

# Getting Pregnant

Getting pregnant seems pretty simple: egg meets sperm = baby, right? Yes, but coordinating that meeting can be a little tricky. Even though sperm is produced pretty much nonstop, an egg is only available to be fertilized for 24-48 hours of your entire cycle. The key to getting pregnant is figuring out when you are releasing an egg (ovulating) and therefore when you are actually fertile.

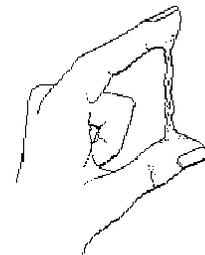
With careful attention, you can learn to notice your signs of ovulation which can help you identify the best timing for conception.<sup>1</sup> In general, the most likely times to get pregnant are the day before you ovulate and the day of ovulation.

Here are some ways you can figure out when you're ovulating:

**Timing** The average menstrual cycle lasts 28 days, with Day 1 as the first day of bleeding, and Day 28 as the last day before you start bleeding. Many women have cycles that are longer or shorter. Whether your menstrual cycle lasts 21 days, 28 days, or 42 days, you will ovulate 14-16 days before your period starts. Count backwards 14-16 days from when you expect your period to come: that's when you are likely to be ovulating.



**Cervical fluid** Women produce various types of cervical fluid in the course of the menstrual cycle, each with a different purpose. The type of fluid that corresponds with ovulation is clear, white, and stretches like egg whites when you get some between two fingers. This is specialized fluid that facilitates sperm movement, and most women notice it for the two or three days around ovulation. When you find this kind of cervical fluid, you can be pretty sure you are ovulating. You can check your cervical fluid by feeling with a clean finger just inside the opening of the vagina, or deeper inside the vagina closer to the cervix. It is a good idea to check your fluid each day so you can pinpoint the change to fertile fluid.



**Secondary fertility signs** Some women notice some, all, or none of the following signs at the time of ovulation: spotting; sharp pain or dull achiness in the ovaries; crampiness; increased sexual desire; breast tenderness or sensitivity; abdominal bloating; water retention; increased energy level; heightened sense of vision, taste or smell; changes in the position and feel of your cervix.

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<sup>1</sup> These signs can also be used to prevent pregnancy; however the use of fertility awareness for birth control is well beyond the scope of this handout. Please see the resources section for info about preventing pregnancy.

**Basal body temperature** This is your temperature taken immediately after sleeping for a minimum of three hours. When checked and recorded every day, you will notice a significant rise in the average waking temperature after you have ovulated. This can help you understand your own specific fertility pattern. A history of temperature charts can also be very useful in infertility evaluation.

**Ovulation Predictor Kits** Ovulation is caused by a surge of Luteinizing hormone (LH) 24-36 hours before ovulation. Testing your urine for the LH surge can help you pinpoint the time when you are about to ovulate. There are a variety of brands of these kits, most of which cost about \$50 per month. These kits are not foolproof, and are likely most accurate when used in combination with the other signs of fertility.

Getting pregnant is a process that can take many months and still be normal. In general, a good quality balanced diet, moderate exercise, avoiding alcohol, and folic acid supplementation with 0.4 mg per day to prevent neural tube defects is the key to success. You may also want to explore the variety of complementary therapies such as herbs or acupuncture that may be able to increase fertility. Consult your family doctor if you have not gotten pregnant after a year of regular unprotected intercourse.

**Resources:**

- [Taking Charge of Your Fertility](#) by Toni Weschler is the best book about using signs of fertility to prevent or achieve pregnancy.
- Serena BC is a nationwide nonprofit Catholic organization that teaches courses about fertility awareness. Their website is: [www.vcn.bc.ca/sereabc/](http://www.vcn.bc.ca/sereabc/)
- Fertility Friend [www.fertilityfriend.com/](http://www.fertilityfriend.com/) is free online fertility charting software. There are many websites such as this one; look around until you find one you like.
- [Our Bodies, Ourselves](#) by the Boston Women's Health Book Collective is a fabulous book about women's health, with lots of information about the menstrual cycle and fertility. Excerpts are available online at:
- And last but not least, for when you become pregnant: [www.midwiferygroup.ca](http://www.midwiferygroup.ca)

