

Q: “I have a suspicion that I may be pregnant. How do I know for sure?”

A: Many women can detect early symptoms of pregnancy before ever taking a pregnancy test while others can be several weeks, or even a few months, into a pregnancy without realizing. Symptoms of pregnancy can vary from woman to woman but paying attention to subtle signals from your body can provide clues to what’s going on inside.

Early pregnancy symptoms may occur within the first couple of weeks after conception, around the time that your next period should begin. Breast tenderness, a frequent need to urinate, fatigue, a heightened sense of smell, food aversions, period-like cramping and nausea or vomiting can be indicators of pregnancy. If those symptoms are not present or go unnoticed the first tip-off can be a missed period.

Many symptoms of pregnancy can be caused by other factors but if you have been trying to conceive or if you have had unprotected sex and are experiencing symptoms and think you may be pregnant you should take a pregnancy test. Drug stores and grocery stores carry a variety of pregnancy test kits that offer reliable results when used correctly.

Pregnancy test kits require a urine test that you can administer at home. The test will detect the presence of hCG, the hormone manufactured by your body after implantation of a fertilized egg. For the most reliable reading wait approximately one week after your missed period and use your first-morning urine. If you receive a positive reading, it’s time to call your doctor to confirm the pregnancy and begin proper prenatal care. Keep in mind that false-positives and false-negatives are possible with home pregnancy test kits so if you question the results talk to your doctor.

Dr. Grace Badman is an OB/GYN at Westside Physicians for Women, part of the Hendricks Regional Health Medical Group. To schedule an appointment call 272-8033.