

## Do Your Homework On In-Home Health Testing

(NAPSA)—Convenient and relatively inexpensive, in-home tests for conditions such as diabetes, blood pressure and pregnancy are gaining popularity in the United States. But should consumers really use them?

Yes and no. Pathologists caution that in-home tests are only as good as the people using them and are not a substitute for regular medical exams. "In-home tests can give people access to important information about their health," says Gene Herbek, MD, a pathologist in Sioux City, Iowa. "However, it's important to remember that all tests can generate false positives and false negatives."

If you use an in-home testing kit and receive unexpected results, it is important to consult with your doctor or other health care professional immediately. Your medications, diet, vitamin supplements and other medical conditions can affect test results. Your doctor can discuss these with you, recommend any follow up testing needed to make a definitive diagnosis and suggest an appropriate course of treatment.

For example, after missing her period, a woman may use a home pregnancy test to determine if she is pregnant. Because every home pregnancy test is different, and because not every woman produces the same amount of hormones detected by home tests, a pregnant woman may actually get a negative result. Since she's unaware of her pregnancy, the woman could unknowingly harm her baby by drinking alcohol or taking over-the-counter medicines in the first few months of her pregnancy. A simple visit to her doctor after the negative in-home test result could help her to have a healthy baby.

"Unlike an in-home test, a

### ***In-Home Testing Tips:***

- Use test before expiration date
- Store the test kit properly
- Follow all instructions
- Call your doctor if you get an unexpected result



physician's diagnosis of a patient's condition is not just the answer to a simple 'yes' or 'no' question—it's a result of many important factors," says Dr. Herbek. "A physician reviews a patient's medical history, performs a physical examination and consults with other medical experts, including pathologists, to interpret laboratory test results."

Pathologists, doctors who specialize in caring for patients through laboratory medicine, study body fluids and tissues to help your primary care doctor make a diagnosis about your health or any medical problems you have, and use laboratory tests to monitor the health of patients with chronic conditions.

"Professional medical laboratories must meet quality standards set by the federal government and by independent accrediting organizations," says Dr. Herbek. "These standards help ensure the reliability of the results from tests performed in the laboratory."

To get the best results from home tests, use them responsibly—follow test directions precisely and talk with your doctor about any unusual or unexpected results.