

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

In the United States, nearly half of all pregnancies are unintended.

Q When is the earliest I can take a pregnancy test?

A. As soon as your period is late, you can take a pregnancy test and get reasonably accurate results. Some tests may be used before then, but the tradeoff is an increase in false-negatives – when a negative test result is shown, but conception has occurred.

Home Pregnancy Tests (HPTs) work by screening for the presence of hCG, a hormone produced during pregnancy, in the urine. Though most women will produce enough hCG to yield an accurate test as soon as their period is late, waiting a week and taking the HPT first thing in the morning can further increase the accuracy of the result. The presence of hCG can also be determined through blood tests available through your health care provider. These tests, though more costly, have the benefit of determining if you are pregnant as soon as 6-8 days after ovulation.

Pregnancy tests have been around for a very long time, but modern tests over the past 50 years have evolved to offer increasing convenience and accuracy. Interestingly enough, many of the pre-scientific techniques also used urine to determine pregnancy. The ancient Egyptians soaked wheat

and barley with urine, and if the seeds sprouted, the woman was considered pregnant. According to papyrus texts, if the barley grew it was an indication of a boy; sprouted wheat meant a girl was on the way. A 1963 research study found that the urine from pregnant women did in fact promote seed growth 70% of the time – perhaps due to increased estrogen levels – while urine from men and non-pregnant women did not, suggesting that the ancient Egyptians were probably on to something.

HPTs are available from the Campus Health pharmacy for \$5.99. While most can be up to 99% accurate when used correctly, improper use (failing to read or follow the instructions) can significantly drop their effectiveness. If you get a negative result, it's probably a good idea to test yourself again a few days later. If your test is positive, you'll want to make an appointment with your doctor right away to confirm the results. For more information on pregnancy testing or to discuss your options, contact Campus Health's Women's Health Clinic at 621-9202.



Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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