



Follicle Monitoring

Performed around Cycle Day 10-16

In some cases, especially if a woman's menstrual period is irregular, she may not be ovulating. The purpose of monitoring with blood work and an ultrasound exam is to determine if a woman is ovulating and if the events surrounding ovulation are occurring normally. Blood work testing includes an estradiol, LH and progesterone levels which can determine how close to ovulation a woman is, or if she has already ovulated.

In addition, the estradiol level helps assess the quality of the egg prior to ovulation. The ultrasound exam is useful for assessing the size of the follicle which is what supports the growing egg and for determining the thickness of the uterine lining. Abnormalities in these findings could help to explain why a woman may have difficulty conceiving.

In women taking fertility medication, follicle monitoring is essential to assess her response to treatment. In order to safely proceed, it is important to know how many eggs will be ovulated and how high the estradiol level is. Each mature egg should produce between 150 and 200 pg/ml of estradiol. Therefore, by using the hormone levels in conjunction with the ultrasound exam, a more accurate determination of a woman's response to treatment can be made.

Also, the dose of the fertility medication can be adjusted during treatment if there is an inadequate response or if too many eggs start to mature. If the estradiol level gets very high, a woman may be at an increased risk for developing ovarian hyperstimulation syndrome. If multiple eggs reach maturity simultaneously, a woman may be at high risk for a multifetal pregnancy. In some instances, canceling the cycle because of these risks is recommended. Alternatively, rather than cancel, the cycle can be converting to in vitro fertilization (IVF) treatment to take advantage of an overly exuberant response to fertility medication.

The goal of follicle monitoring to provide information about the number of mature eggs that will be ovulated and to ensure that this is accomplished safely.