



In the past, the emphasis of sex education in schools has been on how not to become pregnant. Now it's time to explain how to get pregnant.

Before trying for a baby, there are some things you can do to increase your chances of getting pregnant and having a healthy baby. This includes preconception care and knowing the best time of the menstrual cycle to try to get pregnant – the fertile window.

## Preconception care

Preconception care is the preparation a man and a woman should take before they start trying for a baby and it involves simple steps that have been shown to increase the chance of becoming pregnant and having a healthy pregnancy, birth and child.

Women need to get the necessary vaccines up to date, including German measles (Rubella), tetanus, and the flu and they should start taking folic acid at least one month before trying to get pregnant.

## Understanding your fertile window

The fertile window is the time of the month that a woman can get pregnant and it is the 5 days before the egg is released, which is called ovulation, and the day of ovulation. You can get pregnant 5 days before ovulation as sperm can stay alive for up to 5 days in the womb/Fallopian tubes. Once the egg is released, it is only viable for 24 hours and then the fertile window is closed.

Research has shown that knowing when your fertile window is, really boosts your chance of getting pregnant. But many couples don't know when this window is, which can be why they struggle to get pregnant.

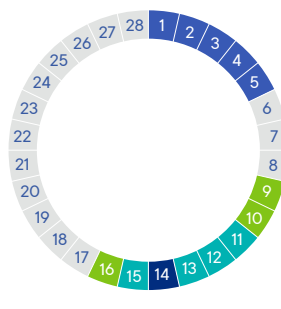
Knowing when the fertile window is can be difficult because it varies based on the woman's menstrual cycle, it is different for every woman and can vary each month. The menstrual cycle can vary between 21 and 35 days (see the information leaflet on the menstrual cycle). Ovulation can vary between day 10 if the cycle is very short and up to day 26 if the cycle is very long.

## It is best if both partners

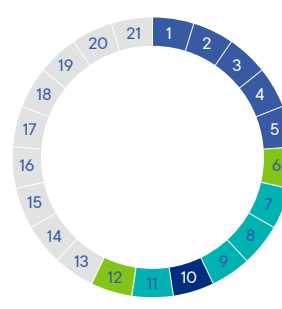
- Eat a balanced diet
- Keep a healthy weight
- Exercise regularly but not excessively
- Quit smoking
- Reduce caffeine
- Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs
- Stay away from certain medications without a doctor's prescription
- Be cautious at work, especially if your job includes risks that could affect your fertility

## Menstrual cycle

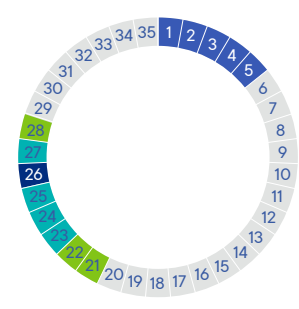
- Menstruation
- Fertile period
- Minimal risk of getting pregnant
- Ovulation day



Regular cycle



Short cycle



Long cycle

## Understanding Your Body's Fertility Signals

There are some methods you can use to figure out when your fertile window is for each menstrual cycle, based on your body's own signals. Fertility tracking methods are called Fertility Awareness-Based Methods (FABM). They can help you find out the best days to try for a baby.

- The calendar method, where you record the days of your menstrual cycle. But this is not the most reliable way since women's menstrual cycles vary and it assumes a woman ovulates on the 14th day, which isn't true for everyone.
- Your temperature goes up slightly after you ovulate and so you can measure your body temperature first thing in the morning. To get an accurate reading, you should use a digital thermometer as soon as you wake up, without getting out of bed. Unfortunately, since the temperature rise happens after ovulation, it won't tell you in advance when to have intercourse if you're only using temperature as your guide.
- Changes in cervical mucus. This is the secretion women get from their vagina around the time of ovulation. It gets clear, stretchy, and slippery like raw egg whites when you're most fertile.
- Using the Symptothermal Method, which combines the calendar, temperature, and mucus observations for a fuller picture.
- Ovulation prediction kits, which check your hormone levels, tell you when you're about to ovulate. You just pee on a stick a few days before you think you might ovulate. If the test is positive, it means you'll probably ovulate in the next 24-40 hours. But if you have a condition like PCOS, which affects how often you ovulate, these tests might not work well for you.



Calendar Method



Basal Body Temperature



Changes in Cervical Mucus



Symptothermal Method

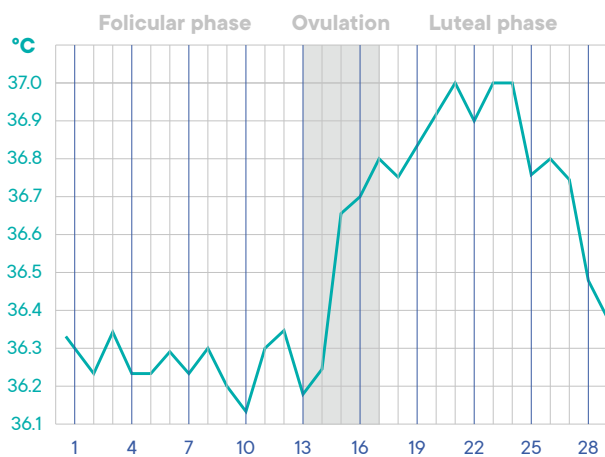


Ovulation Prediction Kits



Fertility App

## Basal Body temperature



## Fertility apps

Nowadays, there are apps for everything, including tracking fertility. Some apps let you record your menstrual cycle dates, while others use details like your basal body temperature to predict your fertile window more accurately. These apps can also help spot any unusual patterns in your cycle, which could be important for your overall health and fertility.

Remember, while these methods and tools can be helpful, they are not guaranteed to help you get pregnant. If you're having trouble getting pregnant, it's a good idea to talk to a healthcare provider for more personalised advice.