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REPRODUCTIVE PHYSIOLOGY

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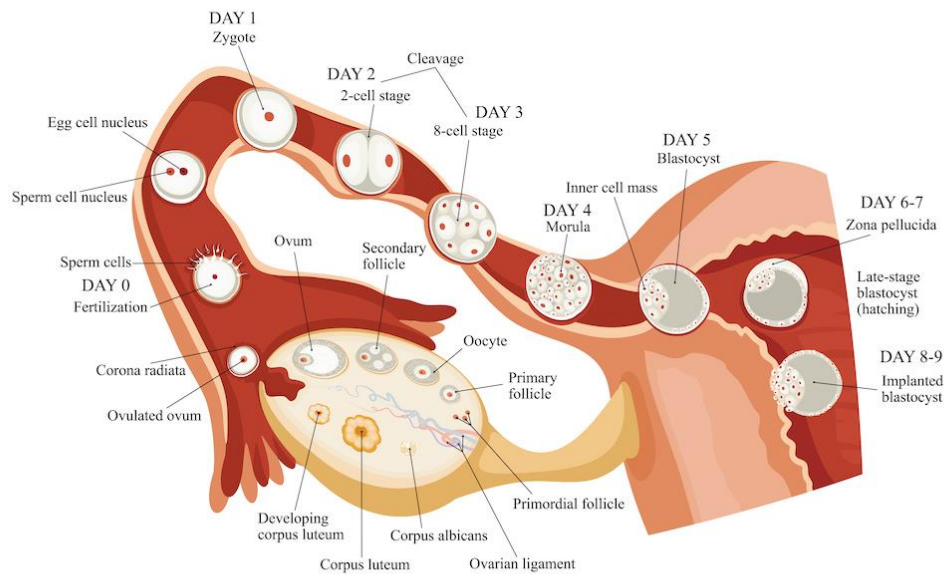
What is Implantation?

Implantation is the time when the fertilized egg successfully attaches and implants into the lining of the uterine wall. Although the egg may have been fertilized over a week before, it's only after implantation that your body starts producing hCG—human chorionic gonadotropin, also known as [the hormone](#) that's picked up by pregnancy tests.

When does implantation occur?

Sperm meets egg, and [40 weeks](#) later, boom—it's baby time! Sounds simple, right? Let's back things up a bit, Biology 101 diagram-style.

FROM OVULATION TO IMPLANTATION



Your ovary will release an egg into your fallopian tube, and if you had sex up to about a week prior to ovulation, sperm will be waiting in your fallopian tube. If fertilization is successful (yay!), the egg will begin to divide and travel down your tube toward your uterus. This process usually takes about a week; after that, implantation happens.

On average, implantation occurs about 8-10 days after ovulation, but it can happen as early as six and as late as 12. This means that for some women, implantation can occur around cycle day 20, while for others, it can be as late as day 26. This is part of the reason why counting [your pregnancy weeks](#) can be confusing.

How long does implantation last?

Although most pregnancies are [40 weeks](#), the process of implantation represents only a fraction of that time. Implantation typically lasts only a few days.

Once it's complete and the fertilized egg—now called an embryo—is burrowed snugly inside your uterine wall, it will begin to produce hCG. Your body's progesterone levels will also begin to rise, nourishing your uterine lining and preventing your period from beginning.

When to take a pregnancy test

Congratulations are in order, because now you're officially pregnant! But don't start peeing on a stick quite yet.

At the very earliest, the most sensitive of [pregnancy tests](#) will begin to show a positive result around 10 days past ovulation. Remember—ovulation, fertilization and implantation all work together in a perfect storm to result in a viable pregnancy. Each process has its own timeline, and each timeline differs for every woman, so what's the norm for one woman may be different for another.

Even after an embryo successfully implants and begins producing hCG, it still takes a few days for the hormone to build to a high enough level to be [detected by a pregnancy test](#).

Bottom line: save yourself time and money (not to mention your nerves!) and do your best to wait until the first day of your missed period to take a home pregnancy test in order to get an accurate reading.

What does implantation feel like?

There are a lot of misconceptions around whether or not someone can actually feel implantation, so let's set the record straight.

For most people, implantation feels like nothing at all. Some report feeling implantation symptoms like mild cramping right around the time of implantation, but doctors aren't certain if there's even an association between the two. Do your best to stay cool, calm and collected during that two-week wait—just because you're not feeling any implantation symptoms doesn't mean it's not happening.

Implantation symptoms

Since there's no real correlation between when implantation happens and actual implantation symptoms, it's best to think instead about implantation symptoms and how they relate to early pregnancy.

The most common implantation symptoms of early pregnancy include:

Implantation cramps. Some women may notice some minor cramping right around the time implantation is taking place. Though there's no way to know for sure what's actually going on, what we do know is that this cramping is due to the rise in progesterone that occurs during the second half of your cycle, whether you're pregnant or not.

Implantation bleeding. Defined as a small amount of [bleeding or spotting](#) that can occur after conception and a few days before your menstrual cycle, implantation bleeding is light, stops on its own and doesn't require treatment. It's experienced by about [a third of all pregnant women](#), although there's [no scientific data](#) that proves the correlation between implantation and bleeding.

Nausea. Often some of the first tip-offs that something might be up, nausea and vomiting are popular—and unpleasant—implantation symptoms in early pregnancy. You may also start noticing changes in your appetite or that you're getting grossed out by foods you previously loved.

Tender breasts. As your hormones change, you may start to notice your breasts starting to swell and feeling a lot more sensitive than usual.

Constipation and bloating. Things feeling like they're starting to slow down? You can thank those pregnancy hormones yet again for constipation, a common implantation symptom. You may also notice you're looking extra bloated during this time, so it might be time to break out the leggings.

Fatigue. Growing a baby is hard work! If you're feeling more tired than usual, that's often a sign of early pregnancy, caused by a rise in progesterone and increased blood volume.

Headaches. Another side effect of your increased blood volume during pregnancy, headaches are a common implantation symptom.

Mood swings. Notice yourself getting extra bothered by even the smallest of things? Mood swings are a common implantation sign during early pregnancy.

While implantation can be a bit of a mystery, you'll know when it's happened when you get that positive pregnancy test!