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REVIEW OF FAIRHAVEN HEALTH'S BFP OVULATION & PREGNANCY TESTS

By: Andrea Lewis

Before my first pregnancy, I tracked my cycles religiously. It was fairly easy, with a predictable and regular menstrual cycle. Now I am still breastfeeding without a postpartum period, which has made tracking my ovulation and fertility a bit trickier. Normally, I track the changes in my cervix and cervical mucus, but these changes are only indicative of changes in hormones and do not actually guarantee ovulation has occurred. The first recommended step when tracking fertility with an irregular or absent period is to use an Ovulation Predictor Kit with test strips. These strips detect surges in Luteinizing Hormone (LH), the hormone that signals your ovaries to produce an egg. While OPK strips cannot confirm ovulation has occurred, they can predict it *might* occur soon so intimacy can be timed appropriately and a tentative date for a Home Pregnancy Test (HPT) can be set.

For my honest opinion, Fairhaven Health sent me twenty-five BFP OPK strips and ten BFP Pregnancy Test strips. I had just experienced some spotting and heavy PMS symptoms—lovely!—so I decided to count that as a potential period to make dating the testing cycle easier. While I waited for the BFP strips to arrive, I picked up one of my previously preferred OPK brands from CVS Pharmacy. I started testing with CVS the day of spotting, henceforth known as Cycle Day (CD) 1, and received an obvious negative result. The next few days, I continued to experience spotting and PMS alongside negative results.

On CD 11, the CVS strip showed a near-positive result. In order for the result to be considered positive, the test line must be as dark as or darker than the control line. That can sometimes be hard to discern, so when in doubt, have intercourse anyway and test again the next day. I have also heard that if the test line appears darker on one edge (as shown in Figure A), to use the darkest edge as the result. In that case, it appeared my OPK would be positive in the next day or two. And just in time for me to begin using the BFP OPK strips.

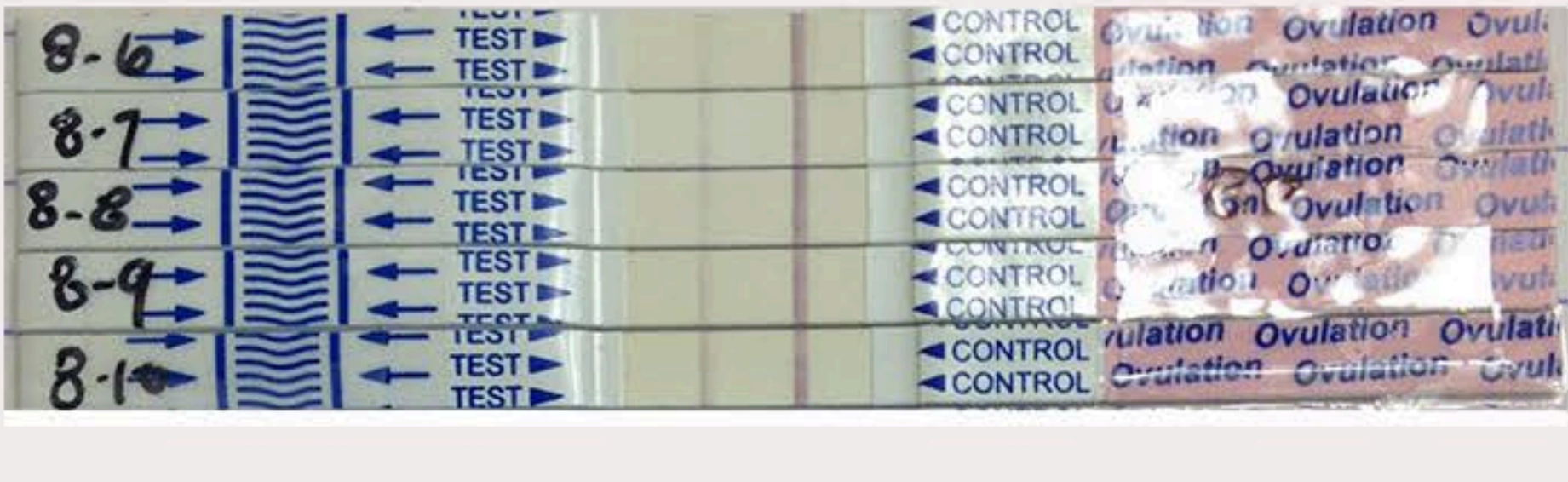


Figure : CD 7-11 as seen on CVS OPKs.

When they arrived, the first thing I noticed about Fairhaven Health's BFP strips were the included instructions. That's right, I'm big on reading directions, especially when it comes to something new and potentially confusing. However, it was immediately obvious Fairhaven Health had its customers in mind when they designed these instructions. The print was large and easy to read, while the illustrations were also clear. They went beyond the usual step by step directions by also explaining a little bit about the ovulation process and the science behind the strips. Their list of FAQ's answered all my questions, and their contact information was clearly displayed in case there was any other information I needed.

My first day using BFP OPK, CD 12, both the BFP and CVS brands showed a lighter negative result rather than a darker positive (see Figure B). While I was disappointed, I was calm. CD 11 is a bit early for ovulation. Furthermore, it is normal for some women to have tiny surges of LH just before the actual surge—think of it as your ovaries practicing for the big day. Either way, I noted CD 11 as potential ovulation and continued to test with both brands.

Each day, I still got negatives on both brands. My hopes were high that I had indeed ovulated with a very short surge—perhaps I had missed it on the tests. After all, I had had a very short surge when I conceived my son and only caught it by testing at midnight. But just in case this was just a practice surge, I kept testing.



Figure : CD 11-27 comparing CVS and BFP brand OPKs.

Alas, at 14 days past ovulation (DPO), my OPKs were still negative. I waited for signs of my period or pregnancy, but I saw neither a positive HPT nor a spot of color. It is unlikely that I ovulated on August 10th. I tested out the remaining BFP OPK strips and was rewarded with another mini surge as my sticks grew darker again (see Figure D). Up until August 28th, both brands were comparable, being equally negative with slight hints of LH detected. However, on that day, the BFP strips showed up darker than the CVS, even though I was using the same urine sample at the same time each day. For six days, the BFP strips gave me almost-positives. I decided to count the 30th as possible ovulation for yet another two-week-wait for HPT testing.



Figure : CVS, left, shows lighter than BFP, right.

On the 3rd, the BFP brand grew lighter again, and I experienced some spotting. At the time, I wasn't sure if it was another warning period or just breakthrough spotting. I've noticed it's common for women to have a mini-surge of LH right before their periods are due. If that was the case for me, you can see the mini-surge building up on the BFP strips. But the CVS brand is just kind of all over the place. If I were only using the CVS sticks, I would have been very confused and frustrated with the lack of direction on my stand. With BFP, I felt as though my hormones were going somewhere.

Now in retrospect, I see that the September 3rd spotting (that continued for a few days) could have been my period, as I ended up ovulating exactly 14 days later and subsequently got my first postpartum period 13 days after that. It appears the BFP strips really did catch the mini-surge right before my period!

Unfortunately, when I later ovulated, I was not using any OPK strips at the time. I would have loved to see a big fat positive result on the BFP strips, as I'm confident in the results I received prior.

Bottom Line: I would definitely recommend BFP OPK strips. It is obvious the BFP strips showed a much clearer result than the CVS strips. The instructions were so easy to follow, and communication with Fairhaven Health was always quick and pleasant. The price is very affordable, especially with a discount for buying in bulk. The only thing I don't like about them is the name BFP, as I feel that is a sacred word

that should only be used for an actual Big Fat Positive. But that is certainly a personal opinion and does not affect how well the product works.

I mentioned above that I was also sent ten BFP Pregnancy Test strips to try out. These HPT strips are above that in the popular Wondfo brand and are almost identical, discounted in bulk. During my Two Week Wait (TWW) between possible ovulation and expected period, I used a few for the first time. I noticed these strips have a somewhat silvery sheen so that the tiny indentation in the stick where the dye collects is pretty noticeable (see Figure E). To any average person, this isn't much of a problem. But to a seasoned line-spotter like myself, this can make you go blind trying to see the imaginary line better. While I did not ever see this, it is a possibility, so I cannot comment on the effectiveness of the product. I would like to add a word of caution to Pee On A Stick (POAS) addicts and amateur tweekers. A line is a line, but a line is only a pregnant line if there is color.

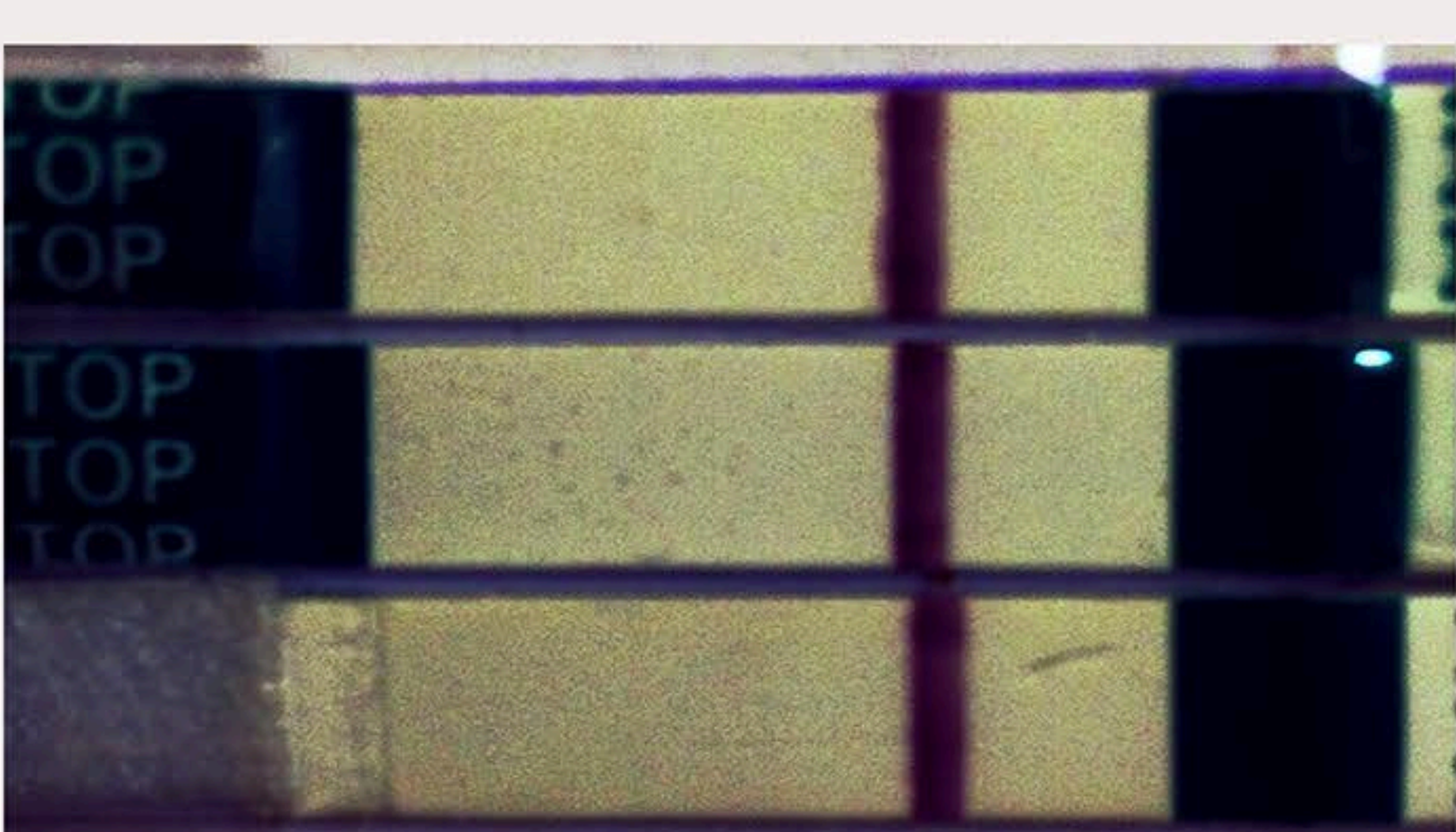


Figure : BFP Pregnancy Test "tweaked" to show the indent lines