

How can I know if I'm pregnant?

KEY WORDS

pregnancy | menstruation | gynecologist | safe sex



Many young women in the first years of having sex suspect that they may be pregnant, whether it's true or not. This may be due to confusion about their changing bodies, since menstrual cycles may take a few years to stabilise, or due to a lack of information. No matter the case, let's help clear things up.

First things first, to be pregnant, there needs to be **unprotected sex or a failure in the use of contraception**. If you'd like to learn more about situations which lead to contraception such as condoms and birth control failing, we have a topic on that, too. What follows next after unprotected sex or failure in contraception and which can point to pregnancy is a **missed period**.

Besides 1 or more missed periods, what follows next can be **morning sickness**, which means you might feel nauseous and even vomit, especially in the early stages of pregnancy. In addition, your **appetite** might change, and you could develop aversions to certain foods or certain smells.

The first **changes in your body** could be noticeable with your breasts. Your breasts might start to feel more sensitive, swell up a bit, or even change color around the nipples. Your body might change by becoming tired more easily due to an increase in the hormone progesterone.

It's important to note that **these signs are not fool-proof**. This means that:

- some people have irregular menstrual cycles, so a missed period is not automatically a cause for concern
- some people can still have menstrual bleeding during pregnancy
- some people can experience breast tenderness because their breasts are still developing or due to changes in hormones
- some people might experience nausea and tiredness due to certain hormonal disorders or thyroid issues

That's why the best way to confirm pregnancy suspicions is to **take a pregnancy test and/or consult a doctor**. We've covered these points and more on our infographic here, but read on below for details.

You can find pregnancy tests at pharmacies without needing a prescription. They are supposed to detect a hormone called **hCG** in your urine. For best results, take the test in the morning when your urine is more concentrated. False negatives can occur if taken too early or if the hCG level is low. Waiting a week after a missed period can make it more accurate.

Here's how to check a pregnancy test:

- Grab the test and read the instructions carefully.
- Pee in a clean cup or directly on the stick (depending on the test).

- Dip the stick or place a few drops of urine as directed.
- Lay it on a flat surface and wait for a bit (usually 3-5 minutes)
- Check the result after the specified time.

It's completely understandable that taking or even buying a pregnancy test can be nerve-wracking – **reach out to a supportive friend to help you** buy the test if you feel anxious or frightened, you don't need to face this alone!

In addition to taking a pregnancy test, you can check for pregnancy with a blood test at a **gynecological appointment**. You can be open and honest with the gynecologist about your concerns – it's their job to help you and offer the best advice for your specific situation. No matter what happened to lead to this, don't feel ashamed or embarrassed. Acting quickly and gaining knowledge from an expert is what will guide you to make informed decisions and get the care you deserve.

If you are pregnant, take a deep breath – **choose the path that's right for you**. You can decide to:

- continue the pregnancy and become a parent
- explore adoption
- consider pregnancy termination (abortion)

Before making your choice, confide in your family or a trusted adult and speak with a doctor. You're not alone in this journey, and there's help available every step of the way!

**CONTRACEPTION
AND PREGNANCY**

