

# Few teens undergo pregnancy testing in the emergency department

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Few adolescent females undergo pregnancy testing in the hospital emergency department (ED), even when they complain of lower abdominal pain, or before they are exposed to radiation for tests or examinations, according to an abstract presented Friday, Oct. 19, at the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) National Conference and Exhibition in New Orleans.

In the abstract, "Pregnancy Testing Rates Among Adolescent Emergency Department Patients," researchers reviewed National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey data from 2000 to 2009 on female patients aged 14 to 21 who were examined in a hospital ED.

Of the 77 million girls who visited an ED over the nine-year period, just 14.5 million (18.7 percent) were tested for pregnancy. Of the patients reporting abdominal pain, 42.3 percent were tested for pregnancy, and of those receiving radiologic imaging, 21.5 percent were tested. Of patients exposed to radiation that could cause birth defects (such as a chest radiograph or CT scan), only 27.9 percent received a pregnancy test. In addition, disparities in testing were noted based on age, race and insurance type.

"We were surprised to find that pregnancy testing occurred infrequently," said study author Monika Goyal, MD, FAAP. "It was particularly concerning that rates of pregnancy testing were low even among females with potential reproductive health complaints or with exposure to radiation through diagnostic testing, like CT scans."

"These findings underscore the need to develop quality improvement interventions to increase pregnancy testing in [adolescent girls](#) in the emergency department, especially among those with higher risk of [pregnancy complications](#)."

Provided by American Academy of Pediatrics

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