
SOUTHEASTERN FERTILITY CENTER
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POSTCOITAL TEST

The postcoital test (PCT) is a means by which we can determine whether there may be a problem with migration of the sperm cells up the female's reproductive tract after the semen is ejaculated into the vagina. The first step for the sperm cells after ejaculation is to swim into and through the mucus which is found in the cervix. The cervix contains an opening which joins the vagina with the cavity of the uterus. The cervical mucus normally responds to the hormones produced by the ovaries in such a way that when ovulation is occurring, it becomes very thin and easily supports sperm survival. Sometimes these changes do not occur and infertility results. It is estimated that 15 percent of couples with infertility have a problem at the level of the cervix.

When we do a PCT, we are looking to see how many sperm have made their way into the cervical mucus, how well they are doing in terms of their vitality and swimming strength, and what the physical properties of the mucus are. In order to do this test correctly, the test has to be done at or around the time of ovulation. This is determined with commercially available ovulation predictor kits.

*Approximately one and one-half days before ovulation, the pituitary gland sends a strong hormonal message to the ovaries in order to trigger the changes which lead up to the release of an egg. Several commercially available kits now allow the couple to check urine for evidence of the hormonal signal. **Beginning on cycle day number 11 (the first day of flow is defined as day number one), check your urine between 12:00 noon and 2:00 pm every day**. On the day before ovulation, the test will be positive. Follow the directions on the ovulation predictor kit to determine when the test is positive. Ideally, the postcoital test should be done the day after the color change.*

*The test is very simple and painless. Contact our office as soon as you have a positive test. You must call before 4:30 p.m. We will arrange a time for your postcoital test. If you are given a morning appointment, you are to have intercourse **at or after midnight** the night before. If you are given an afternoon appointment, you are to have intercourse early in morning the day of your appointment. A pelvic exam is performed by the physician or one of the nurses, and the cervical mucus is removed and placed under the microscope. The sperm are observed and counted. The information is available immediately.*

If a problem with the PCT is discovered, treatments are available. Frequently, intrauterine inseminations will be employed to bypass the cervix entirely. The decision on what therapy to employ is a joint one between the couple and physician.

While we attempt to be available 7 days per week, testing can not always be performed on weekends and holidays. Please call the office if you have questions about weekend/holiday testing.