



Menstrual Cycle Charting

There are as many reasons for keeping track of our cycles, as there are individual women. Some common reasons are: determining when we are fertile, finding out how affected we are by PMS, tracking irregular periods, and menstrual pain. By charting we can observe how daily choices and activities affect how we feel. Everyone's cycle is unique.

The goal of charting is to begin to recognize natural body rhythms. Once patterns begin to emerge, you can use the information to help make healthy choices about what your body needs rather than ignoring or covering up signals which can lead to poor health.

Some women will choose to chart cycles to determine the best time to conceive or to avoid pregnancy. For specifics on basal body temperature see below.

Day 1 of a cycle is typically the first day of bleeding. If you spot for a day or two prior, use your first full day of bleeding as Day 1. Everything is counted from here! Utilize the PMS Diary and or the Menstrual Cycle Chart on our website to help you gauge your symptoms. There is also a basal body temperature available for you.

Basal Body Temperature Charting

In order to achieve or avoid pregnancy, knowing the timing of ovulation can be important. Besides expensive ovulation predictor kits, a simple way of monitoring your cycle is to take your temperature first thing in the morning with a digital thermometer. You should take this temp when you first wake up and if possible around the same time every day. You will notice your temperature fluctuates around a given baseline. Immediately before ovulation, your temperature drops briefly (this may be a few tenths of a degree). Usually within 12 hours of ovulation, the temperature will rise several tenths of a degree above your normal baseline and remain there until your next cycle. The temperature will stay elevated if you achieve pregnancy (ever wonder why pregnant women are always hot?).

The key to charting is recognizing your particular patterns. Achieving pregnancy centers on identifying ovulation in order to plan intercourse appropriately. The egg itself, once released is on the clock. It only lives for about 24 hours. If fertilization does not happen by then – the egg will die off and no pregnancy is possible that month. Unlike the egg, sperm can live anywhere from 2-5 days inside the woman's body. Timing intercourse so that sperm will be present when the egg is released will increase the likelihood of pregnancy.

Another sign to pay attention to in order to determine ovulation timing is cervical fluid. Cervical fluid changes through the cycle in response to various hormonal influences. In the beginning of a cycle following menses most women will describe a thicker or dry fluid. This fluid is not fertile, as the sperm would be unable to swim through it. As the

cycle progresses, the fluid becomes thinner and stretchy. The fluid can often be described as “egg white” on the most fertile days. Ovulation typically occurs in the 2 days prior or up to 2 days after the peak stretchy cervical fluid. Once ovulation happens the drier cervical fluid typically returns.

To prevent pregnancy, a woman should abstain or utilize a barrier method during her most fertile days – typically 5 days prior to ovulation through 3 days after.

The following is a general guideline to help you determine ovulation. Be sure to combine all of your signs to get the most individualized estimates.

Cycle Length	Probable ovulation Day
25	11
26	12
27	13
28	14
29	15
30	16
31	17
32	18
33	19
34	20
35	21

Cervical Mucus Method

