

## **POSITIVE PREGNANCY TEST PATIENT INFORMATION**

Pregnancy tests, done with either urine or blood, check for a hormone called HCG (human chorionic gonadotropin). This hormone is only present in a pregnant person. A false negative test may occur if the urine is not concentrated enough or the test is done too early. A false positive test is unlikely, but could be repeated if the person is in doubt of the results. Occasionally, a rare medical condition other than pregnancy may be found or monitored using this test as well.

A person may be excited about a pregnancy, ambivalent about being pregnant, or devastated in learning they are pregnant. We strongly encourage people who are upset to speak with a professional in the Health Center or Counseling Services at UCSC. If a person is considering terminating the pregnancy, there is an issue of timing for this procedure, and putting off the decision may limit their choices.

Whether or not they choose to continue the pregnancy, the person needs to be aware of important medical information to protect their health. Certain symptoms of pregnancy that may be normal in moderation can signal a need for consultation if they are severe. Vaginal spotting may occur occasionally in early pregnancy, but heavier bleeding is not normal. Abdominal or pelvic discomfort may be okay, but true pain, especially if increasing, may be a sign of a tubal or ectopic pregnancy, spontaneous abortion, or an infection in the bladder or uterus. Nausea and vomiting are not unusual, but severe vomiting can be problematic for the pregnant person and may require medical care. These concerns are covered in greater depth below.

### **PRENATAL CARE**

A person who is pregnant should consider arrangements for prenatal care as soon as possible, as it may take weeks to get an appointment. It is wise to check with their medical insurance carrier before identifying an obstetric provider to make sure that provider's services are covered.

Certain lab tests are suggested within the first few months, but there is generally no rush to have them done. However, the following important health recommendations should be implemented as early as possible for all pregnant people:

- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, tobacco products, and all street drugs
- Talk immediately to your clinician if you are on any medications that may be problematic
- Do not take any over the counter products before checking safety in pregnancy
- Begin a pre-natal vitamin as soon as possible. Folic acid in particular is very important and is present in most pre-natal vitamins
- If you have questions about any medications or street drugs that you have used or may consider using, you may call the Teratogen Hotline at 800-532-3749 to request information
- Eat a healthy diet. Get plenty rest. Try to avoid being around people who are ill

### **PREGNANCY TERMINATION**

When someone is considering or is certain they want to terminate a pregnancy, they may do this legally and safely using a variety of medical providers who provide this service. There are no safe and effective alternatives to medical or surgical pregnancy termination. Names of abortion providers may be given by your medical insurance company. Locally, and in many communities, agencies such as Planned Parenthood are known for providing compassionate and professional services in this area. Our nursing staff may be able to help a student make arrangements if they are having problems doing this on their own.

After a pregnancy termination, it is important to comply with follow-up medical care suggested at the procedure. Testing for blood type (Rh) is important to insure safe future pregnancies, and medication may be needed for the person who is Rh negative. In addition, all people should be offered contraception as part of their care. If there are complications or concerns, please contact the facility where the procedure occurred. Again, the Student Health Center medical and nursing staff is willing to help if there are problems that cannot be solved in another way.

### **ECTOPIC PREGNANCY WARNING**

An ectopic pregnancy is a pregnancy which is located outside of the uterus (most commonly in the fallopian tube). Frequently the tube may rupture (break) when it is stretched too much by the growing pregnancy. This can cause internal bleeding which in some cases may lead to death.

We do not know the cause, but it is more common in people who have scarring of the fallopian tubes from a previous infection or previous tubal surgery. People who have had a previous ectopic pregnancy are at higher risk for another ectopic. If a person has an IUD then these unlikely pregnancies are at a much higher risk for ectopic pregnancy.

A person with an ectopic pregnancy might have symptoms no different than a normal pregnancy (missed menstrual period, nausea, and breast tenderness). More commonly, they will have some unusual vaginal bleeding and lower abdominal pain, especially on one side. If there is internal bleeding, the abdominal pain will get worse and sometimes will cause shoulder pain, dizziness or fainting. If there is severe pain or bleeding, emergency care should be sought.

The Emergency Room is the best place to seek care in these circumstances. At the hospital, special tests can be done, and medication or possibly surgery will be arranged. If there is no one to drive the patient, or the symptoms are serious, call 911 for transportation to the hospital.

### **SPONTANEOUS ABORTION OR MISCARRIAGE**

Heavy bleeding and cramping in pregnancy are not normal. Light bleeding may resolve with rest, but the patient should be examined as soon as possible if bleeding is heavy, constant and accompanied by cramping pain.

### **NAUSEA AND VOMITING**

Many pregnant people find that certain tastes and odors increase their nausea, and should be avoided if possible. Nausea and vomiting are most common when awakening, hence called morning sickness. Saltine type crackers eaten before even getting out of bed help many people settle their stomachs. Inability to hold down fluids can lead to dehydration and medical care should be sought if this occurs.

There is much important dietary information for pregnant person. A consultation with a medical professional or dietician may be helpful in determining your nutritional needs during pregnancy.