

Why urine is checked in pregnancy

Your urine gives vital clues to the health of you and your baby.

It will be checked regularly in pregnancy for:

- **Protein** - a sign of pre-eclampsia
- **Glucose** (sugar) - a possible sign of diabetes which can appear for the first time in pregnancy
- **Bacteria** - a sign of infection

This information is mainly about urine checks for pre-eclampsia (which used to be called toxemia). The signs and symptoms of pre-eclampsia occur in the second half of pregnancy. High blood pressure is the other sign.

Women with pre-eclampsia usually feel perfectly well. That's why regular checks on urine and blood pressure are so important.

How the test works

Your midwife or doctor dips a paper strip (dipstick) into a sample of urine from that day. The test shows whether protein is there and gives an indication of how much.

A tiny amount of protein is written in your notes as a "trace". This is nothing to worry about. More than a trace of protein is noted as one or more + signs, up to four at the most.

What if protein is found?

If you have one + or more of protein and high blood pressure (usually more than 90mmHg diastolic - the lower number) you may have pre-eclampsia and will need extra care from now on. You may be asked to collect urine over a 24 hour period, to measure exactly how much protein you have. Protein in your urine is not very likely to be a sign of infection, particularly if you have no other symptoms.

Collecting a urine sample at home

You may be asked to collect your own urine samples at home and bring them to the clinic for checking. You may be given a special container or be asked to find one yourself. Whatever container you use, be sure to keep it clean and well rinsed.

There are three types of sample you may be asked to collect.

Here's how to do them:

1. First morning specimen

On the day of your appointment, collect some of your first urine passed after waking up.

2. 24-hour specimen

Collect all the urine you pass over a 24-hour period:

Step 1 After waking up, empty your bladder into the toilet without collecting a sample. Your midwife or doctor may ask you to do this at a set time of the morning.

Step 2 Collect all the urine you pass during the rest of the day and night. Empty your sample container each time into the larger one given by the clinic.

Step 3 Exactly 24-hours after Step 1, collect your last sample and add it to the container.

3. Mid-stream specimen (MSU)

Clean your genital area with water.

Then use the '3S' plan as follows:

Start - pass a small amount of urine into the toilet

Stop - while you still have plenty more to do

Sample - start again and fill the container

Then pass any remaining urine into the toilet.

If you forget to bring your sample to the clinic, ask for a container and collect a fresh sample while you are there.

For advice or information about any aspect of pre-eclampsia, call the Action on Pre-eclampsia helpline on 0208 427 4217

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