

YOUR MENSTRUAL CYCLE

Understand your hormones!

LUTEAL PHASE

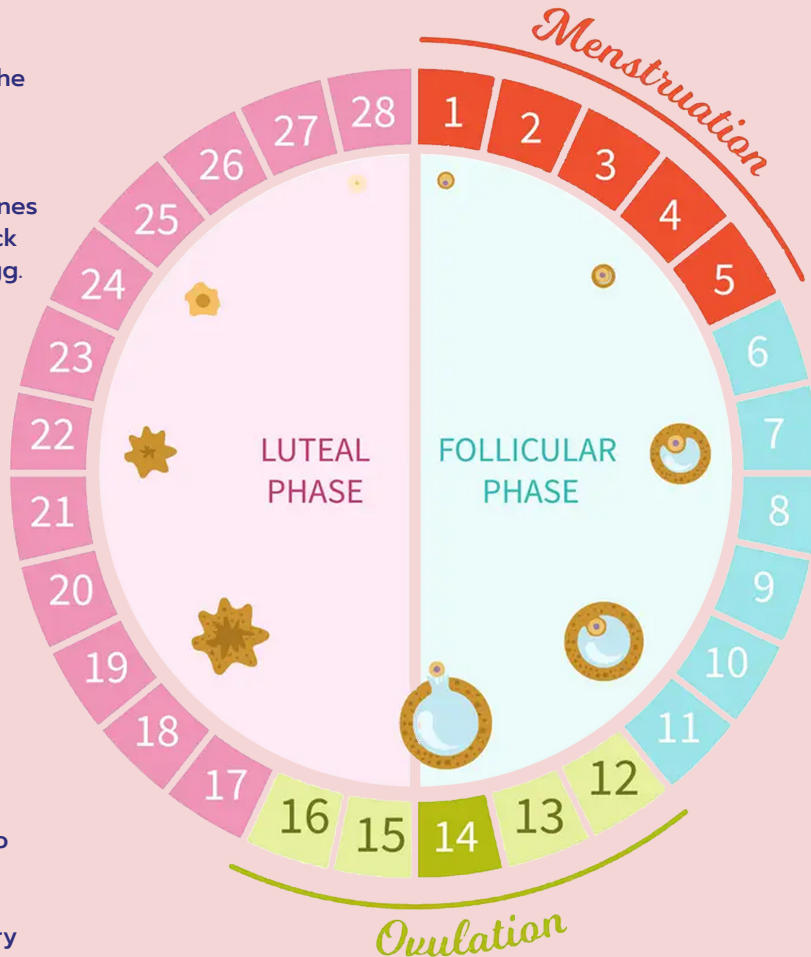
The mature egg turns into the corpus luteum. This releases several hormones, mainly progesterone and some estrogen. This rise in hormones keep your uterine lining thick and ready for a fertilized egg.

If you get pregnant, you will produce a certain hormone called hCG. If you are not pregnant, the corpus luteum will shrink away and be reabsorbed - leading to decreased levels of estrogen and progesterone, which causes the onset of another period.

OVULATION PHASE

The rising estrogen levels during the follicular phase causes the pituitary gland to release luteinizing hormone (LH).

Ovulation is when your ovary releases a mature egg. The egg travels down the fallopian tube towards the uterus to be fertilized by sperm. This is the "fertile window". While ovulating you may have a higher body temperature and have thicker discharge.



MENSTRUAL PHASE

This is the first stage of your menstrual cycle. This phase begins when an egg from your previous cycle isn't fertilized (ie. not pregnant). Your estrogen and progesterone levels drop. The lining of the uterus sheds through what is known as your period. A menstrual phase is 3 to 7 days on average.

FOLLICULAR PHASE

This phase begins on the first day of your period and overlaps with the menstrual phase. Your hypothalamus sends a signal to your pituitary gland to release follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH). It is the phase that begins producing eggs, and out of many, one will mature. This maturing egg increases estrogen and thickens the lining of the uterus. The average follicular phase can range from 11 to 27 days.

HOME TIP

Using a mobile app can help you keep track of your cycle. Studies show that fertility awareness mobile applications can aid in both getting pregnant (Johnson et al, 2020) and avoiding pregnancy (Berglund Scherwitzl et al, 2016).**

OTHER THINGS TO REMEMBER

Everyone's menstrual cycle is different! There may also be other things that affect or alter your menstrual cycle:

- Birth control: It may make your periods shorter and lighter.
- Pregnancy: You will not have a period during pregnancy.
- Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS): Hormonal imbalance may prevent an egg from developing normally.
- Uterine fibroids: Noncancerous growths that make your periods longer or heavier.
- Eating disorders: Disrupt normal menstrual cycles.

CALL YOUR PHYSICIAN IF:

Here are a few signs of a problem with your menstrual cycle:

- You've skipped periods, or your periods have stopped entirely.
- Your periods are irregular.
- You bleed for more than seven days.
- Your periods are less than 21 days or more than 35 days apart.
- You bleed between periods (heavier than spotting).

If you have these or other problems, talk to your physician.

** Menstrual cycle or fertility awareness mobile applications should not be solely relied on as a means of contraception.

Berglund Scherwitzl, E., Gemzell Danielsson, K., Sellberg, J. A., & Scherwitzl, R. (2016). Fertility awareness-based mobile application for contraception. The European Journal of Contraception & Reproductive Health Care, 21(3), 234-241. <https://doi.org/10.3109/13625187.2016.1154143>

Johnson, S., Stanford, J. B., Warren, G., Bond, S., Bench-Capon, S., & Zinaman, M. J. (2020). Increased Likelihood of Pregnancy Using an App-Connected Ovulation Test System: A Randomized Controlled Trial. Journal of Women's Health, 29(1), 84-90. <https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.2019.7850>