

OVO G-U-I-D-E Getting Pregnant



*Fertility no more a
Chance but a Science*



Starting your family is one of the most exciting and important phases of life and one should know all what's, how's, why's of getting pregnant. Now that you are planning to have a baby, knowing about your reproductive system will help you carry out discussions with your doctor.



Following reproductive events occur in humans:

- Formation of eggs in females and sperms in males
- Transfer of sperms into female genital tract (insemination)
- Fusion of eggs and sperms (fertilization) to form zygote
- Development of embryo and eventually delivery of baby



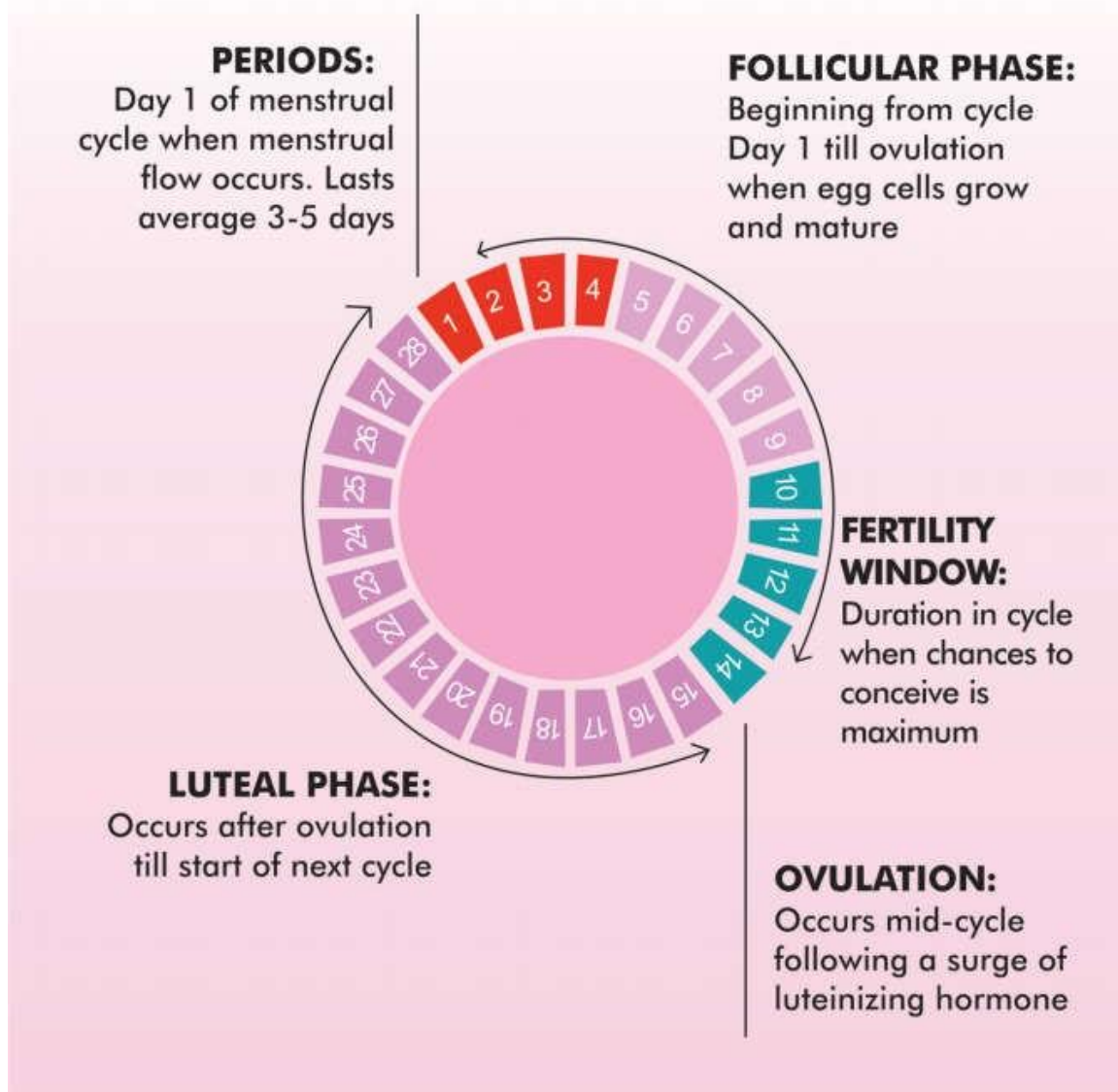
Menstrual Cycle

Menstrual cycle is the duration of first day of your period to the day before your next period. For most women, the periods are repeated at an average interval between 28-32 days. The menstrual flow during period usually lasts for 3-5 days. However, for more than 70% of women, their menstrual cycles are not regular.

Signs of Irregular periods

- Periods lasting more than 8 days
- Only 6 - 8 periods each year
- Long, heavy and frequent periods that occur irregularly
- Absence of periods for more than 3 months

Know your cycle in a snapshot



Premenstrual syndrome

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is a group of emotional, psychological and physical symptoms linked to the menstrual cycle. At least 85 percent of menstruating women have at least one PMS symptom as part of their monthly cycle.

Cramps

Backaches

Mild depression

Breast tenderness

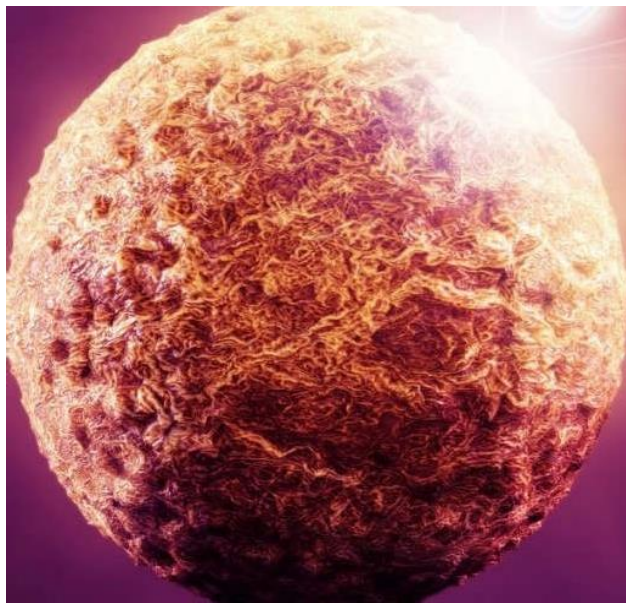
Skin problem

Headaches

Bloating

Angry outbursts

Ovulation

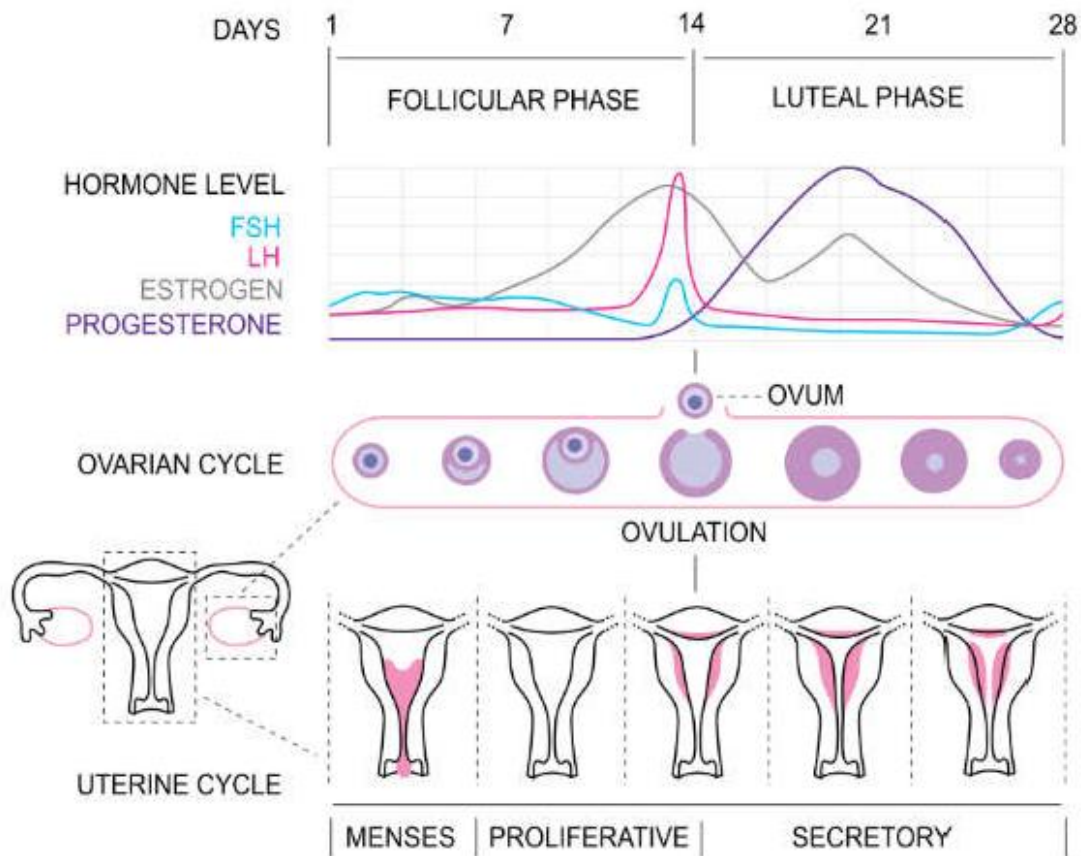


The phase of cycle during which female egg is produced (which is generally during the middle of each cycle) is known as **Ovulation**. The ovulation process is regulated by different hormones gonadotrophin-releasing hormone (GnRh), follicle stimulating hormone (FSH), luteinizing hormone (LH), estrogen and progesterone.

During Ovulation phase, egg produced makes its way to the fallopian tubes where it can be fertilized by a sperm. This is the time when women are most fertile and the sperm has between 12 to 24 hours to fertilize the egg. If the egg is not fertilized, it will leave the body together with the lining of the uterus, which is when you get your period.

Pregnancy is counted from the first day of your last menstrual period. From that point, most pregnancies last about 40 weeks.

Changes in Female body during different Cycle days



Female Fertility

Egg health is one of the cornerstones of healthy fertility and plays a crucial role in determining embryo quality. As women age progresses, the egg quality declines and it affects fertilization and implantation. A low quality egg could also fail to sustain its health long enough to continue adequate fetal development even if implanted.

Male Fertility

As in woman, the other half of the genetic code of a child is carried by the male sperm. When a man ejaculates, it contains an average 2-6 ml of semen with a count of around 100 million or more sperms. Of these, only one combines with egg to give birth to a baby.

Fertile indow

As sperms can live up to five days inside vagina, these five days leading to ovulation time is considered the most fertile period to conceive and having sex in this period can lead to pregnancy. The probability of conception ranges from approximately 10% five days prior to ovulation to roughly 33% on the day of vulation itself.

FERTILITY TRACKING



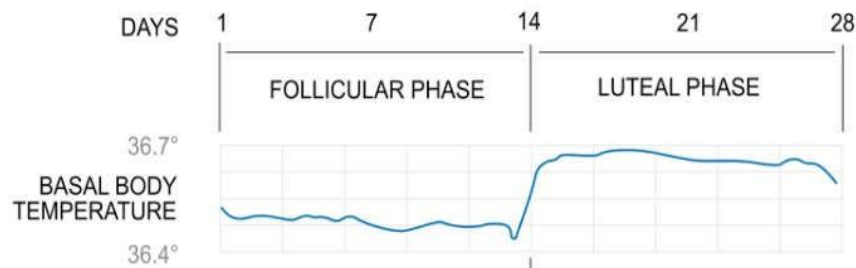
Tracking your menstrual cycle could be used to predict ovulation and increase the chances of becoming pregnant. Tracking **Ovulation on OVO App** will help you know the right times to conceive.

How to track when you are fertile?

There are physical signs shown by woman's body that could help to identify ovulation timing. Although there are many changes in body during ovulation, the major parameters for observing are mentioned here:

A) Basal Body Temperature (BBT)

There is sharp rise in your body temperature during ovulation phase of up to 0.6°F. Tracking your BBT as soon as you wake up every morning, even before you get out of bed can help to know ovulation timing. Measurement can be done using a thermometer with a resolution of 0.1 degree or higher.



B) Cervical Mucus (CM) changes

Cervical mucus is the vaginal discharge that changes during cycle days. As you near towards ovulation, CM is stretchy and clear, like egg white. If it's sticky and stretchy or very wet and slippery, that's a good sign that you're in fertility window.

C) Ovulation Predictor Kits (OPKs)

Ovulation test kits check the urine contents to predict ovulation. They are easily available in medical stores but could be bit costly when used over time. Another type is the salivary ferning kit that allows you to test your saliva with a pocket-sized portable microscope. *Clearblue* & *i-Know* are the commonly available ovulation test kit brands available around.

D) Cervical position tracking

The position & texture of cervix change during the course of menstrual cycle. Prior to peak fertility and after Ovulation, the cervix is low, firm and closed and feels like tip of nose. During the fertile time and Ovulation, the cervix opens up, gets higher and becomes softer feeling like lips.

You might be overwhelmed by so many tracking parameters but you can track your menstrual cycle & predict Ovulation using OVO App that keeps track of the changes in your body & tells you the best days to conceive or avoid pregnancy.



PREPARING TO CONCEIVE

Getting off Birth control modes

Contrary to popular myth, birth control methods do not affect your chances of getting pregnant in the future. Well that's a relief for all the women because all reversible birth control methods don't have long-lasting effects on your ability to get pregnant when you stop. That's why women who use the pill but accidentally forget to take it for a few days can get pregnant that month.

Birth control modes used by women

- Pills
- Intrauterine devices (IUDs)
- Patch, Rings
- Injections (Depo-Provera shots)
- Fertility Awareness methods

Aligning your body weight

Being overweight (obese) or underweight can affect your chances of conceiving and having a healthy baby. Body Mass Index (BMI) between 19 and 25 is considered healthy.

BMI < 19: Underweight

25 < BMI < 30: Overweight

BMI > 30: Obese

$$\text{BMI} = \frac{\text{weight in kg}}{(\text{height in meters})^2}$$

Severely obese women may be 23–43% less likely to conceive, in contrast with women who having BMI of 29 or below. So if BMI is not in range, re-evaluate your diet and lifestyle and get closer to safe range of conception.

Food and supplements when TTC

Do you know pre-pregnancy diet can affect your baby's DNA? So it's best to make a healthy diet plan for you (mother) and your baby's health.

Super food for super future moms

Folic acid

Taking 400-600 mg daily before pregnancy and about 800 mg during pregnancy is essential in the diet. It can be in the form of supplements, prenatal vitamins or foods like certain nuts, beans, citrus fruits, and leafy vegetables.

Dairy products

Dairy products like milk or yoghurt are essential when you are TTC. They contain Calcium and protein which are crucial nutrient for your baby's health, and your own.

Fruits & veggies

They contain lots of essential nutrients and antioxidants and help decrease body inflammation. So it's a good practice to get enough of fruits and veggies when planning for pregnancy.

Iron

Many women face iron deficiency issues when they menstruate. So you should get checked for Iron level when planning for pregnancy. Iron supplements or food like pumpkin seeds, liver (chicken), sea-foods, cashew, almonds, beans, pulses and yes, dark chocolates.

Small steps to healthy weight



Swap sugary drinks and alcohol with water & juices



Choose healthy snacks like fruits, plain nuts



Reduce your plate size for lunch and dinner



Eat less fast food & make healthier choices whenever you can



Aim goal based weight-loss plan

Lifestyle during TTC



Exercise

A moderate fitness regime can help you feel good throughout your TTC and boost you with more stamina for labor and delivery. You need to strengthen your abdominal and back muscles before getting pregnant.

- **Mix of fitness routines:** Walking, Zumba, Aerobics, dancing, cycling, swimming, Pilates, Yoga, playing badminton
- **Baby friendly routines:** Walking, swimming, Pilates, Yoga

Other tips

- Avoid smoking and drinking when you are in TTC stage or during pregnancy. Smoking at any point may put your baby at risk.
- Sex positions like missionary with man on top increase the odds of conception in which sperms don't have to fight against gravity

Stress & Sleep

The quantity and quality of your sleep affects your health, mood, hormones and fertility. Sleep affects fertility hormones - progesterone, estrogen, LH and FSH. Eight hours of sleep per night is recommended for women who are TTC.

Remaining calm and composed is the key when you are TTC. Stress can be caused due to peer pressure and couples might end up being less sexually active which reduces the chances of conception.

Combating stress & sleep

- Relax yourself with meditation, reading books or some fun activities
- Open up with close family members and friends
- Refocus your relationship with your partner. Plan romantic evenings or some activities together to keep both your spirits up
- Make a consistent sleep routine and get away from gadgets when going to bed



Healthier habits for Dads

Sperm's health is most important for dads to be. One third of male infertility issues are due to men's health. So it is important for men to address their health history and habits prior to TTC. Some of the healthy habits that dads could adopt are:

- Ease up on heavy drinking and smoking
- Make healthy choices like proper food, exercise
- Avoid wearing tight underwear and opt for boxer shorts
- Reduce head exposure activities like hot tubs, saunas and steam rooms which reduce sperm count

MEDICAL CHECKUPS



For Female

Having general health checkup especially when you have chronic conditions like Asthma, high Blood pressure or Diabetes is considered a good idea. You can get yourself screened for sexually transmitted infections (STI) like hepatitis B, Chlamydia, syphilis and HIV to avoid any complications during pregnancy.

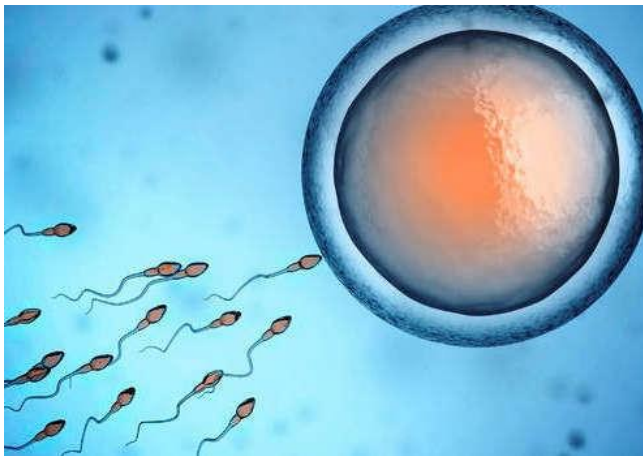
Getting vaccinated for tetanus-diphtheria-pertussis (Tdap); measles, mumps, rubella (MMR); chicken pox; and HPV, among others are also suggested by doctors pre-pregnancy.

Gynecological Examination

You should also go for preconception gynecological examinations because they might highlight any issues that could lead to pregnancy or fertility problems, such as ovarian cysts or fibroids, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), endometriosis, and more.

For Male

Infertility can be caused due to male partner also and there are lots of tests that could reveal male infertility. Different checkups includes precautionary screening test for sexually transmitted infections (STI), physical examination for varicoceles and sperm & semen analysis.



Infertility & treatment

One out of seven couples may get difficulties in having natural pregnancy. There could be many reasons for infertility like age or infertility due to medical conditions. The best option is to seek doctor's advice after a certain period of trying to get pregnant.

To know more in detail about different infertility issues and available treatment options, **refer to our OVO guide on Infertility and IVF.**