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MAY 2000

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CAN I REALLY CHOOSE MY BABY'S SEX?

Q: I've heard that there are kits that couples who want to have a baby can buy that can let them choose the child's gender. Do they really work?

A: Medical experts say no. Gender-selection kits, which may contain ovulation tests, digital thermometers, douches and oral supplements, are based on methods—including changes in diet, timing of intercourse and monitoring vaginal pH levels—that the manufacturers claim influence gender. GenSelect, one company that distributes such kits for a cost of \$199, says its product has a success rate of up to 96 percent and cites

independent studies on its Web site to support its claims. But **Randy Morris, M.D.**, a reproductive endocrinologist in Chicago, points out that the kits are not FDA approved, and says the studies aren't large enough to prove the results can be attributed to anything other than chance. He says that the only reliable gender-selection techniques are also the most expensive ones: preimplantation genetic diagnosis (creating embryos outside of the womb and testing them for gender before implantation) and flow cytometry, a new sperm-sorting technology. These procedures can cost anywhere from \$2,500 to \$18,000. —Maureen Kennedy

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