

# GRACE HOPPER CELEBRATION



/ ANITA  
B.ORG



“Engineers Talk Periods: Launching Female Health Tracking at Fitbit”

The taboo around menstrual cycles is changing, but what's an engineer to do?  
Build period tracking into a mainstream health and fitness app!



# about me

Jennifer Mellor  
Software Engineering Manager at Fitbit  
San Francisco, CA



#GHC19

# also me

“These FemTech thinkers are helping women take control of their sexual and reproductive health, one period at a time.” – *Women’s Health* magazine

The collage includes:

- A large cover of *Women's Health* magazine with the headline "GET UP & GO!" and the tagline "Tons of Tips to #OwnYourMorning". It features a woman in a grey sweatshirt and blue jeans.
- A graphic with the text "Change THE GAME" in colorful, stylized letters.
- A small inset photo showing two women, Belén Lafon and Jennifer Mellor, standing next to a stationary bike. A circular graphic next to them states: "4.5 MILLION This many Fitbit users have added the period-tracking feature since it was released. And to date, more than 8 million periods have been logged."
- A small photo of a woman sitting on a white stool.
- A small photo of a woman sitting on a white stool.
- A large graphic with the number "4" and the text "Belen Lafon and Jennifer Mellor These FemTech thinkers are helping women take control of their sexual and reproductive health, one period at a time."
- Text from the article:

Mellor (right), a Fitbit engineering manager, first thought about tracking her period using the ancient technologies known as pen and paper. Her colleague Lafon, a senior research algorithm scientist, didn't spend much time convincing execs that the feature deserved the green light. Once the project ramped up, Mellor led the engineering team in charge of coding and building the product. "Information really is power," Mellor says. The truth is, it hasn't always been information in the right way. This doesn't always happen because a lot of tech is developed by men. "One way we can help women connect with products is by showing them more things built by



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# also me

"She is... a dancer who knows how to choreograph to women's femininity and strength. Like all good muses, Ms. Mellor inspires and can make us think of things in ways we have not done so before."

*– Bay Area Dance Watch*



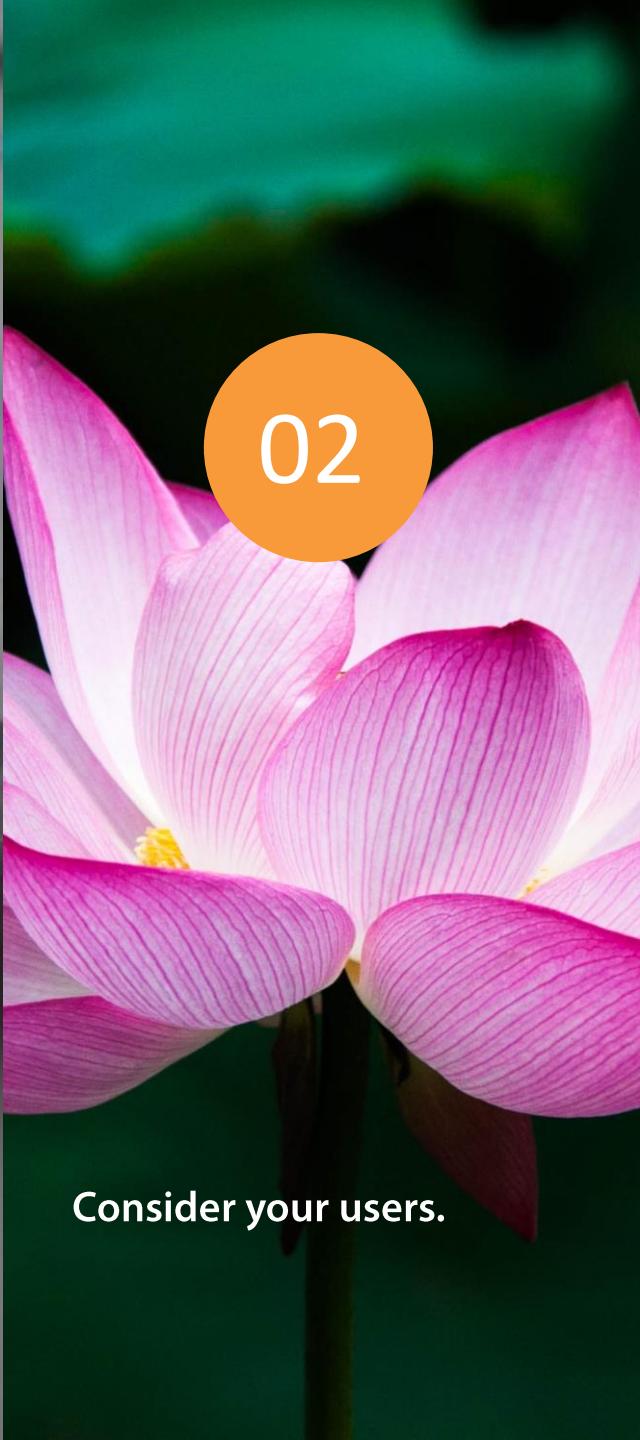
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Women are underrepresented in and by technology. How do we change it?

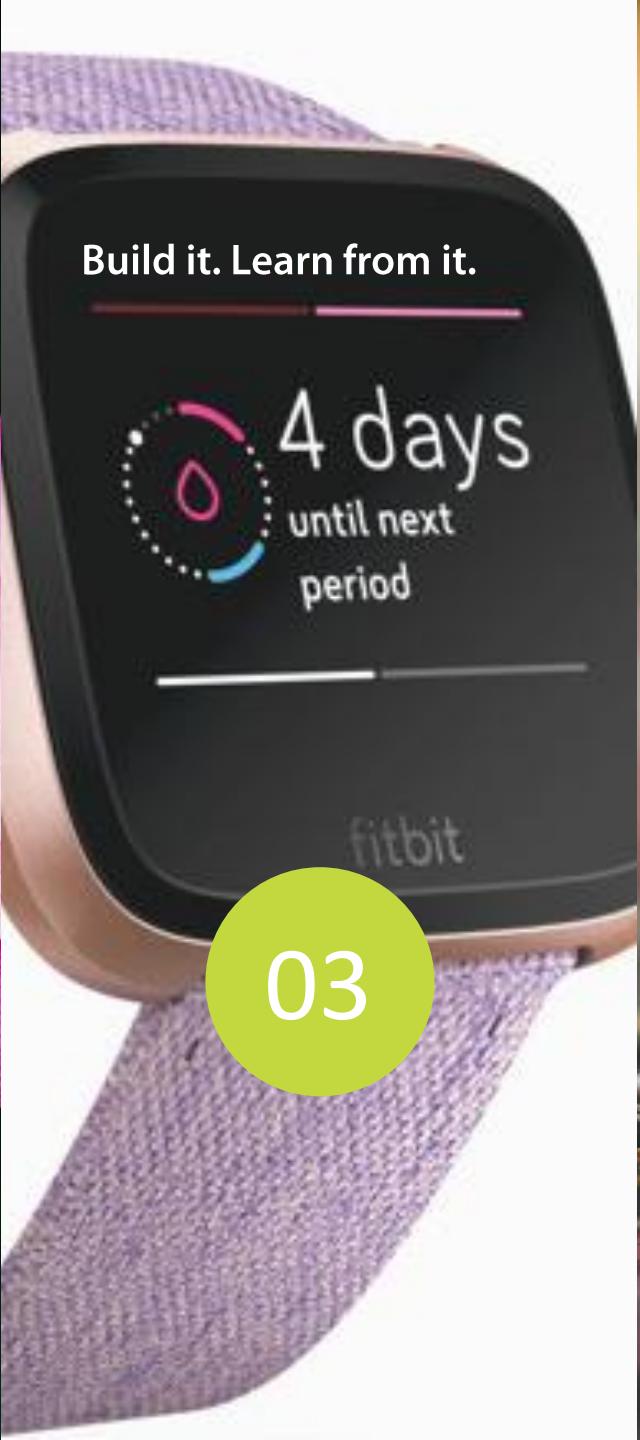
01

Consider your users.



02

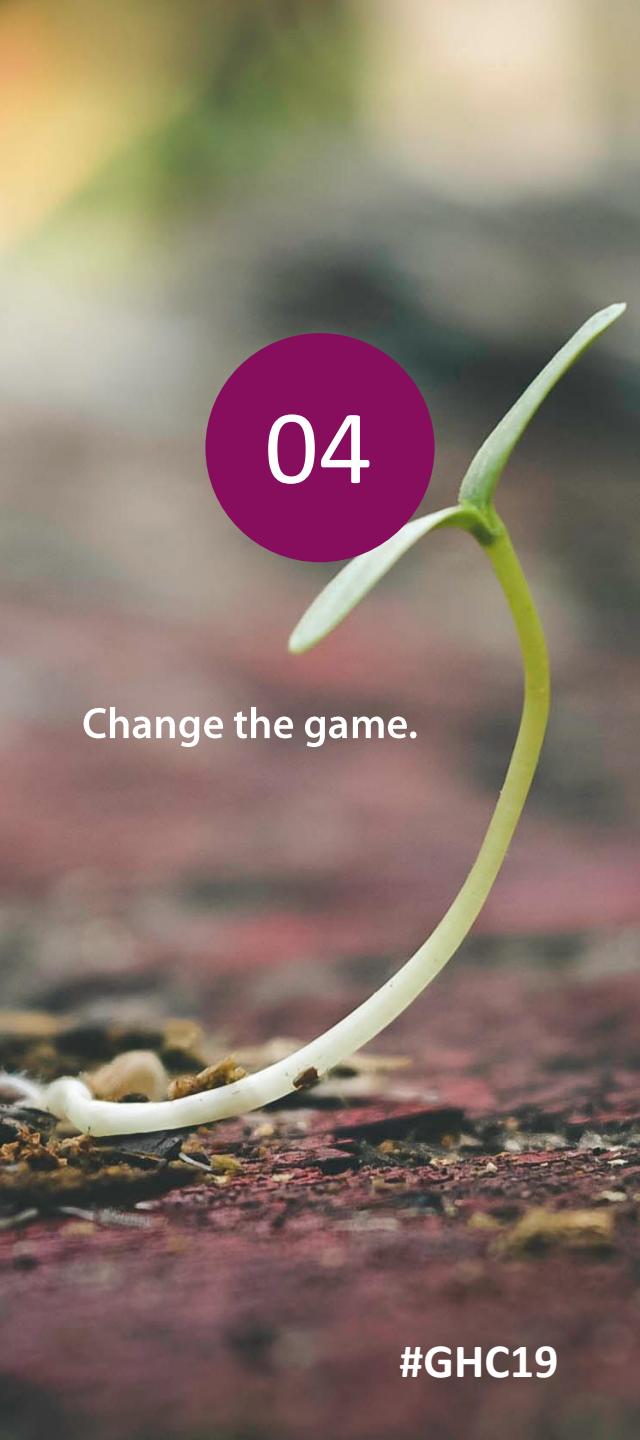
Consider your users.



Build it. Learn from it.

4 days  
until next  
period

03



Change the game.

04

#GHC19



**Women are  
underrepresented  
*in and by*  
technology.**

01

#GHC19

# There's a gender gap in clinical health research.



*"For decades, a lot of clinical research was done solely or largely on men and the results were extrapolated to women. It's really only since the early nineties that the research community has begun to recognize the importance of including women and paying attention to the possibility that there may be sex/gender differences."*

*- The Surprising Reason We Lack So Much Knowledge About Women's Health, Forbes.com*



# Women and girls are *dying* because of their *periods*.

*"A 21-year-old woman has become the fourth person known to have died this year as a result of the illegal practice of chhaupadi, whereby menstruating women in Nepal are banished from their homes and forced to sleep in huts."* – [\*The Guardian\*](#)

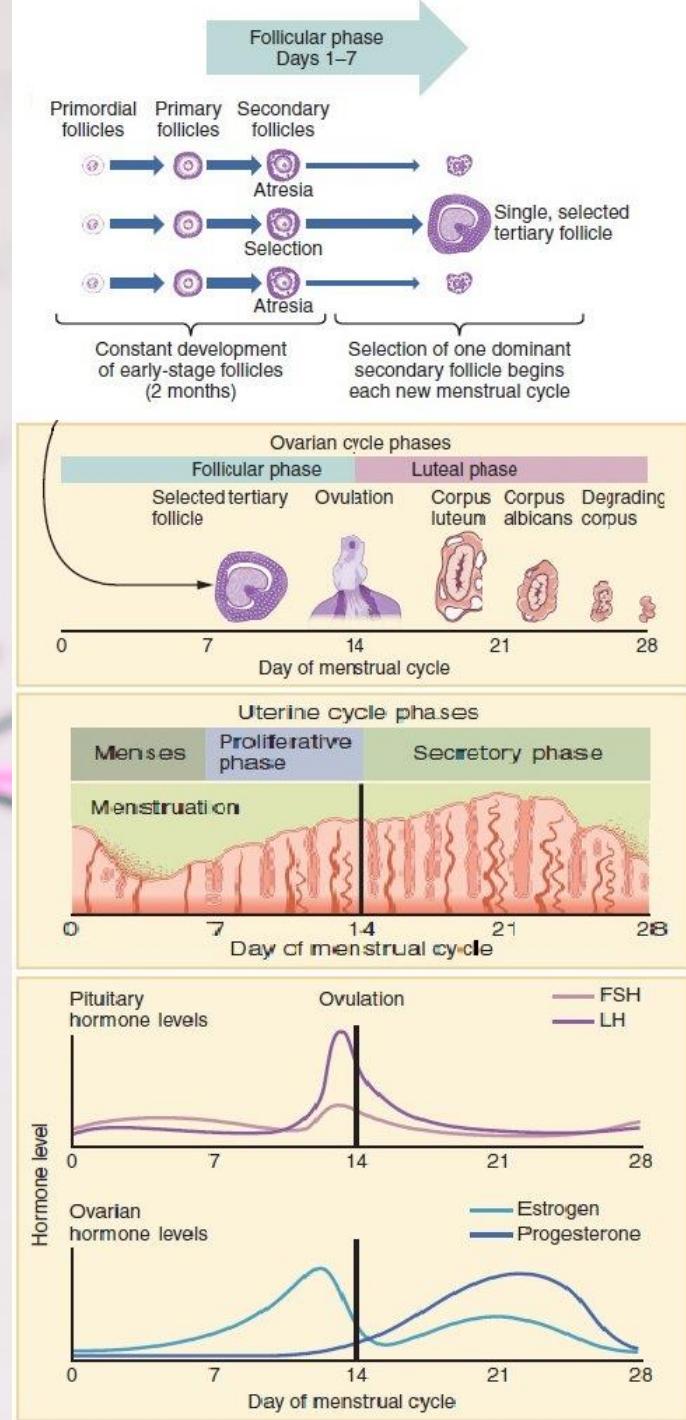
# Consider your users.

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02

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# It's a period tracker. What could be so hard?

Human biology, as it turns out.

Also, the myriad of reasons anyone with a menstrual cycle might want to track it.



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A photograph of a person's hand holding a black smartphone. The screen of the phone displays a colorful menstrual cycle tracking application with various colored bars and text. The person is wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and a red digital wristband. In the background, there is a white shelf with a small yellow decorative object and some books. A dark-colored lamp is visible on the right side.

We focused on  
women wanting  
to understand  
their cycle and  
be prepared.

**Everyone on the project learned something about ourselves (or the other women in our lives).**



**Build it.  
Learn from  
it.**

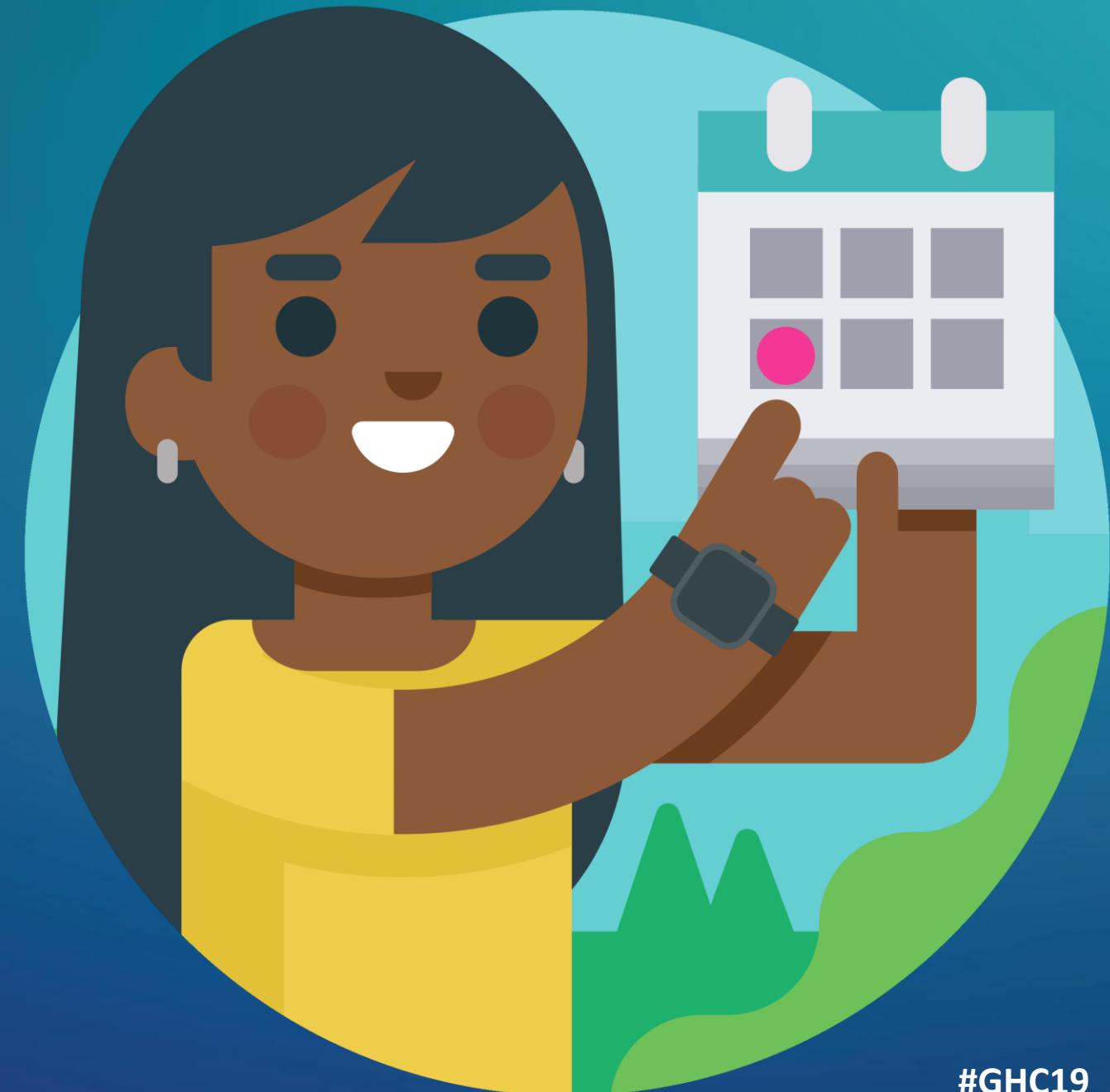
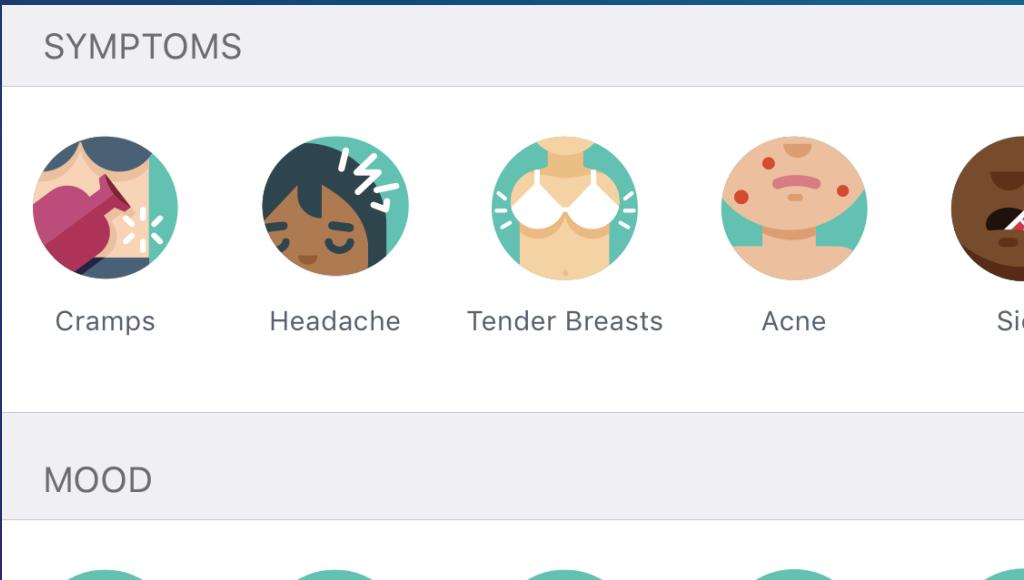
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03



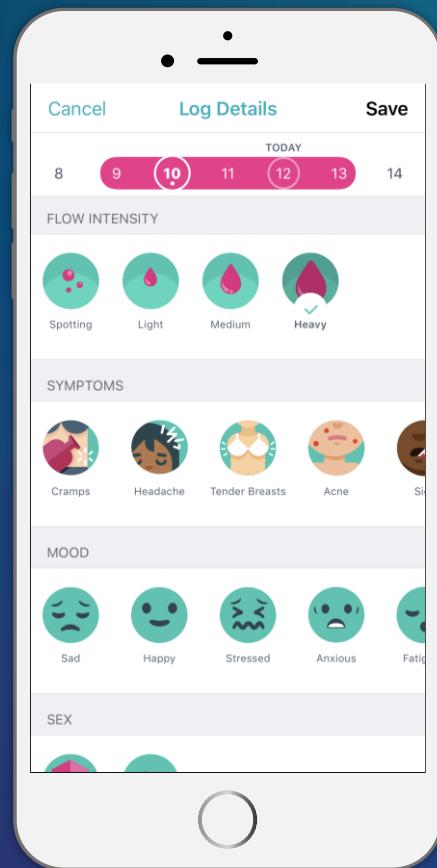
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# So we built a feature to track your period and symptoms!



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# At first, we thought we'd infer periods from flow intensity.



What if there's a gap in the data? Do we glue periods together?

Not everyone wants to log that much detail every day.

Women know best which bleeding is their period versus spotting.

# We decided to let women log their periods explicitly.

< Back      Calendar      Trends      ?      ⚙

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						TODAY
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21

**Editing a period**

Fine tuning your periods will help improve the accuracy of predictions and trends. To edit, drag the bar to adjust your duration, then press Save.

**Save**      **Cancel**      **Delete**

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Calendar

Trends

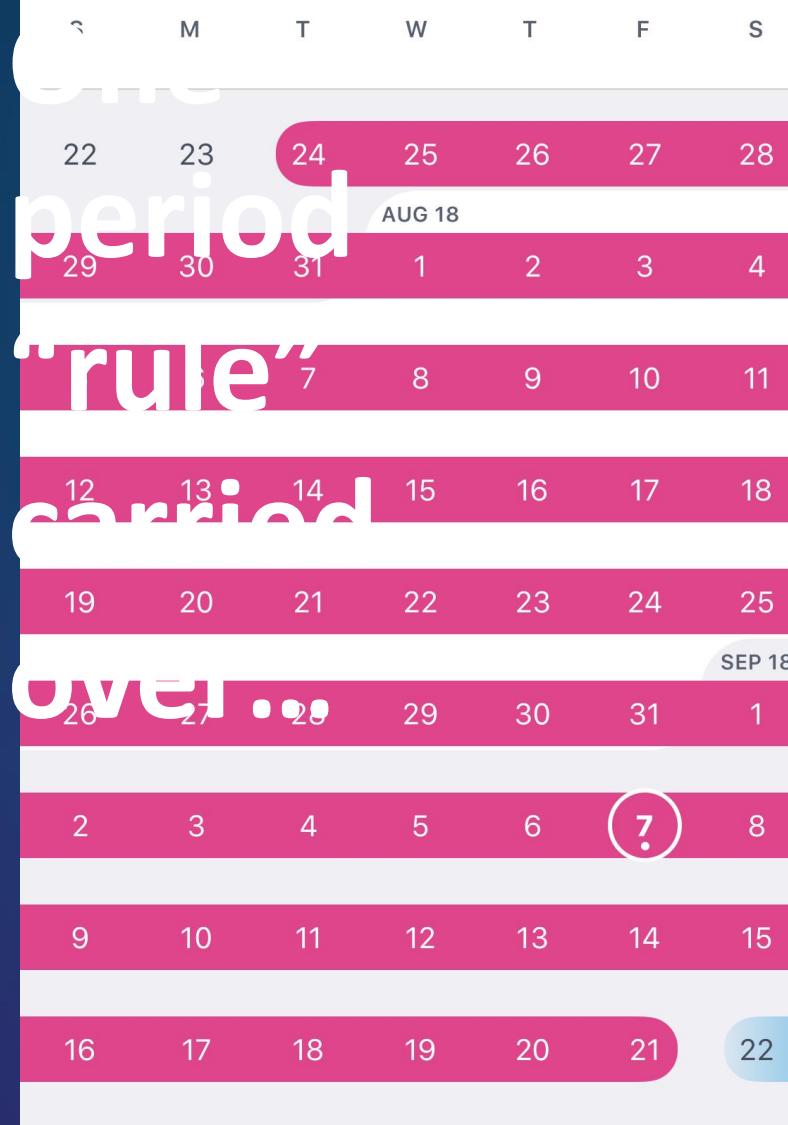
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Calendar

Trends



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Sep 7, 2018



Cycle day 46 of 79



&gt;

**41 days**  
Average Period Length

**86th day**  
Average Estimated Ovulation

### Your cycles

Jan 10 – Aug 24

Period: 56 days | Ovulation: 214th day | Cycle Length: 227 days



2018

Nov 29 – Jan 9

Period: 9 days | Ovulation: 29th day | Cycle Length: 42 days



Oct 11 – Nov 28

Period: 37 days | Ovulation: 36th day | Cycle Length: 49 days



Jul 24 – Oct 10

Period: 60 days | Ovulation: 66th day | Cycle Length: 79 days



g in all my data from previous cycles and it wont let  
? What about women who have an abnormal period  
. Who agrees?

So we fixed  
it (based on  
user  
feedback).

problem is that when periods are irregular and trying to track  
0 days with bleeding!) sometimes it's 90 days  
decide how to treat what's going on. The new feature  
overridden?)



6 Votes

Reply

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# Part of being

## PREDICTIONS

Show period predictions



Show predicted fertility



SEEMS SIMPLE, RIGHT?

- My partner and I are infertile. Seeing my fertile window is heartbreaking.



**Find your  
opportunity.  
Keep at it.**

04



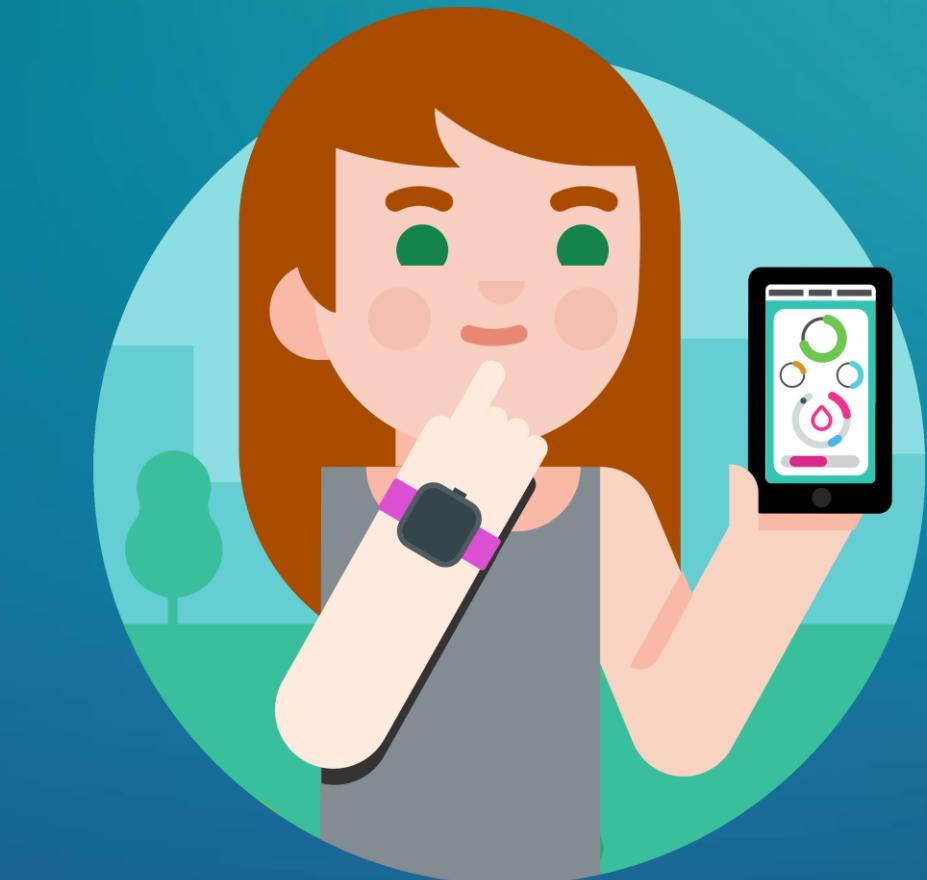
**Change the  
game.**

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Please remember to  
complete the session  
survey in the mobile  
app.

THANK YOU  
YOU CAN FOLLOW ME @  
jennifermellor



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