

Pregnancy Planning

# Understanding Your Menstrual Cycle



CITY FERTILITY CENTRE

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# Understanding Your Menstrual Cycle

Females are born with approximately 2 million immature eggs in their ovaries. By the time they reach their first menstrual cycle they have around 400,000 left.

Each monthly menstrual cycle, between 20-30 eggs are selected to become a possible candidate for release. Usually, only one egg is released per cycle.

The average menstrual cycle length is somewhere between 28–32 days and begins day 1 of the “period” or the day you begin to bleed. Cycle lengths may vary shorter or longer than this but this is the average. The “period” usually lasts between 3–7 days. Period pain usually occurs in the first few days as hormones are causing the womb (uterus) to actively shed the lining called the endometrium.

Assuming the woman has a 28-day cycle, her time of ovulation will be around day 14 of her cycle. Ovulation is the release of an egg from the ovary and is the fertile time of a woman’s menstrual cycle.

If your period is regular and the length is the same every month, then you can calculate ovulation by counting back 14 days from the end of the cycle. So if your cycle is 32-days long then ovulation will occur around day 18, or if your cycle is 28 days long then ovulation will occur around day 14.

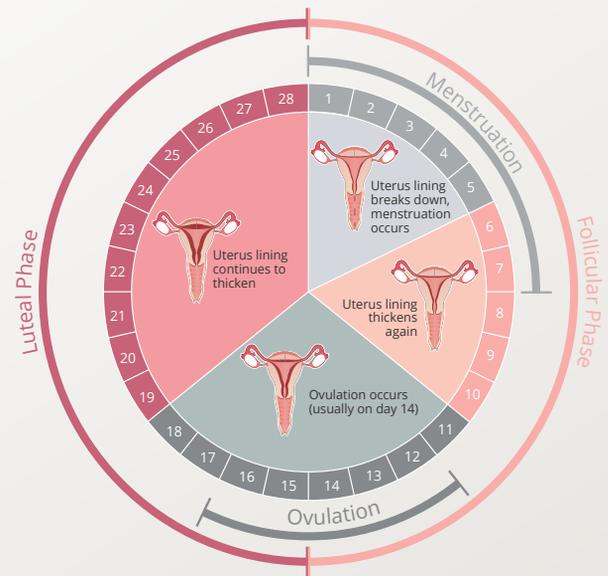
If your cycle is irregular and changes length each month it is much harder to calculate ovulation.

You may notice some changes during ovulation. The cervical mucus will change from being sparse, cloudy and dense to thin, clear and slippery. It is often described as having the appearance of raw egg white. This mucus is sperm friendly and allows the sperm to swim freely and last in this environment. Some women may also experience slight pain during ovulation and may also notice some abdominal bloating. They may also experience breast tenderness. However, some women may not notice any of the above.

Meanwhile, the lining of the uterus is prepared to receive a possible fertilised egg.

Once the egg has been released it can survive for up to 24 hours. The sperm, however, can survive from 3–5 days.

## Menstrual Cycle Diagram



## Optimising Conception

To optimise your chance of becoming pregnant, it is recommended you have unprotected intercourse every 2-days throughout the fertile period. So a woman who has a 28-day cycle and ovulates on day 14 should have intercourse on days 9, 11, 13 and 14 etc. to increase her chances of conception. Fresh sperm is needed in the tubes to meet the egg, so regular intercourse prior to and during ovulation is recommended.

Home ovulation kits are good predictors of ovulation and are available in pharmacies and large supermarkets. They can help to accurately determine the time a woman is most likely to become pregnant. They are a simple urine test and they detect the amount of LH or Luteinising Hormone present, which is needed for the release of an egg. This will peak in the urine 24-36 hours prior to the egg being released.

With each menstrual cycle a normal, healthy, fertile couple has about a 20% chance of falling pregnant. On average 60% fall pregnant after 6 months of trying to conceive and 80% within 12 months.

## When Should I Seek Advice?

### If you are a woman under 35 years of age...

We recommend that you start to investigate your cause of infertility by making an appointment with one of our specialists after 12 months of regular unprotected intercourse.

### If you are a woman aged between 35-40 years...

It is recommended that you investigate the cause of infertility after six months of regular unprotected intercourse.

### If you are a woman aged 40 and over...

It would be recommended that further investigations are commenced after three months of trying to get pregnant; as female age is one of the most important predictors of whether pregnancy will be achieved.

### Single women or same-sex couples...

Women or men who know they need or may require donor sperm, eggs or a surrogate should contact a fertility specialist once they are ready to start a family.

### Women who want to preserve their fertility...

The ideal age for a woman to consider egg freezing is under the age of 35 years; as this is when the eggs are the healthiest.

## Where to now?

Get a referral from your GP, to one of our accredited specialists to book a fertility health check.

## Contact Us

**Call** 1300 354 354

**Email** [contactus@cityfertility.com.au](mailto:contactus@cityfertility.com.au)

**Visit** [cityfertility.com.au](http://cityfertility.com.au)

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