

How To Understand the Ovulation Cycle

By [Laura Johnston](#) ★★★★★
Monday, April 24, 2006

Recommended Links

• [OvulationCalculator.Com](#)

Did you know that when a baby girl is born she is born with all the eggs she will ever have in her life? As she reaches puberty, the eggs begin to mature and her first menstrual cycle is triggered. Ovulation occurs monthly as a part of an even bigger event, the menstrual cycle. Understanding how it works is one of the most important things a woman should understand about her own body. It can help a woman to either become pregnant or to prevent pregnancy.

- 1. The menstrual cycle.** The average cycle lasts between 28-32 days but can be shorter or much longer. A cycle is the number of days from the start of one period to the next. A woman's cycle can be unpredictable and can change over the years. What is normal for some women may not be normal for others, yet as the cycle behaves similarly for most women, there are key things that occur during the cycle to recognize.
- 2. Ovulation.** This consists of three phases; pre-ovulation, ovulation and post-ovulation. A woman has two ovaries in her reproductive system, containing immature eggs. Ovulation is the process that results in the release of an egg from the ovaries, representing the time around which a woman is able to become pregnant.
 - **Pre-ovulation.** This is also known as the follicular phase, which begins on the first day of your period and continues until ovulation. As your period progresses and your hormones change, the eggs in the ovary prepare for release. The uterus lining begins to thicken, which can be recognized by the changes in cervical fluids. For the first few days following your period you will not notice much of a change in the cervical mucous. When you are ovulating, the mucous becomes stretchy and clear, resembling egg whites.
 - **Ovulation .** This can be calculated starting with the first day of the last menstrual period. For an average cycle, most women ovulate between day 11 – day 21. Around the 11th day after your period started, the ovary releases a mature egg down the fallopian tubes to the uterus. This should occur on or about the 14th day for women with an average 28-day cycle. It occurs once in every menstrual cycle as the brain alerts the ovaries to begin the process. Some women can feel a slight twinge or pain in the abdominal area when ovulating but others don't recognize any symptoms.
 - **Post-ovulation.** Known as the luteal phase, this is the last phase, which begins on the day of ovulation until the next period begins. It typically lasts 12-16 days from the day of ovulation, regardless of your cycle length. A luteinizing hormone (LH) is released and if the egg is fertilized, it becomes implanted in the womb. If it is not fertilized, it slowly stops producing hormones. This breaks down the lining of the uterus, prompting your next period/cycle to occur.
- 3. Menstruation.** If no implantation occurred, your period will begin. The uterine lining and unfertilized egg will be shed. Your period can last anywhere from 3-10 days or longer.
- 4. Fertile periods.** The most fertile days or days when there is possibility of conception are the several days prior to ovulation, the day of ovulation and the day after. Identifying these fertile times by understanding your cycle opens the window of opportunity if you are trying to conceive.
- 5. Temperature changes.** During the ovulation cycles, a woman's temperature changes. During the first part of the cycle the temperature is low. When ovulation begins, temperature rises and remains higher until the beginning of the next cycle. Some women monitor their ovulation cycles by taking their temperatures first thing in the morning every day and tracking the changes.
- 6. Resources.** [Taking Charge of Your Fertility](#) by Toni Weschler, MPH, is a popular book describing the ovulation cycle and fertility signs. There are also online resources such as [www.ovulation-calculator.com](#) to help you better understand the ovulation cycle.