

---

## GUIDELINES TO ENSURE ACCURACY WHEN HORMONE TESTING

---

**Menstruating** women should test during the luteal phase (i.e., day 19, 20 or 21) of their menstrual cycle.

Hormones are usually measured in the morning (upon waking), since that is how the reference ranges of the diagnostic laboratory were determined. The timing of the test sample collection should avoid peaks and troughs in the hormone level based on the frequency of administration.

- **It is best to time the test sampling at the midpoint between doses.** For example, if the hormone is supplemented once daily, test 12 hours following the dose. If the dose is given twice a day or every 12 hours, the sampling should be done approximately 6 hours after the last dose.
- Sometimes it may be necessary to move the timing of the dose for a few days so that morning sampling accommodates proper timing in regards to the last dose.

The duration of the dosage form also needs to be taken into consideration.

- **Slow-release capsules** release contents over a time period of 10-12 hours. In this case, even if the hormone is dosed once daily, it would be best to test within 4-8 hours after the last dose to avoid a peak or a trough.
- **Immediate release capsules** release contents over approximately 6 hours. In this case, it would be best to test 2-4 hours after the last dose to avoid a peak or trough.
- **With sublingual or buccal administration**, hormone levels return to baseline in 6 hours, so sampling should be done 3-4 hours after the last dose.
- If you are supplementing with any **thyroid hormones** it is essential to collect your test sample 4 hours after your last dose for accurate thyroid hormone testing.
- It is recommended to rest for a least 15 minutes prior to **testing a T3 level** in an effort to minimize metabolic demands resulting in T3 level elevations.

Additional Tips and Tricks:

- Saliva testing should not be used if the hormone is being administered by **sublingual or buccal route**. These routes of administration result in accumulation of hormone in the oral mucous membranes and tissues, resulting in a high level that does not correspond to tissue levels.
- Caution must be taken with saliva testing not to contaminate the sample (see Contamination Handout).
- If using **topical hormones**, contact with the fingers (i.e., using the hands to rub doses into the skin) can result in higher levels than normal in the fingertips for several days. Therefore, capillary blood spot testing should not be utilized if regular contact with the fingers occurs.