



# FERTILITY



## Physical examination

Before you and your partner start trying to get pregnant, it is important to book a health before pregnancy check-up with your health care provider. **Both men and women** benefit from a check-up prior to pregnancy. If you or your partner has not had infections such as chicken pox or rubella (German measles), you need to be immunized before pregnancy. Screening for sexually transmitted infections can also be done. If you have had problems with a previous pregnancy, have a medical condition or are taking drugs, you may need specialized care before, during and after pregnancy.

While you are booking your health before pregnancy check-up with your health care provider, book one with your dentist. Dental problems and infections can lead to serious consequences for both the mother and the baby during pregnancy. It is best to ensure your dental health before conception.

### *Are my eggs ready yet?*

Much goes on when you start getting ready to have children. You and your partner have a lot to think about and to discuss. You search for family planning tips. You start asking friends for what they know about babies. But pregnancy becomes more real as you start preparing your body for pregnancy.

Barrier methods such as condoms, diaphragms and sponges stop the sperm from reaching the egg but do not interfere with ovulation. An egg is still released each month. When you have thought things through and are ready to get pregnant, simply stop using these forms of birth control.

### *From pill to pregnancy*

If you have been using birth control pills, you may have questions. *“When do I stop taking the pill? What should I know?”*

There are many different kinds of birth control pills. That is because women's bodies are not all the same – you really are one of a kind. So you can expect that your body will have its own unique way of responding when you stop taking the pill.

There is no way to tell how long it will take you to get pregnant based on the time you have been on the pill or the kind of pill you use. But some basic information can be counted on to help ease your mind while you make your way to parenthood.

### *The sunny-side up!*

- ❖ You do not have to wait for the pill to leave your system before you try to get pregnant.
- ❖ More than 98% of women will ovulate (release an egg) within 3 to 6 months after stopping the pill.
- ❖ A small number of women might find it takes longer to get pregnant. This is not linked to using the birth control pill.





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## *The “egg timer”*

If you want to become pregnant, you will want to have sex during your most fertile time – during ovulation. But when is this? You can predict it. Track your periods for more than 2 months. Any calendar will do. The more menstrual cycles you track, the more likely you will be able to see your pattern of fertility.

1. Decide how many months you want to track.
2. Put a “P” on the days you have your period each month, starting with the first day you bleed.
3. Count the number of days in each cycle. Count from the 1st day of one period to the day the next period begins. Write this number down under each month in your calendar.
4. Next count back 14 days from the start of each period for every month you tracked. Mark an X. The X marks the days you are most likely to have released an egg during that cycle. You should also mark an X on the other possible fertile days. This could be 2 days earlier or 2 days later. As each one of us is unique, it is often difficult to pinpoint the exact day and is helpful to mark all of these days as possibly fertile.
5. Pay attention to your vaginal discharge. Fertile mucus is clear, sticky and there’s lots of it! The only time of the month you have this particular discharge is during ovulation.

## *What all couples should know*

- ❖ 95% of healthy couples under the age of 35 are able to get pregnant within 1 year of trying.
- ❖ Pregnancy is more likely to happen when sex takes place around the time that an egg is released from the ovary.
- ❖ After an egg is released it lives for about 24 hours.
- ❖ Sperm can live up to 5 days in a woman’s reproductive tract.
- ❖ A woman is most likely to release an egg (ovulate) 14 days before the start of her period.
- ❖ Having sex too often can decrease sperm counts in men. If you are trying to get pregnant, have sex every couple of days around the time of ovulation.
- ❖ Women can track menstrual cycles (periods) to tell when ovulation happens for them. Learn more about your own fertility pattern.
- ❖ Healthy eating, getting enough sleep, being active and getting a handle on stress helps to keep your sex organs healthy.



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## *Regular vs. irregular*

❖ How long are your cycles (from the start of 1 period to the start of the next period)?

Are they about the same length each month? If yes, then your periods are “regular” and ovulation is easier to predict because it happens close to the same time each cycle.

Do your cycles vary a lot in length? Then they are irregular, making it harder to know when ovulation will occur.

❖ Which day did you ovulate in each cycle if you count from the first day of each period? You’re most fertile time starts a day or 2 before your ovulation day and ends a day or 2 after.

Does this number stay the same each cycle? Then you are regular.

Is this number different each cycle? This makes it harder to predict when you will ovulate, but not impossible.

## *Changing cycles*

Some women do not have regular cycles – here is an example: over 3 months you find one cycle is 28 days long, another is 24 and another is 36 days long. For each cycle subtract 14 days to find out when you may have ovulated.

### **28 day cycle - 14 = 14**

In this cycle, you likely ovulate on the 14th day after the start of your period.

### **24 day cycle - 14 = 10**

In this cycle, you likely ovulate on the 10th day after the start of your period

### **36 day cycle - 14 = 22**

In this cycle, you likely ovulate on the 22nd day after the start of your period.

You now know you release an egg (you are fertile) sometime between day 10 and day 22 after the beginning of your period. The egg lives only 24 hours, but because sperm can live up to 5 days, the day you have sex is not the only time when the sperm and egg can meet.

When you have irregular cycles, you will find it much harder to figure out fertile times than someone with regular cycles. You might want to look into other ways of predicting your fertile times, such as measuring your body temperature and watching for changes in discharge from the vagina. All details of fertility tracking are hard to piece together so it is a good idea to review your pregnancy plans with people who work on fertility issues.

## FOR HELP CLOSE TO HOME CONTACT:

Health care provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Local public health unit: Call INFOline at 1-800-268-1154 / 416-341-5518 \_\_\_\_\_

Community health centre: \_\_\_\_\_

Fertility clinic: \_\_\_\_\_

Library: \_\_\_\_\_