

# sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

**factoid** 93% of female UA students prefer not to have sex on the first date.  
(Health & Wellness Survey, 2008)

## Q. How long does it take after you have sex to determine if you are pregnant?

A. Whether a woman and her partner are trying to get pregnant, or worried about an unplanned pregnancy, the wait to find out if you are pregnant can be ridden with anxiety. Unfortunately, there is not much that can be done to avoid the wait.

About half way through a woman's menstrual cycle, an egg is released (ovulation). Pregnancy occurs when a female egg joins with a male sperm and the fertilized egg implants into the wall of the uterus. Since an egg can live for 24 hours and sperm can live in the woman's reproductive system for 3-5 days, knowing the exact day that you get pregnant is complicated. If a woman has unprotected sex on the day of ovulation or the day after, or if she has unprotected sex 3-5 days before she ovulates, the woman can become pregnant. Once pregnant, a woman begins to produce a hormone called human chorionic gonadotropin (HCG), and she produces more and more HCG with each passing day.

A home pregnancy test (HPT) checks for the presence of HCG in urine and can detect pregnancy 2 weeks after ovulation. Since most women can't tell when they ovulate and ovulation doesn't always occur on the same day during each menstrual cycle, it is difficult to know exactly how much time has passed after ovulating. Fortunately, most pregnancy tests are sensitive enough to detect pregnancy one day after a missed period. However, if the woman's body hasn't yet produced enough HCG to be detected by the HPT, the test would show up negative even if she was pregnant. For this reason, it is recommended that a negative HPT taken one day after a missed period should be followed by a second HPT one week later if the woman still had not started her period.

A blood test can also be used to detect HCG. While a blood test can detect pregnancy as soon as the egg implants, this method is usually used only with a risky pregnancy because it is expensive.

HPTs are available at local drug stores as well as the Campus Health Service Pharmacy. At drug stores, prices range from \$8-\$20. Campus Health Service sells a pregnancy test for \$4.99.

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