Pregnancy Testing Before Anesthesia and Surgery

Information for women before surgery

About the Test

At the Pre-Anesthesia Clinic at University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC), we inform female patients about anesthesia and possible risks to pregnancy. If you are planning to have surgery and could be pregnant, or if being pregnant might affect your decision about having surgery, we recommend you have a pregnancy test on the day of your surgery. We can do this test after you check in.

How is the test done?

We can test a urine sample, but if you cannot provide one, we will need to draw a small sample of your blood to test.

What are the benefits of this test?

Past studies have suggested that having anesthesia and surgery during early pregnancy could result in miscarriage or birth defects in the fetus. More recent studies that looked at large numbers of women do not clearly show harm to fetuses from non-emergency anesthesia and surgery in healthy female patients. But, we do not know all there is to know about how anesthesia may affect a growing fetus or the progress of a pregnancy.

Many anesthesiologists recommend that pregnant women wait to have anesthesia and surgery when waiting will not harm your health. Also, many surgeons will not do elective surgery (surgery that is not needed to protect your health) on pregnant women.

If your pregnancy test is positive, your surgeon and anesthesiologist will talk with you about whether you want to go ahead with your surgery at this time.

Results of your pregnancy test are strictly confidential. They will not be shared with anyone other than you and your doctors, unless you give us your specific permission.
What if I choose not to have this test?

You may decide not to have this test. The risk of this is that you would not know about a possible early pregnancy.

Do we have your permission to do a pregnancy test on the day of your surgery?

- [ ] Yes, I want to have a pregnancy test.
- [ ] No, I do not want to have a pregnancy test.

Please initial and date here:

INITIALS       DATE

Thank you!