## **Fertility Awareness**

Fertility Awareness can help a woman to find her fertile days or the days she is most likely to get pregnant during her menstrual cycle.

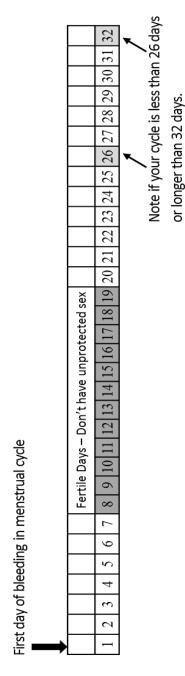
- The Standard Days Method is one fertility awareness method. Women who have menstrual cycles that are from 26 days to 32 days long can use the Standard Days Method. With these cycles, a woman is most likely to be fertile or get pregnant on day 8 through day 19 of her menstrual cycle.
- The length of a menstrual cycle is measured from the first day of a period to the first day of the next period.
- This method is not recommended for women who have irregular menstrual cycles.
- It would be more difficult to use this method if a woman's cycle is not predictable.

NOTE: This method is not perfect! Every woman's body is different and it is possible for a woman to get pregnant even when she is having her period, is breastfeeding, or has just had a baby.

### Instructions:

- 1. Count the first day of your period as day 1.
- 2. Continue counting every day of your menstrual cycle, until you start your next period.
- 3. On day 1 through day 7, your chances of becoming pregnant are much less.
- 4. On day 8 to day 19, you must use a barrier method or not have sex if you want to prevent pregnancy.
- 5. From day 20 to the end of your cycle, you have a lower risk of becoming pregnant.
- 6. If you have more than one cycle in a year that is shorter than 26 days or longer than 32 days, the fertility awareness method to prevent pregnancy is not right for you.

(See chart on next page)



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# <u>Fertility Awareness</u> The Female Reproductive Cycle



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#### The Female Reproductive System

A female's reproductive organs are the <u>vagina</u>, <u>uterus</u>, <u>fallopian tubes</u>, and <u>ovaries</u>.

- The vagina is a muscular, hollow tube that extends from the vaginal opening to the uterus. The vagina's walls are lined with mucous membranes, which keep it protected and moist.
- The cervix, at the lower end of the uterus, has strong, thick walls. The opening of the cervix is very small (no wider than a straw). During childbirth, the cervix can expand to allow a baby to pass.
- When a woman isn't pregnant, the uterus is only about 3 inches long and 2 inches wide.
- At the upper corners of the uterus, the two fallopian tubes connect the uterus to the ovaries, but are not completely attached.
- The ovaries are two oval-shaped organs that produce, store, and release eggs into the fallopian tubes. They also produce female sex hormones such as estrogen and progesterone.

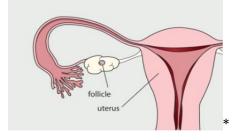
#### The Menstrual Cycle

Once a woman reaches puberty, an egg is released once a month (ovulation) and her period begins.

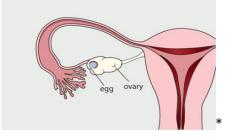
• **Day 1** of the menstrual cycle starts with the first day of a woman's period. Bleeding, or menstruation, usually lasts about 5 – 7 days.



• **Day 7** bleeding has usually stopped. A follicle on the ovary that contains an egg begins to develop. The uterus lining starts to thicken, waiting for a fertilized egg.

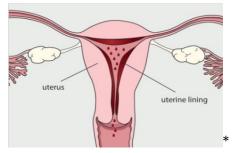


• **Day 14** an egg is released from the ovary and travels to the uterus through the fallopian tube over the next few days.



If a woman has unprotected sex between days 8 - 19 and a sperm unites with the egg in the fallopian tube, the fertilized egg will then continue down the fallopian tube and attach to the lining of the uterus, starting pregnancy.

• Day 25 if the egg is not fertilized, hormone levels start to drop. Within a few days, the egg and the lining of the uterus are shed and bleeding begins. This usually happens about two weeks after ovulation.

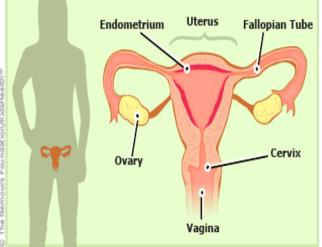


- The average menstrual cycle lasts 28 days, but can vary from 21 to 35 days.
- It can take up to 2 years from her first period for a girl's body to develop a regular menstrual cycle.
- The amount of time before ovulation occurs is different in every woman and can even be different from month to month in the same woman, varying from 13 to 20 days long. Learning about this part of the cycle is important because it is when ovulation and pregnancy can occur.

#### How does pregnancy happen?

If a woman has unprotected sex during ovulation, typically between day 8 and 19 of the menstrual cycle, the sperm from the male can fertilize the egg and begin a pregnancy. Once sperm are released, they can live up to five days!

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