

Fertility Awareness Methods Used to Improve your Chances of achieving a Pregnancy



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What are the Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM)?

FAM observes and tracks primary fertility signs in order to identify your fertile and infertile times. These methods are used to help achieve or avoid pregnancies as well as to have greater understanding of our bodies and menstrual cycles.

In order to increase your chances of conceiving you must learn identify your fertile times, which is just before and during ovulation, and then have intercourse.

Have intercourse on each day fertile fluid is observed and most definitely on the peak day of egg white cervical fluid or lubricative vaginal sensations.

For those who track cervical positioning, have intercourse on the day your cervix is the highest, softest and most open.

If the man's sperm count is normal, have sex each day there is fertile cervical fluid. If the man's sperm count is low then have intercourse every second day there is fertile fluid.

Continue having intercourse on the peak day of fertile fluid through to the morning of the day of the temperature rise.

The most effective ways of learning to identify when you are going to ovulate is tracking cervical and fertile fluids, cervical positioning (which not many women choose to do but it can be helpful if there are irregular cycles or a lack of certainty around ovulation) and the other confirming signs listed below

Basal body temperatures will not tell you when you are going to ovulate. They are a confirming fertility sign, letting you know that you did just ovulate. Temperature tracking is also helping in understanding the length of the two phases in your cycle and the health of the hormonal levels as reflected in the temperature patterns.

Please see my article *Yin Yang and your Fertility Signs* on my website to learn more about using this information to understand your body better.

The three main fertility signs to track are:

1. Cervical fluid (CF)

- Provides nourishment for the sperm to live up to 5 days
- Filters out abnormal sperm
- Carries sperm through the uterus and fallopian tubes to allow for conception

- Checking 2 times per day to establish quality of CF by wiping with fingers or tissue and observing quality and changes
- Fertile cervical fluid is wet, slippery and clear often with an egg white quality

- Generally there will be 3-4 dry days post menstruation
- Cervical fluids will then begin to increase becoming tacky and then slipperier, wetter and clear until the peak day which is when ovulation is imminent
- As soon as you notice a change in cervical fluid and it becomes, wetter or more slippery it has become fertile fluid and your fertile phase is beginning

- Factors that can affect cervical fluid are intercourse, BCP, clomiphene citrate (clomid), vaginal infections, anti histamines, cough syrups, swimming in a chlorinated pool

2. Basal body temperature

- The temperature taken upon first waking in the morning
- Taken daily at almost the same time each day after 3 hours at least of not moving, talking, eating or drinking
- Basal body thermometer is different from a fever thermometer in that it only measures up to 38 degrees and measures temperatures by one tenth of a degree picking up on minute changes occurring in the body

- Fevers and illness, alcohol, heating blankets, travel, restless sleep, sleeping close to a child or adult, or waking earlier or later than usual can all affect the temperatures and should be noted
- During the follicular / estrogenic phase temperatures will be between 96.5 – 97.5 or 36.0 – 36.3
- During the luteal or progesterational phase temps will be between 97.6-98.6 or 36.4-36.7
- Ovulation will cause a ½ to 1 degree F or ¼ to ½ degree C rise in temp
- Basal body temperatures are not used to tell you when you are going to ovulate, but when you have just ovulated

3. cervical positioning

- cervix will soften and rise under the influence of estrogen which is indicating ovulation will be occurring soon
- when you are not fertile the cervix will lower, harden and the os will tighten. This will be evident from just after ovulation all the way until approximately day 5 of your next cycle and then changes will begin to manifest again.
- changes in the cervix is used to collaborate other fertility signs
- these changes are especially helpful when breastfeeding, coming off of the pill or are in the peri menopausal years

Other Fertility Signs Helping us to identify when ovulation is occurring

- mid cycle spotting
- breast or nipple changes
- mittelschmerz, pain
- increased sexual feelings or changes in vaginal sensations

Key Points in using these methods to achieve pregnancies

- Goal is to determine when your fertile days, which is the 5 days before ovulation until 2 days after.
- The first sign of mucus in the pre ovulatory phase will be a moist or sticky discharge with white or yellow color – it will separate easily, and at this time your fertile potential begins to increase
- This CF will slowly increase over the next couple of days becoming increasingly slippery and wet
- Peak Day: egg white quality cervical fluid, stretchy, slippery, wet, lubricative, clear, shiny – have intercourse on this day
- You will then ovulate and one day later your temperature will rise

- The cover line, which determines the if the temperatures are in fact showing two distinct phases, is drawn at one tenth of a degree higher than the highest of the 6 low temps right before the temperature rise.

Things to know

- Egg can live 12-24 hours after ovulation (48 is 2 are ovulated)
- Sperm can live 5 days in the vagina after ejaculation

- The most fertile days for a woman are 3 days before and after ovulation (1/3 of your cycle). Ovulation usually occurs between day 11 to 16 depending on your cycle length

- The more you know about your cycle, the better. The more regular you are, the easier.

- The average cycle is between 25 and 35 days

- Day 1 of your cycle is the first day of bleeding (starting before noon)
- Menstruation occurs 12-14 days after ovulation. This means that a delayed cycle is actually due to a delay in ovulation. The arrival of your period can be predicted by the time of ovulation

- 18 days of high temperatures means pregnancy has been achieved

- Basal temperatures can be used through out the first trimester to track hormone level