladder and blood vessels. These areas appear black on the screen. Areas filled with tissue allow some penetration and refraction of sound and produce a grayish-white image. Really hard structures, such as bone, produce a bright white image as the sound waves completely bounce back to the transducer.

Why use pregnancy ultrasound / sonography scan test?

This is the most accurate method to detect the pregnancy. In pregnancy, this allows taking an image of the woman's womb. The amniotic fluid will appear black, which enhances the bones and tissues of the baby, which will appear white. Ultrasound may be used to visualize the fetus in your womb at around four and a half weeks after your last menstrual period (LMP). It can tell you how many weeks you are into pregnancy and how healthy your baby is. You may be able to hear your baby's heartbeat by seven weeks after LMP.

Most accurate method of all, ultrasonography / Ultrasound uses sound waves to produce an image on a screen and help to view the internal structure of the body. This is a safe procedure and does not create any harm to the baby or a mother. Generally done at around four and half weeks after your last menstrual period, this helps to detect the pregnancy duration and health of the baby.

What's next when you get positive pregnancy test?

Your test results are positive, and you are pregnant. Your next step depends on two things, you have planned for this pregnancy and want to have the baby, or this is an unplanned pregnancy.



You planned to have the baby

If you are planning to continue the pregnancy and planning to have a baby, take another test (or two) to make sure you're pregnant. In case of any confusion on the results, [consult the gynecologist](#). It's advisable to see the pregnancy doctor before you reach the 8-week mark. The doctor can then plan and advise the further course of action, the prenatal care you need to take, guidelines about your lifestyle, medication, or diet to keep yourself and your baby healthy for next nine months.

You did not plan to have the baby

If you become pregnant unexpectedly and didn't plan to get pregnant, looking at all the options and deciding on what to do can be very confusing. In this case, talk to your spouses, partner, people close to you and [consult with a pregnancy doctor](#) for help and guidance. The first option is to think about continuing the pregnancy. Although originally you did not plan for the baby, once the results are positive, you can check a possibility of continuing the pregnancy. Talk to people close to you, people you trust and assess this option. If still think not to have a baby, consult the pregnancy doctor for options to end the pregnancy. It is highly advised to use [contraception methods](#) in future to avoid unplanned pregnancy.

False positive pregnancy test results

In some cases, the result might be positive, but you are not pregnant. This generally happens if you have used the kit past its expiration date or if you have given an hCG injection during infertility treatment. A false positive pregnancy test result may also be seen in some cancers and other medical conditions that may produce elevated hCG levels. It is strongly recommended to [consult the pregnancy doctor](#) to confirm the pregnancy results and decide further course of action. To an uncomfortable situation in future, it is advised not to announce your pregnancy immediately after positive results. Keep calm and control your emotions for few weeks. Let the pregnancy develop properly. Ask about "when to announce pregnancy" to the doctor.



Actions to be taken after your positive pregnancy test depends on your decision about having a baby or not having a baby. In both the cases, consult the pregnancy doctor to know different options. If you want to have a baby, consult the doctor before you reach 8-weeks pregnancy mark. This will help to get appropriate advice on maintaining good health of mother and baby. Be aware of false positive. Before you announce your pregnancy, consult the doctor for confirmation.

What's next when you get negative pregnancy test results?

After your negative pregnancy test results, the next steps depend on whether you want to have the baby or not.

You want to have the baby

In case if you want to have the baby, keep trying to get pregnant. You won't always get pregnant from a sexual intercourse. Keep a track of your menstrual cycle, keep an eye on the calendar to decide when the best time is for you to get pregnant. In case if you have tried to become pregnant multiple times, consider referring to a fertility doctor. The doctor will advise and guide you through appropriate steps to be taken.

You do not want to have the baby

In this case, there is not much to do. Just to confirm that you are not pregnant, it is advised to repeat the test one more time. If you took the test out of a pregnancy concern after unprotected sex, make sure to use [contraception methods](#) necessary to prevent pregnancy. [Consult the gynecologist](#) for contraception and family planning advice.

False negative pregnancy test results

In some cases, you might be pregnant, but your test results are negative. This generally happens if you have taken the home pregnancy test too early or you have not done it properly. The negative pregnancy test may come if you are using certain medications, such as tranquilizers or



anticonvulsants. Generally, this is of concern if you are still experiencing pregnancy symptoms, especially you missed the period. [Consult the pregnancy doctor](#) to find out if there is another condition causing the symptoms.

If you get negative pregnancy test results and you want to have the baby, keep track of your menstrual cycle. Refer fertility doctor for advice if needed. If you do not want to have the baby, always use an appropriate birth control to prevent pregnancy. If the pregnancy test is negative, and your periods are missed, consult the pregnancy doctor to find out if there is another condition causing the symptoms.

The question "am I pregnant" may trigger anxiety, curiosity, excitement, and sometimes stress. There are many ways to find the answer to this question. Few pregnancy tests could be taken quickly at home, and few need the doctor's attention. Few factors decide the accuracy of the results. Your actions and sometimes your life is going to change based on the answer to this question. This article provides some guidelines. Feel free to [ask any questions](#) you have. It is advised to [consult the doctor](#) to make sure about your pregnancy.



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