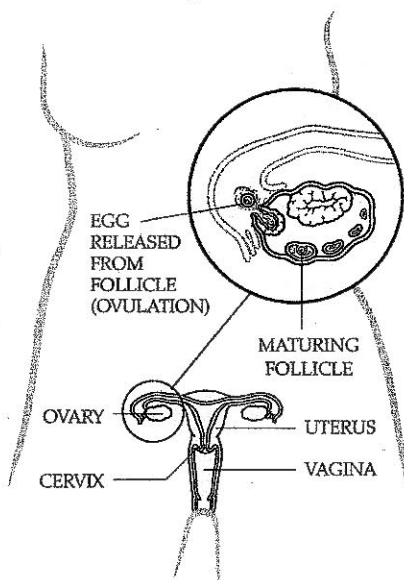


Hormonal Studies

Hormonal studies help identify hormonal imbalances that may impair your fertility.

Hormones control every step in achieving pregnancy — from stimulating the development of an egg, to ovulation and implantation of a fertilized egg in the uterus. Each hormone that plays a role in conception must be produced in a specific amount at a precise time in your menstrual cycle. Hormonal studies measure the levels of certain hormones produced by your body during your cycle. You are likely to have a series of simple blood tests at various points in your cycle. The tests your doctor orders may help determine your diagnosis as well as identify the best treatment options.



Hormones control follicle (egg) development, ovulation, and implantation

Hormones that control ovulation and implantation of the egg

Estradiol

Stimulates the growth of the follicles and the production of fertile mucus from the cervix, and prepares the uterine lining for implantation of a fertilized egg.

Follicle stimulating hormone (FSH)

Stimulates the development of the egg.

Luteinizing hormone (LH)

Stimulates the release of the egg from the follicles (ovulation).

Progesterone

Stabilizes the uterine lining for implantation of a fertilized egg and supports early pregnancy.

Other hormones that can interfere with ovulation

Androgens

Normally, small amounts of androgens — testosterone and DHEAS (dihydroepiandrosterone sulfate) — are produced in women. Excess production may interfere with development of the follicles, ovulation, and cervical mucus production.

Prolactin

Stimulates milk production; blood levels may be higher than normal in certain disorders or if you are taking certain medications.

Thyroid

An underactive thyroid (hypothyroidism) can result in the high prolactin levels.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Q Do I need to fast before I have my blood test?

A Food does not usually affect your blood tests for hormonal studies, so it's okay to eat. However, you may be told to fast before having a prolactin blood test. Speak with your doctor if you are unsure about eating before this test.

Q Do these blood tests have to be done on certain days of my menstrual cycle?

A Yes. Your hormone levels change throughout your cycle and have to be measured at specific times to diagnose an imbalance. Your doctor or nurse will tell you exactly when to have each test done.

Q What is a normal level for each hormone?

A The "normal" levels vary by laboratory, so you'll have to discuss these values and your results with your doctor or nurse.

Q When will I get the results of the blood test?

A Some test results are available the same day; others may take up to 1 week.