

Interesting ways of testing pregnancy of ancient people

In the old days, finding out whether you were pregnant was like solving a mystery with no obvious clues. People tried all sorts of strange methods, from analyzing changes in their bodies to seeking advice from mystics.

Nowadays, it is very easy to buy pregnancy test at pharmacies or order online.

Throughout history, there have been some truly unusual attempts to create a safe pregnancy test. For a time, people thought a frog could do it and more. Here are some of the more interesting ways people used to test for pregnancy.

Cereal grains

Ancient Egyptian women pioneered the earliest pregnancy tests using barley and wheat seeds. They would urinate on these seeds and if they sprouted quickly, it was a sign of pregnancy. Furthermore, the type of germinating seed was believed to be able to predict the sex of the baby. If the barley sprouted, it would be a boy and if the wheat sprouted, the baby would be a girl.

Modern studies show that the wheat/barley pregnancy test can accurately detect about 85% of pregnancies.

The Beginning of the Modern Pregnancy Test



In 1927, German scientists Aschheim and Zondek invented a pregnancy test. They injected a woman's urine into a young female mouse. If, after dissecting the mouse, they found that its ovaries had developed and produced eggs, the test was positive. This indicated the presence of hCG, a hormone from the placenta, confirming

pregnancy. Later, a similar method was used with rabbits instead of mice.

Year of the Frog

A few years later, British scientist Lancelot Hogben introduced a similar method to the mouse or rabbit method, but this time using frogs. Since frogs lay eggs, there was no need to dissect them afterwards to check for ovulation. This was the first reusable pregnancy test in history, and at the time it was the fastest pregnancy test available, providing results in less than 12 hours. Frog pregnancy tests were used worldwide for three decades, from the 1940s to the 1960s, involving tens of thousands of frogs.

Frog pregnancy tests were recently featured on the television series *Lessons in Chemistry*. While initially seemingly fictionalized for dramatic effect, they turned out to be real, old-fashioned pregnancy tests.



The "wind" of change

In the 1960s, things changed, marking the beginning of what we now know as pregnancy tests. Most importantly, these tests no longer relied on the use of live animals. They could be performed in the doctor's office, and by the 1970s, advances had made them much more accurate. These tests used antibodies and could detect pregnancy as early as 2–3 weeks after conception.

Scientists developed antibodies that specifically target and bind to hCG. These antibodies then attached themselves to the surface of sheep blood cells. By observing how the cells clump together when mixed with a woman's urine, the scientists were able to determine whether the woman was pregnant or not.

The first home pregnancy test

In 1970, the first home pregnancy test kit hit the market. These kits resembled a student chemistry kit and included a test tube, a dropper, a dry capsule containing sheep blood cells, and hCG antibody serum. The kit involved a 10-step process and could provide a positive pregnancy result with 97% accuracy and a negative result with 80% accuracy. This was a milestone, as women could now take a pregnancy test at home, without having to go to the doctor's office.

The modern pregnancy test, as we know it today, was introduced in 1988. In the United States alone, more than 20 million pregnancy tests are sold each year. These tests can detect the presence of hCG about eight days after ovulation. Thanks to advances in medicine, today's pregnancy tests are more convenient and affordable than ever.

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