

Myths & Facts About Menstruation and Fertility

Fertility awareness is of great benefit to women in achieving or preventing pregnancy as well as monitoring reproductive and overall health. Unfortunately, myths about the menstrual cycle and the negative legacy of the obsolete and ineffective “calendar rhythm method” of birth control have created a tremendous amount of misunderstanding about fertility awareness.

Justisse Healthworks *for Women* is committed to providing clear, scientifically sound information and education to help women effectively monitor their individual menstrual cycles and respond to them in an effective, natural and healthy way.

FACTS

Fertility Has Highly Reliable Visible Signs

Hormonal changes that occur throughout the menstrual cycle create observable outward signs of fertility. These signs – *obvious cervical mucus discharge* during times of fertility, changes in the *Basal Body Temperature* curves and *changes in the cervix, itself* – provide highly reliable evidence of an individual woman’s fertile and infertile times.

A normal menstrual cycle can range from as few as 25 to as many as 36 days. The number of days is not predictable. What are predictable are the consistent events of a normal cycle: days of menstruation, ovulation day, and days following ovulation. Justisse CycleSense enables a woman to observe, chart and interpret these predictable events occurring within the span of her unique cycle.

Ovulation Occurs On Only One Day in Each Menstrual Cycle

Ovulation is an event that occurs on one day only in each menstrual cycle. Within that one-day period, the ovaries will release one egg (and occasionally two or three in the case of non-identical twins and triplets). Due to hormonal changes that occur after ovulation, other eggs cannot be released until after the next menstrual flow.

MYTHS

Ovulation Always Occurs on Day 14

The idea that ovulation occurs on day 14 of every woman’s cycle comes from scientific assumptions of the early 1900s. Based on animal studies, it was believed that women’s menstrual cycles are 28 days long and that a ovulation occurs 14 days before menstruation. For some women, this may be true. For many women this is simply not the case. The normal number of days following ovulation ranges from 9 to 17. This idea, now a myth, led to the obsolete, ineffective rhythm method.

Women are Infertile During Menstruation

The mistaken belief that ovulation occurs on day 14 has misled women to think that they cannot be fertile while menstruating. Though not common, it is possible for ovulation to occur as early as day five of a woman’s cycle. A woman can detect fertility by charting the appearance of cervical mucus – even during menstruation.

Ovulation Occurs With Sexual Arousal

The myth that ovulation in women occurs with sexual arousal began in the 1920s. Scientists discovered that rabbits ovulate when sexually aroused. The rumour spread that the same was true for women. This is an unfounded rumour indeed! If women were like rabbits, every act of intercourse would result in pregnancy.

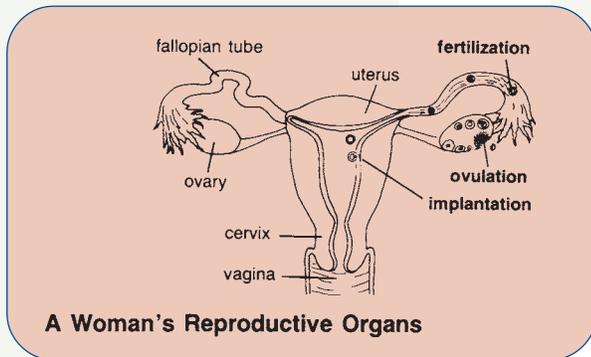


Justisse Healthworks
for Women

Attending women -- body and soul -- from first menstruation to beyond menopause

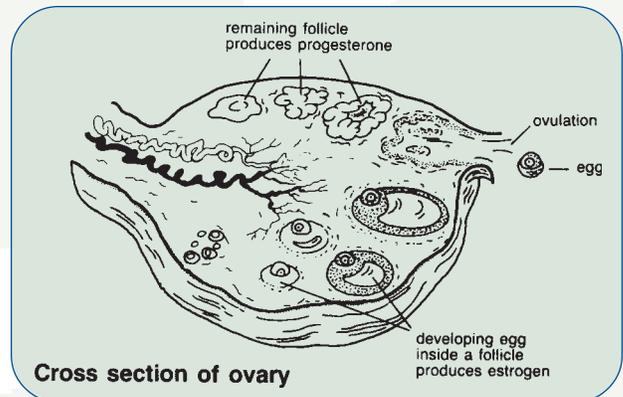
Understanding Your Menstrual Cycle

Fertility awareness enables you to understand the hormonal changes that occur throughout your menstrual cycle and how these changes create outward signs of fertility. The following sections will discuss in more detail the outward signs of fertility and the internal events that cause them.



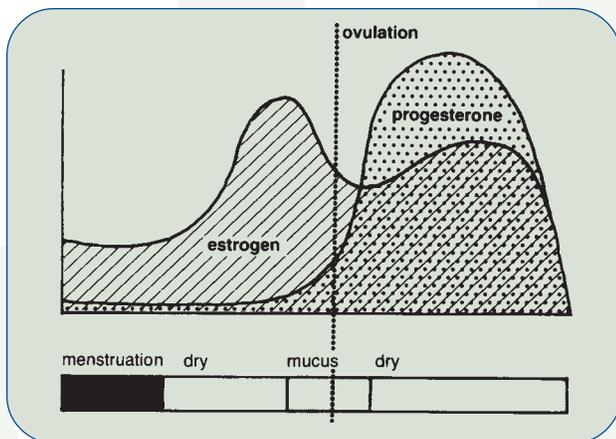
Ovarian Cycle

The picture below shows how hormonal changes unfold inside the ovary. This is called the ovarian cycle. A follicle develops around a maturing egg and produces estrogen. Once mature, the egg bursts out of the ovary. The follicle remains behind and produces progesterone for about 14 days. After this time, menstruation occurs. Then a new cycle begins.



Hormonal Changes

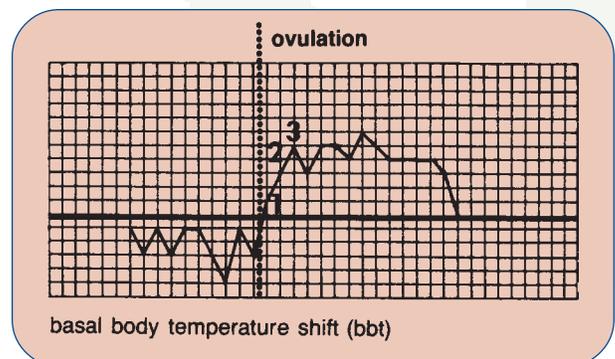
The hormones estrogen and progesterone are the main players of the menstrual cycle. The illustration below demonstrates how these hormones work. The first day of the cycle begins with menstruation. The ovaries begin to produce estrogen.



When estrogen levels reach their peak, ovulation is triggered. After ovulation occurs, progesterone is produced. Over a number of days, progesterone will rise to its peak. The levels of progesterone fall abruptly before menstruation. A new cycle then begins.

Basal Body Temperature Curves

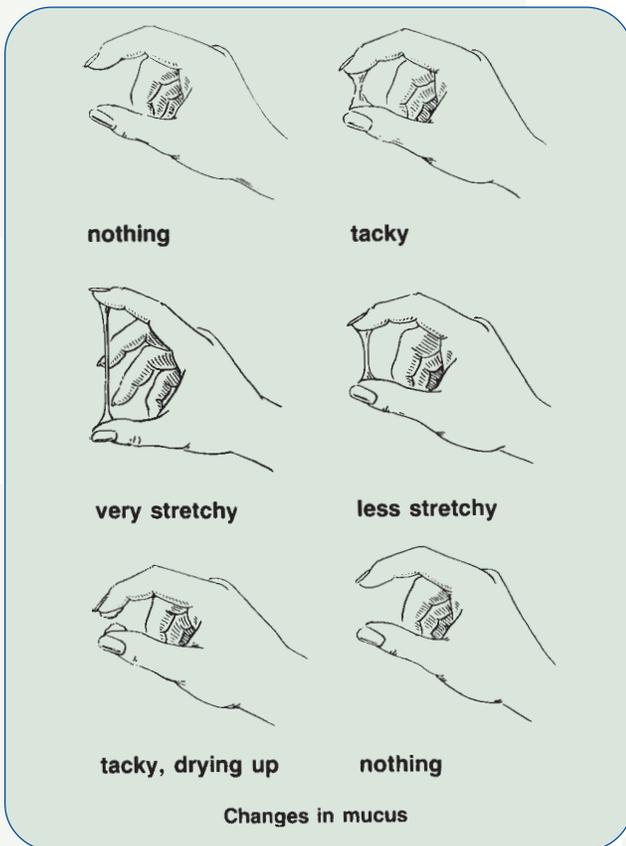
Basal body temperature (BBT) is a measure of the body temperature at rest. A Woman's resting body temperature measures higher after ovulation has occurred. This is caused by the high levels of progesterone in the body following ovulation. If a woman were to take her BBT each morning over the length of one menstrual cycle, and plot it on a BBT graph, she would be able to see the obvious temperature shift from low-ranging pre-ovulatory temperatures to high-ranging post-ovulatory temperatures. Once she sees the shift, she knows that ovulation has passed.



Cervical Mucus

As levels of estrogen rise, the cervix is stimulated to produce cervical mucus. This mucus occurs prior to ovulation. Its dual purpose is to help sperm survive and travel to the fallopian tubes where fertilization takes place. After ovulation has passed, progesterone causes the cervix to stop producing mucus. The woman will not experience mucus until the next cycle.

The presence of mucus is a sign of fertility. Cervical mucus can be easily found at the vulva. When the mucus first appears, it has a smooth, creamy consistency and is white in colour. Over a number of days, it gradually progresses to a slippery, thready consistency, with a clear or cloudy/clear colour. Once ovulation has passed, the mucus disappears. Mucus usually lasts 4 to 6 days.

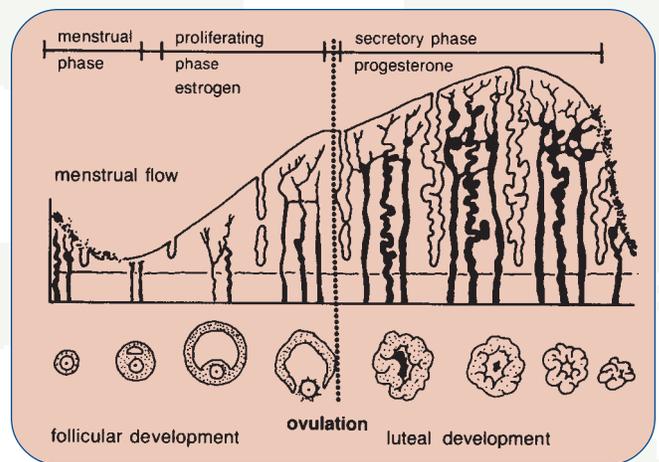


Benefit from Charting Support

You can enhance your ability to observe, chart and interpret your menstrual cycle events by working with an Holistic Reproductive Health Practitioner and/or in a charting group with other women. Justisse Healthworks *for women* offers the information, support and non-judgmental counselling you need to manage your own holistic reproductive health. Call 420.0877 or 1.866.587-8477 (Justisse) today to set up your personal consultation.

Changes in the Lining of the Uterus

The uterus has a special lining called the endometrium. The endometrium grows and changes throughout the menstrual cycle in response to estrogen and progesterone. Menstruation is the phase of the cycle during which the endometrium breaks down and is shed. After menstruation, rising levels of estrogen cause the endometrium to be restored. After ovulation, progesterone causes the endometrium to undergo further changes that prepares it in case a pregnancy should occur. If a pregnancy does not occur, the endometrium sheds off as menstrual flow.



Changes in the Cervix

It is possible for a woman to examine her cervix for signs of fertility throughout her menstrual cycle. When she is fertile, her cervix feels soft and open. In contrast, when she is infertile, her cervix is hard and closed. The cervix becomes softer and more open as estrogen levels rise and ovulation approaches. The cervix is hard and closed when estrogen levels are low, and after ovulation has passed. These changes can be reliable indicators of fertility.



**Around Every Wise Woman
are Many Other
Wise Women**

For education and support in charting your menstrual cycle, consult Justisse Healthworks for Women.

Monitoring your reproductive system in this way enables you to practice highly effective birth control or enhance your potential for fertility. Your growing awareness will also help you, throughout your life, to achieve optimum reproductive and overall health.

Visit us online at www.justisse.ca or call today to set up your personal consultation 780. 420.0877 or 1.866.Justisse (587-8477)



**Justisse
Healthworks
for Women**

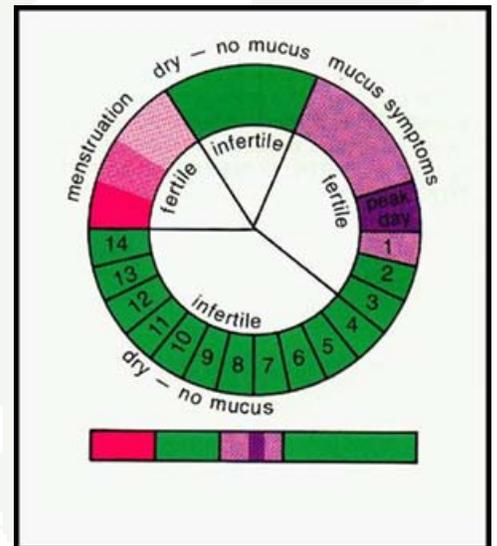
Attending Women -- *body and soul* -- from first menstruation to beyond menopause

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**World Health
Organization
Endorses Natural
Birth Control**

According to the World Health Organization, 93% of women everywhere can identify the symptoms which distinguish adequately between the fertile and the infertile phases of the [menstrual] cycle...[Using fertility awareness for reproductive planning] is inexpensive, highly effective, without side effects and may be particularly acceptable to and efficacious among [certain] people.

- British Medical Journal. Vol. 307, 18 September 1993.



Ever since I started using the Justisse method, I've felt freer and healthier. It works well for me and I was amazed at how simple it really is to use and understand. I feel like I finally have control over my body.

Janice Mintz