

USE OF MULTILEVEL PREGNANCY TESTS (MLPTS) FOR MEDICAL ABORTION FOLLOW-UP

What is a multilevel pregnancy test (MLPT)?

A multilevel pregnancy test (MLPT) is a urine test that detects an approximate concentration of human chorionic gonadotropin (hCG) within specified ranges. All MLPTs have more than one level of hCG concentration and therefore show multiple hCG concentration ranges. This feature allows the user to observe changes in hCG concentration by using MLPTs at different points in time.

How does an MLPT differ from a typical urine pregnancy test?

A typical urine pregnancy test has only one hCG concentration level and essentially shows whether hCG is present or not. A typical pregnancy test is generally used to determine if a woman is pregnant (i.e. has any hCG in her urine).

How does an MLPT work for medical abortion follow-up?

MLPTs can be used to rule out an ongoing pregnancy after medical abortion, usually using two MLPTs. The first test is used before the woman takes any abortion drug, and a second test is used 1-2 weeks later. If the result of the second MLPT shows a lower hCG concentration range than the first, the woman is no longer pregnant. If the result of the second MLPT shows the same or a higher hCG concentration range, an ongoing pregnancy may be present. Because medical abortion is very effective, most women will see a drop in the hCG range.

What are the advantages of using MLPTs for medical abortion follow-up?

MLPTs provide a rapid result and are generally less expensive than an hCG blood test or an ultrasound. They can be used at a place of the woman's choosing (e.g. home, or elsewhere outside of a clinic). In addition, MLPTs can rule out ongoing pregnancy after medical abortion much earlier than typical pregnancy tests (within 1-2 weeks); whereas it takes 4 weeks or more for a typical pregnancy test to show that a woman is no longer pregnant.

How accurate are MLPTs for medical abortion follow-up?

The accuracy of MLPTs in identifying an ongoing pregnancy may vary among MLPTs. Research using one type of MLPT shows that it can identify an ongoing pregnancy with a high level of accuracy.

What does it mean if the hCG concentration range rises from the first MLPT to the follow-up MLPT?

If the hCG concentration range rises, the woman may still be pregnant and she should visit a healthcare provider.

What does it mean if the hCG concentration range does not change from the first MLPT to the follow-up MLPT?

If there is no change in hCG concentration range at follow-up, there is a small possibility that there is an ongoing pregnancy. However, most women whose follow-up MLPT result is in the same range as the initial reading do not have an ongoing pregnancy. The woman can choose to visit a healthcare provider or use another MLPT two to three days later. If the third MLPT result does not show a drop in hCG concentration range (or there is an increase), the woman should visit a healthcare provider.

What if some lines are faint?

All lines—no matter how faint—should be used in reading the result. If any control lines are blank, however, the test is not working properly, and the results of that test are invalid. In such cases, another MLPT should be used. Refer to the instruction sheet for more information about how to determine whether the MLPT results are valid.

If any amount of hCG is detected, does it mean that the medical abortion was not successful?

No. The hCG hormone normally declines rapidly after a successful medical abortion, but some amount of hCG may remain in the body as long as 4 weeks after the abortion. As long as the results of the second MLPT show a decline in the hCG when compared to the results of the first MLPT, then the woman is no longer pregnant.

Is there a limit to the gestational age when MLPTs can be used?

Yes. To date, research shows that MLPTs can be used in medical abortion when the first abortion pill is taken by 63 days since the last menstrual period.

Who can read the results?

Anyone who can understand the instructions on how to perform an MLPT and interpret the results can read the test.

Will blood in the urine affect the results?

No. Some women may experience bleeding or spotting up to a month after a medical abortion. Blood in urine will not interfere with an MLPT's result.

Can medications affect the results?

No. Medication, food, or drink will not affect the results of an MLPT.

Is there a particular time of day when an MLPT should be used?

No. An MLPT can be used at any time of the day.

Can an MLPT be used to date a pregnancy?

No. The hCG levels present in urine vary across individuals and throughout pregnancy. MLPTs should not be used to date a pregnancy.