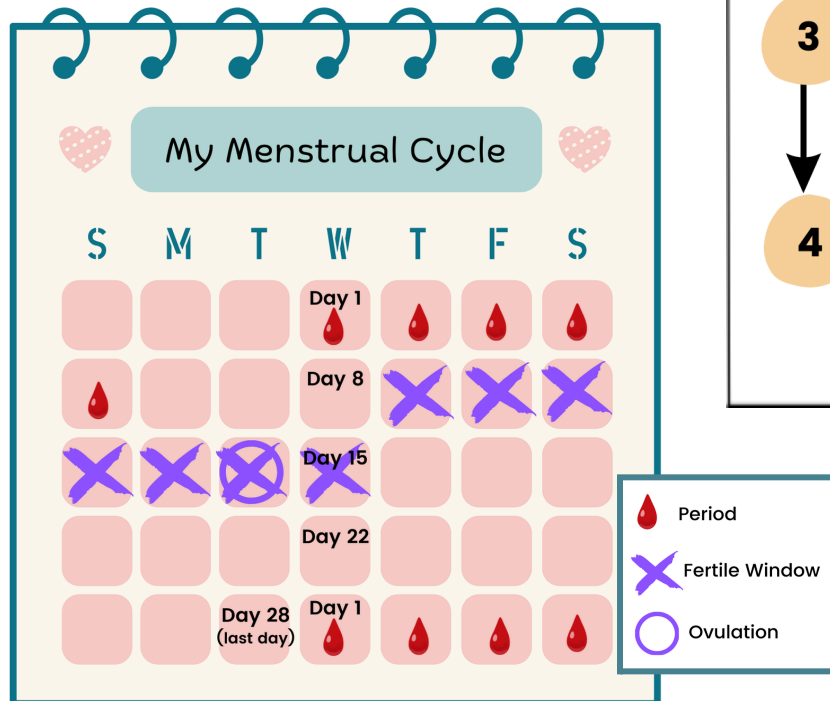
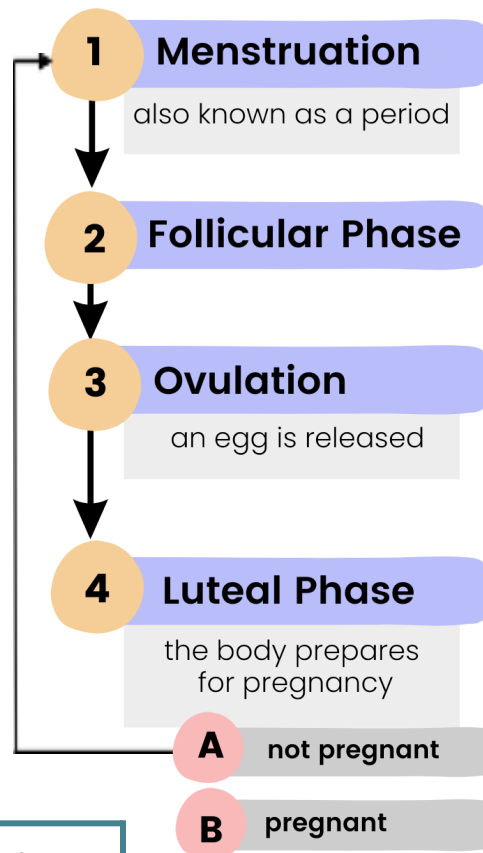


Fertility Awareness 101

The Menstrual Cycle is the series of changes in the reproductive system that make pregnancy possible. Tracking your cycle allows you to understand it and use it to prevent pregnancy (or to help you get pregnant). The average cycle lasts *roughly 28 days*, but can be shorter or longer.



If your cycle is not regular, meaning the number of days between your periods differs from month to month, fertility awareness will not be reliable for you. If you want to avoid pregnancy, consider another method. If you are unsure if your cycles are regular, you can track your period using the calendar app on your phone, a cycle-tracking app (*Natural Cycles* is highly effective), or by using a paper calendar!



Phases of the Menstrual Cycle

Menstruation is the time when the lining of the uterus sheds, causing blood and other tissue to leave the body through the vagina. **The first day of your period is considered Day 1 of your cycle.**

The Follicular Phase is the time between the first day of menstruation until ovulation. During this time, your ovaries produce a mature egg.

Ovulation occurs when an egg cell is released from an ovary and moves through the reproductive system. Typically this occurs between Days 12 -15 of the menstrual cycle. The time surrounding ovulation when pregnancy is possible is called the **Fertile Window**.

The Luteal Phase is the time when the lining of the uterus thickens and prepares for a pregnancy. During If a sperm cell combines with an egg cell, the egg is fertilized. Pregnancy occurs when a fertilized egg implants in the uterus.

If a fertilized egg **does NOT implant** in the uterus, the uterus sheds its lining, starting the cycle over

If a fertilized egg **implants** into the uterus, a hormone is produced that maintains the uterine lining, allowing the pregnancy to grow.

The **Fertile Window** is the period of time surrounding ovulation when pregnancy is possible. This period of time begins 5 days before ovulation and lasts for one day after.

- The fertile window is long because ovulation can vary and because sperm can survive in the body for up to 5 days after ejaculation.
 - You can **prevent pregnancy** by not having sex during your fertile window. If you have sex during the fertile window, make sure to use a condom.
 - For an average menstrual cycle (between 26 and 32 days long), Day 8 - Day 19 is your fertile window.
 - To increase your chances of getting pregnant, do the opposite!

Remember: No birth control method is 100% effective. Condoms are the only method that prevents sexually transmitted infections. ★