Pregnancy Testing

Often the first sign of possible pregnancy is missing your period. Keeping a calendar record of your monthly periods helps you know if a period was missed or is late. If you think you missed a period but haven't kept track, try to estimate, as closely as possible, when you last menstruated.

If you also have abdominal pain and vaginal bleeding, please seek a medical evaluation immediately. These symptoms could be a sign of an ectopic pregnancy (an implantation of the pregnancy at a site other than the lining of the uterus, where it is intended). This can be a potentially life-threatening condition.

If your need is urgent, and the student health service is closed, go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call 911 for an ambulance.

Without such symptoms, wait until 7 to 10 days after you first miss your period to have a home or clinical pregnancy test -- before that time the test can be unreliable. Furthermore, due to the various levels of accuracy of different home pregnancy tests, it is very important to have the test confirmed by a health care practitioner.

The lab technician examines the urine specimen to detect the presence of a placental hormone known as HCG. HCG is produced during pregnancy and secreted into the blood as well as eventually excreted in the urine. HCG is usually detectable 10 to 14 days after conception.

The results of your pregnancy test will be reviewed with you during your appointment with a nurse or clinician. If your test results are negative and you were not planning a pregnancy, you may want to consider birth control options.

Emergency Contraceptive Pill (ECP)
The ECP can be taken following unprotected intercourse to reduce your risk for an unwanted pregnancy. It consists of hormone pills that are taken within 72 hours (3 days) of the unprotected intercourse. The earlier it is taken, the more effective ECP is in preventing pregnancy. However, more recent research shows ECP may be effective even if used within 120 hours (5 days) of the unprotected intercourse. Please discuss this option with your clinician.

The ECP is to be used as an emergency measure only and not as a main method of birth control. ECP will not adversely affect a pregnancy that has already been established. Please see the Emergency Contraceptive Pill handout for further information.

For more information about emergency contraception, go to www.not-2-late.com or call 888-NOT-2-LATE.