

Navigating the 2-week wait

The two-week wait is perhaps one of the most talked about periods of time across the fertility journey. A period where it feels that time is somehow standing still, and 2 weeks feels like a lifetime. Just to clarify, the “2 week wait” is that time between your IUI/IVF embryo transfer and when you can take that all-important pregnancy test.

It's common for people to experience heightened anxiety through this period where we await the outcome, and often take our attention to our bodies to search for those reassuring signs of a pregnancy – or not, “was that a pain in my abdomen?”, “did I just feel a little Nauseous?”, “is this bloating or maybe pregnancy”.

When we feel a lack of control in any stressful situation, it's normal to play the ‘mental searching game’, where we seek out information that might provide evidence for an outcome, whether that be a positive outcome – pregnancy, or a negative outcome, no pregnancy. Sitting with uncertainty is hard work so it's only natural that our minds would try and help us out.

While we can't make the two weeks go any faster in reality, there are some things that you can personally do to help navigate this time. Here are some things to consider.

Mentally prepare: Acknowledging in advance that this time period will be challenging can help us feel more mentally prepared to sit with the emotions that present themselves, rather than feeling taken off guard. Knowing that it might be a tough few weeks can also help us respond to ourselves with kindness.

Your support team: It may be that only a few key people know about your fertility journey, or perhaps it's just you and your partner. Consider if there are people in your world who you want to open up to, who would be a good shoulder to lean on. This may be your fertility counsellor. Let your team know what you find helpful during this waiting time and also what you find unhelpful! Perhaps you want to spend time with some close friends who will help provide a welcomed distraction for fertility thoughts, or maybe asking people to give you space. Consider booking an appointment with your counsellor during this time if you want a safe space to speak freely.

Make plans: The very nature of the title ‘two week wait’ feels flawed, in that we often assume this requires sitting back and waiting for the result. The old phrase ‘A watched kettle never boils’ applies here. Let's try and make this 2-week period of time about more than sitting and waiting. See if you can schedule some other things during this time that take your attention, are enjoyable and allow you to move forward. Perhaps these are things that you have a command and agency over and a sense of control.





Check in with yourself: It's likely that you will experience a raft of emotions through this time. Know that all of these emotions are reasonable, valid and part of being human, albeit often uncomfortable. Mentally check in with yourself at multiple points, "how am I doing?" "what do I feel right now?", "what do I need?", and respond accordingly. There may be days where you choose to focus on external things, delve into a project at work, or an interest you have at home, and other days where you need relaxation, to curl up on the couch with a good movie and hugs from those around you.

Avoid the rabbit holes: Again, it's a normal human response to seek out reassurance when we are sitting with uncertainty. This might mean feeling the urge to do some 'Doctor Googling' or long going online searching and heading down some deep rabbit holes of conflicting information. The effect of this searching and seeking behaviour sometimes keeps us in an anxiety loop where it's hard to get mental distance from our Fertility thinking and can have the result of increasing our stress levels. Perhaps try to fight the urge or limit the time you spend online.



Reduce unnecessary stressors: While stress will not directly impact the outcome of your result on test day, make your life easier by reducing the stress load you have during this time. Are there things you can delay, or put down for these two weeks that might allow more mental space for you to tackle this time?

Self-compassion: How would you respond to a close friend who was sitting in this two week wait? Sometimes we are kinder to those around us than we are to ourselves. Your fertility journey has likely already brought a raft of challenging emotions. Now is a time to speak warmly to yourself with compassion and kindness. What words do you need to hear right now that bring a feeling of comfort? "I'm doing the best that I can in a difficult time", "I'm proud of how I'm navigating this journey", "it's okay to feel all of the emotions".

Control what you can: One of the more challenging aspects of fertility treatment is the lack of control you may feel in the process. Everything is happening internally, which you can't physically see. Further to this, your following medical protocols designed by your clinical team and for some, feeling that you don't have agency or control over the process can be unsettling, particularly for those of us, who thrive on having a sense of control in over our worlds. Remember that during this two week wait, the emotions that you experience will not affect the outcome. Be kind to yourself accept that you have done everything that you needed to do. What you have control over is how you choose to respond to yourself and the strategies that you employ to help your emotional journey through this time.

Find the present moment: Believe it or not, anxiety is a biological coping strategy, where our mind and body help us to prepare for what's coming next. Cognitively how this can look is our mind always thinking to the future, considering all possible outcome and how we may manage then. While this is helpful in a time limited way, it can also be overwhelming. We can counter this by actively bringing our attention back to the present moment. Being in the 'here and now'. Check in with yourself and



notice where your attention has gone and give yourself permission to be present. You might try some mindfulness meditations or breathing activities to help with this.

Prep for test day: You will be aware of when test day is! And likely aware of approximately when you will be getting the all-important phone call from the clinic with the results. Have a think about where you might be at that time. Are you okay getting that call while you're at work, or would you rather be at home? Will you be on your own or perhaps would rather that you and your partner are together of you and a close friend. While you can't control the outcome of the result, sometimes thinking about the context of the way you receive the information can be helpful.

Take time to Absorb: Whether the results on test day are the ones you want, or sadly the ones you don't want, the information you receive will evoke an emotional response. Take the time you need to sit with this news and to sit with the emotion. Again, know that your response is valid, reasonable and human.