PEARLS

Practical Evidence About Real Life Situations

Does timed intercourse increase the chances of pregnancy for couples trying to conceive?

Clinical Question	How effective and safe are ovulation prediction models for timing intercourse for conception in couples trying to conceive?
Bottom Line	There was moderate-quality evidence that timed intercourse using urine ovulation prediction increased the chance of live birth. Timed intercourse using urinary ovulation detection was also associated with higher pregnancy rates than intercourse without ovulation prediction. Only two studies specifically analysed stress levels using timed intercourse (using ovulation prediction) and found no difference in stress levels at three and 12 months, respectively comparative to levels experienced in the control group.
Caveat	The evidence obtained from the included studies consisted of a mainly fertile cohort. For example, when assessing pregnancy rate, 93% of the couples in the urine ovulation detection studies and 94% of couples in the fertility awareness-based methods (FABM) studies were classified as fertile. Moreover, six of the seven studies only included women under 40. This review's results therefore cannot be extrapolated to an infertile population or those over 40.
Context	Many factors influence fertility, one being the timing of intercourse. The 'fertile window' describes a stage in the cycle when conception can occur and is approximately five days before to several hours after ovulation. 'Timed intercourse' is the practice of prospectively identifying ovulation and, thus, the fertile window to increase the likelihood of conception. Methods of predicting ovulation include urinary hormone measurement (luteinising hormone (LH) and oestrogen), FABM (including tracking basal body temperatures, cervical mucus monitoring, calendar charting/tracking apps), and ultrasonography.
Cochrane Systematic Review	Gibbons T, Reavey J, Georgiou EX, Becker CM. Timed intercourse for couples trying to conceive. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2023, Issue 9. Art. No.: CD011345. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD011345.pub3. This review contains 7 trials with a total of 2,464 participants.

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Systematic review link:
https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD011345.pub3/full