The Conception Success Handbook

Your Complete Guide to Preparing for Pregnancy & Conceiving with Confidence
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Table Of Contents** ................................................................. 2

**Introduction** ......................................................................... 4

**The Biology of Menstruation** ................................................. 5

**What is Menstruation?** .......................................................... 5
  - Puberty ............................................................................. 5
  - Estrogen or Oestrogen ....................................................... 5
  - FSH Follicle Stimulating Hormone ....................................... 6
  - LH Lutenising hormone ..................................................... 6

**How Does the Menstrual Cycle Happen?** ......................... 8
  - The Cycle Begins ................................................................ 8
  - Ovulation .......................................................................... 9
  - Menstruation ..................................................................... 10

**Menstrual Irregularity** ........................................................... 11
  - Long Term Irregularity ........................................................ 11
  - Short Term Irregularity ....................................................... 12
  - What can be done about irregularity? ............................... 12

**Common Menstrual Problems That Can Affect Fertility.** .... 14
  - Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome – PCOS ................................ 15
  - Endometriosis ................................................................... 15
  - Fibroids ............................................................................ 15
  - Blocked Fallopian Tubes .................................................... 16

**Glossary of Menstrual Terms** ............................................. 16

**Fertility Basics** ..................................................................... 18

**How Do You Know When You are Fertile?** ....................... 18

**Steps to Managing fertility:** ................................................. 21

**Cervical Mucus** .................................................................... 22
  - What is a natal lunar phase? .............................................. 24

**Taking Your Basal Temperature** ......................................... 25

**Ovulation Prediction Kits** .................................................... 25
  - How do Urine Kits work? .................................................. 26
  - How do Ovulation Microscopes work? ............................. 26
  - Is an Ovulation Predictor Kit necessary? ......................... 27
Choosing a Kit for you ................................................................. 27

The Mechanics of Conception ...................................................... 28

How Does Conception Occur? ...................................................... 28

The arduous journey of the Sperm .............................................. 28

Fresh Eggs and Sperm are Vital .................................................. 30

3 Critical Conception Factors ..................................................... 30

Eggs ........................................................................................ 30

Sperm ..................................................................................... 31

Fallopian Tubes ......................................................................... 31

The Pill and TTC ....................................................................... 32

Increasing the Odds of Conception ............................................. 33

Increasing The Odds .................................................................. 33

Diet Guidelines When TTC ....................................................... 36

Foods for a Healthy Menstrual Cycle ........................................ 37

Foods that promote health ....................................................... 38

Helpful Supplements ................................................................ 42

Maca Powder ............................................................................ 42

Vitamin / Mineral Supplements .............................................. 43

Herbs ...................................................................................... 46

Meaningful Charting .................................................................. 46

Getting the timing right ............................................................. 48

Counting the days ..................................................................... 49

What about Lunar Fertility? ..................................................... 51

Stress Management ................................................................... 51

Complimentary Therapies ....................................................... 53

Herbalism ................................................................................. 53

Homeopathy ............................................................................. 53

Acupuncture ............................................................................. 54

Massage .................................................................................. 54

Chiropractic / Osteopathic ..................................................... 54

Kinesiology ............................................................................. 54

Neurolink ............................................................................... 54

Naturopathy .......................................................................... 55

The Mind Body Connection ..................................................... 55
Welcome, this Conception Success Handbook has been especially created for you to use in conjunction with your personalised Conception Action Pack.

This handbook covers a myriad of topics, providing practical information that you can implement daily to help you achieve your goal of having a baby.

We recommend that you refer to the information here and in your Conception Action Pack as often as possible as it is only through repeated exposure that you will be able retain and use the information we present.

Best wishes to you

Nadia MacLeod
THE BIOLOGY OF MENSTRUATION

What is Menstruation?

Understanding the way your menstrual cycle works each month is an important step in improving your fertility.

Menstruation is the term given to the periodic discharge of blood, tissue, fluid and mucus from the reproductive organs of sexually mature females. The flow usually lasts from 3 - 6 days each month and is caused by a sudden reduction in the hormones oestrogen and progesterone.

It is hormones that govern this process. Hormones are a chemical substance, produced by an organ, gland or special cells that is carried through the bloodstream to regulate the activity of certain organs.

It is the balance and interplay between these hormones, which regulate the specific events that make up the menstrual cycle. Factors like nutrition, stress, exercise, travel, light and belief systems can all influence how the hormones work and what we experience during our cycles.

Puberty

Hormones start to do their thing at the onset of puberty, and various types of hormones are involved. These hormones are:

Estrogen or Oestrogen

1) Promotes the development and maintenance of female reproductive structures (especially the endometrial lining of the uterus),
2) Assists in the control of fluid and electrolyte balance within the body.
3) Prepares the follicle for the release of an egg.
Estrogen also has many other functions.
**Progesterone**

Secreted at ovulation, helps to prepare the endometrium (womb lining) for the implantation of an egg, prepares mammary glands for milk production. Primarily concerned with the procreation and survival of the fetus.

**FSH Follicle Stimulating Hormone**

Stimulates the follicles (a follicle is a balloon shaped structure which is filled with fluid and contains an egg, follicles are found in the ovaries) to ripen several eggs. At the same time the ovaries release oestrogen.

**LH Lutenising hormone**

Further develops the follicles, triggers ovulation and stimulates production of other hormones necessary for the post ovulatory stage of the menstrual cycle.

**The secretion of hormones is a complex affair. Various parts of the body become involved in a myriad of chemical transactions.**

Refer to the Diagram taken from "Women's bodies, Women's wisdom" by Dr Christiane Northrup, Figure 5 page 103. The Female Mind/Body Continuum: Interactions between the Brain and the Pelvis
Often the hormones within the menstrual cycle have other functions to play in a woman’s body.

For example progesterone increases libido, is a natural diuretic and aids in the process of building new bone to name just a few, therefore maintaining hormonal health is essential to all levels of a woman’s well being.

We need to remember that these hormones are usually only present in small amounts and that it is the relationship between the levels of the hormones that is critical. When the balance is upset, any number of menstrual irregularities can occur.

For example the triphasic or combination contraceptive pill contains the hormones oestrogen and progesterone. It works by altering the bodies natural hormonal balance, thus inhibiting ovulation, preventing implantation of the egg and making the cervical mucus hostile to sperm.
Because this contraceptive works by altering the relationship between the hormones it is easy to see why it can precipitate so many side effects on a physical, mental and emotional level. Leslie Kenton’s book Passage to Power goes in depth into hormones, their effects and nutrition etc.

**How Does the Menstrual Cycle Happen?**

The menstrual cycle can vary in length, but is usually about 29.5 days which coincides with a lunar month.

One of the reasons why the menstrual cycle does coincide so neatly with the moon is that the endocrine (hormone releasing) glands (like the pituitary and hypothalamus) are **light sensitive, and are influenced by the varying amounts of light which the moon gives out as she goes through her phases.**

The Suprachiasmatic Nucleus (SCN) or Body Clock in the brain signals the ovaries to develop the egg sac, and again about 14 days later, the body clock starts the release of the egg. The body clock uses bright light signals like sunlight to set its daily sleep/wake rhythm, and it relies on moonlight to regulate the menstrual.

**The Cycle Begins**

The cycle begins on the first day of bleeding. The pituitary gland releases FSH - Follicle Stimulating Hormone which "targets" (travels through the bloodstream and impacts upon) the ovaries.
Diagram shows the changes in hormone levels throughout the menstrual cycle.

The follicles within the ovaries are stimulated by the FSH (Follicle Stimulating Hormone) to ripen several eggs in preparation for ovulation.

At the same time oestrogen is released by the ovaries, causing these changes in the body:

- cervix - softens and rises
- cervical mucus - becomes more profuse and friendly to sperm
- womb lining or endometrium - thickens and prepares for a fertilised egg implantation.

All these changes ensure conditions are ripe within the female reproductive system for fertilisation to occur at ovulation.

Ovulation

When the levels of oestrogen reach a high enough level, a signal is sent to the pituitary gland which releases a sudden surge of Lutenising Hormone, causing the release of the rippest egg from its follicle, to be collected by the nearest fallopian tube to await fertilisation. This is ovulation.
The burst follicle that is left behind in the ovary is now called the corpus luteum or 'yellow body.'

The corpus luteum, which is in effect a tiny and temporary endocrine gland, continues to secrete reduced amounts of oestrogen, which returns the cervix and mucus to their naturally infertile state. The cervix closes and hardens and cervical mucus dries up.

The corpus lutuem begins to secrete even greater amounts of progesterone causing the endometrium to thicken even more in absolute preparation for the egg (which is starting to journey down from the fallopian tube to the uterus). It also signals the ovaries to stop releasing eggs and assists in returning the cervical mucus to its non-fertile state.

If the egg implants successfully into the womb lining and pregnancy occurs, progesterone levels will continue to climb.

**Menstruation**

If fertilisation does not occur, the corpus luteum dies, therefore stopping the production of hormones. The uterine (womb) lining breaks down and blood, mucus and tissue is released through the vagina. This is menstruation.

We have returned to day 1 when the whole process starts all over again.

Women go through this cycle every month from puberty to menopause.

Breaks from menstruation occur during:
- pregnancy and lactation
- if a woman has health problems
- or if a woman chooses to use oral contraceptives continuously.
Menstrual Irregularity

Women can often experience irregularity in their menstrual cycles. As was stated in the previous pages, the process of menstruation is completely dependent upon the balance of hormones in your body, and many of factors can affect this hormonal balance. Such as:

- Stress
- New cycle: the irregularity experienced by some young girls at the onset of the periods. Their cycle can be irregular for months or years while it establishes itself.
- Dietary problems, eg anorexia, bulimia or simply poor diet
- Too much exercise
- Drugs, prescription and recreational
- Break in routine
- Thoughts and emotions
- Sexual activity, especially when it is a new occurrence
- Anxiety about pregnancy
- Illness or physiological imbalance eg thyroid conditions
- Not enough Light

Irregularity also falls into 2 categories:

- Long Term Irregularity
- Sudden or Short term Irregularity

Long Term Irregularity.

Long term irregularity can be anything from a cycle that varies in length from month to month to the experience of various abnormal symptoms, for example, excessive bleeding, no cycle for months at a time, very painful periods or ovulation.
To be on the safe side if you are experiencing prolonged bleeding or very painful symptoms it is wise to consult a doctor to find out what is going on.

**Short Term Irregularity.**

Short-term irregularity can be attributed to any of the causes listed above, and are generally a one off or sporadic occurrence. These cases are probably not a cause for great concern unless you are experiencing pain or just feel as if something is wrong.

Naturally, a delayed period can indicate pregnancy so you may want to clear that option by taking a pregnancy test.

**What can be done about irregularity?**

If you are experiencing bouts of irregularity, you need to examine your lifestyle.
Review the causes listed above;

- **Are you under extra stress?**
  If so, what are some tangible steps you can take to reduce its effect upon your body... Can you change your thinking? and reprioritise your goals? Do you need to include more exercise or meditation into your routine? Have you got a support network? What action’s can you take to solve specific problems in your life?

- **Diet?**
  Are you eating healthily and regularly? If not, do you need to improve the foods you eat or supplement your diet with vitamins, minerals and herbs? If you suffer from a eating disorder are you ready to get help?

- **Too much exercise?**
  Are you addicted to exercise or slimming and just not feeding
yourself enough or working your body too hard?

- **Drugs?**
  Excessive use of drugs can and does affect the menstrual cycle, they affect the physiology of the body and also affect your emotional and mental health.

- **Break in routine?**
  Holidays, change in lifestyle, travel (especially if you are crossing timezones), new romance – there are many factors that can cause a hiccup in the cycle.

  Please note that starting to synchronise your mid cycle ovulation to lunar fertility can also cause short term irregularity as your cycle moves around to achieve your goal.

- **Illness?**
  Sicknesses as simple as the cold or flu have been known to either bring on or delay your menstrual cycle.

- **Sexual activity and anxiety about pregnancy?**
  For some reason sexual activity does seem to affect the menstrual cycle, probably due to hormones released during lovemaking. It can also be due to unconscious or conscious anxiety about pregnancy, change in status, trust issues, and the impact of sex and the changes it causes in our intimate relationships.

  **Women still carry the burden of pregnancy, because we are the ones who get pregnant.** It is our responsibility to ensure that this only happens when we want it to happen. Knowing how your body works, your fertile signs and having a reliable and safe form of contraception on hand when you need it is vital to your peace of mind and ensures that unwanted pregnancy is highly unlikely.
• **Coming off the Contraceptive Pill**
  Can cause irregularity. Whilst you are on the Pill, its hormones run your cycle (although it is not a real menstrual cycle). When you come off the Pill, it can take 3-6 months for your body to start cycling naturally again depending on how long you were on the Pill.

• **Insufficient Light.**
  Your body clock needs sunlight to regulate your waking / sleeping patterns and moonlight to regulate your menstrual cycle. Research has shown that women who live close to the equator often have more regular menstrual cycles and increased fertility than women who live closer to the poles or spend most of their times indoors.

Ok so you’ve reviewed all these factors, what else can you do?
Connecting to the moon is the simplest and most effective way of sorting out minor menstrual irregularities. The moon is so influential to your cycle that by using the techniques revealed in the Conception Action Pack you should be able to cycle regularly again quite quickly.

The section Increasing the Odds also has many tips for regulating your menstrual cycle and increasing fertility.

**Common Menstrual Problems That Can Affect Fertility.**

Some of the menstrual problems, which require professional intervention, include:

- Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome - PCOS
- Endometriosis
- Fibroids
- Blocked Fallopian Tubes
The following is only a brief overview, please follow the links for more information. We have chosen these links at random, simply as a starting point. If you would like to recommend better links please let us know.

**Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome – PCOS**

A condition where the ovaries are larger than normal and the underdeveloped follicles resemble a bunch of grapes. It often causes women to stop ovulating and can produce other distressing symptoms like weight gain, acne, mood swings and hirsuitism (hair growth). PCOS is a common cause of menstrual abnormality.


**Endometriosis**

A condition where the endometrium or lining of the womb starts to grow in other places other than the uterus. Endometrium may start to grow in the fallopian tubes, ovaries, bowel or bladder and will exhibit the same characteristics as normal womb lining, that is bleeding regularly in response to hormonal changes in the body, just like a period. Endometriosis can affect fertility because the endometrium can scar and cause blockages within the ovaries or fallopian tubes.

See [http://www.endometriosis.org/](http://www.endometriosis.org/)

**Fibroids**

Are non cancerous growths that form in or on the uterine wall. They are quite common, and mostly do not affect fertility. Sometimes however, they can stop the embryo implanting or be a factor in miscarriage.

See [http://www.uterinefibroids.com/](http://www.uterinefibroids.com/)
Blocked Fallopian Tubes

Clear fallopian tubes are essential for successful natural conception, as the fallopian tubes provide the path for the sperm and the egg. If your tubes are blocked then conception via intercourse is very difficult if not impossible. If you have been trying for a while with no results, get a full check and make sure your fallopian tubes are clear.

Some complimentary therapies can help with menstrual problems such as endometriosis, PCOS and Fibroids. Often hormonal irregularity contributes to these illnesses so addressing the individuals hormonal function can be helpful.

Glossary of Menstrual Terms

**Cervix** refers to the neck of the womb.

**Corpus Luteum** or Yellow Body is in effect a tiny and temporary endocrine gland, continues to secrete reduced amounts of oestrogen which return the cervix (closes and hardens) and mucus (dries up) to their naturally infertile state.

**Endometrium** mucous membrane lining of the uterus.

**Estrogen** is the female sex hormone responsible for the development and maintenance of female reproductive organs, especially breast and uterus, and the secondary sex characteristics such as distribution of fat and hair patterns.

**Fallopian Tube** is a duct that transports ovum from the ovary to the uterus.

**Follicle** is a small secretory sac or cavity, which surrounds the ovum in the ovary.
**FSH or Follicle Stimulating Hormone** stimulates cells in the ovaries to secrete estrogens, and also assist mature ova to be released from ovary.

A **Hormone** is a chemical substance, produced by an organ, gland or special cell that is carried through the bloodstream to regulate the activity of certain organs.

**LH or Lutenising Hormone** stimulates the ovary to release mature ova and prepares the uterus for the implantation of a fertilised egg. It also stimulates the formation of the corpus luteum in the ovaries.

**Menarche** is the term given to the onset of menstruation in females. This occurs at puberty and can be anywhere between the ages of 10 and 17, depending on the individual.

**Menopause** is the termination of the menstrual cycle in women in midlife between the ages of 40 and 55 years.

**Menstruation** is the term given to the periodic discharge of blood, tissue fluid and mucus from the endometrium (lining of the uterus) that usually lasts from 3 - 5 days. It is caused by a sudden reduction in estrogens and progesterone. Can also be referred to as the menstrual phase or menstrual cycle, or menses.

**Ovary** a female gland that produces hormones and the female reproductive or germ cell (ova).

**Ovulation** is the release of a fertile ovum or egg from the ovary into the fallopian tube.

**Uterus** hollow, muscular organ in females that is the site of menstruation, implantation, development of the foetus, and labour. Also called the womb.
Ovum (plural) or Ova (singular) are the female reproductive, egg or germ cell.

Pituitary Gland is a gland located in the brain that regulates a wide range of bodily activities from growth to reproduction.

**FERTILITY BASICS**

**How Do You Know When You are Fertile?**

Knowing your own body and being able to tell when you are fertile or ovulating is an important skill that every woman should have.

You will save yourself an enormous amount of worry and anxiety when you get to know your body and can control your risk of unwanted pregnancy. By the same token, you will save yourself lots of frustration if you know when to have sex at the right times to have a baby.

The fact is that there are **only certain times during your menstrual cycle when you are fertile or can get pregnant in**. So it pays off to know when those times are.

Your body will give you clear clues and signals as to when fertility is approaching and happening.

A woman is fertile when she is ovulating and for a few days approaching ovulation when fertile cervical mucus is present.

Ovulation usually occurs mid cycle, ie ovulation usually occurs 14 days before the onset of bleeding.

However - ovulation can be upset by many factors, eg, sickness, alcohol, travel, stress etc which is why simply counting the days
can be inaccurate. It is better to become accustomed to recognising the signals your body will give about its state of fertility.

However ovulation / fertility can also spontaneously occur during your natal lunar phase. And your natal lunar phase fertile time can occur at any time during your menstrual cycle, including before, during and after your period. Your natal lunar fertile time is individual to you and is calculated from your birth data - it is all to do with the phase of the moon that you were born under.

Please go to what is menstruation or the changes your body goes through for a biological description of what goes on through the menstrual cycle, and there is a menstrual glossary for an explanation of terms.

Below is a table that gives a rough description of the very real physical and emotional symptoms that you can observe throughout your menstrual cycle. It is a brief guide that I have put together from my own observation. The time frame is very approximate, so don't worry if your cycle is not the same... everyone is individual.

Please note that this table is not the definitive guide. Each cycle may not be the same, and each woman is not the same, it all depends on how you are and what's going on in your life. If you experience other feelings or symptoms, let me know so I can add it to the list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 1</th>
<th>Bleeding and the various symptoms felt then depends on the individual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From first day of bleeding</td>
<td>At the post bleeding phase there is generally an increase in physical energy and vitality. The individual is more outgoing and sociable. Sleep patterns and appetite return to normal. Vaginal mucus is dry or absent.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Week 2**

As ovulation approaches mucus becomes more wet, slippery, white (whatever is your individual pattern.)

**Ovulation**

Day 14 approximately*

Mucus is very wet and slippery, easily allowing penetration of sperm. Breasts may be tender, Mood swings, increase in libido, cramps, desire to be with your partner.

**Week 3**

After Ovulation moving into premenstrual phase

Mucus production slows, becomes drier and thicker. Moods balance out again.

**Week 4**

Pre-menstrual phase

Premenstrual symptoms kick in, which depending upon you, range from bloating, cramps, headaches, mood swings, food cravings, and insomnia. Energy levels decrease, libidio may increase.

Desire for solitude

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**Please note that ovulation does not always occur at day 14 / 15,** which is why counting the days or the rhythm method is an unreliable and often incorrect method of gauging fertility. However, periods or bleeding do usually arrive 14 days after ovulation. In irregular cycles, it is the first half of the cycle or pre-ovulatory phase which varies in length (rather than the second half of the cycle), as bleeding almost always occurs 14 days after ovulation.

It is only through getting to know your individual cycle that you can know what your pattern is. **If you experience a constant reliable rhythm - then that rhythm is yours,** regardless of how it fits into the 'norm'.

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Steps to Managing fertility:

Find a **system of recording your menstrual cycle and fertile times that is easy for you to use.**

There are many good systems available from simple moon / menstrual calendars and diaries to fertility tracking computer software that allows you to record and track many different bodily symptoms.

It's not always to buy something special - using your normal diary or calendar works just as well as long as you **remember to write down the information you need.**

The system you need will depend very much on your purpose. Someone trying to conceive is going to need to record more information than someone else who just wants to know when her period is due.

1. **Use your system regularly.**

2. Use your natal lunar phase fertile time because you know that the moon can trigger ovulation to occur at any time during the menstrual cycle.

3. **The moon is a great tool for monitoring and regulating menstrual cycles** - so try to use it in whatever system you employ. The moons cycle is approx 29 days and so is your cycle. Observe the moon (look at the sky, check out the ready reckoner or invest in a moon diary or calendar) so you know what the moon is doing in the sky. At the very least write down when your lunar phase will happen each month.

4. **Start observing your mucus**, and keep a record...**WRITE IT DOWN.** Use the Free Blank Charting Template and instructions we have supplied. Or enter it into your trial Hormonal Forecaster.
software which makes tracking your fertility a breeze.

5. **If using lunar fertility methods - do your two cycles** (mid cycle ovulation and natal lunar fertile time) coincide? **Do you have one fertile time or two?**

6. Ensure you use contraception or abstain from sexual intercourse during your fertile time if you don’t want to get pregnant.

If you do want to get pregnant, go for it during your fertile times.

**Cervical Mucus**

It will change throughout the menstrual cycle from being dry, thick or pasty (infertile) to being wet and slippery (fertile). **It is the job of the cervical mucus to either restrict or allow sperm penetration through the cervix.**

**Getting to know your body and its types of mucus is a very important step in this process.** Different women have different symptoms or characteristics of mucus, differences in the wetness, colour, smell, pastiness, so it only by "Knowing Thyself" that you can know what your own personal pattern is... Personal observation is extremely important.

**When observing mucus, ask yourself the question –**

"**Could a sperm swim through this type of mucus?**"

It will assist in deciding if you are fertile or not. It is easy to imagine that mucus that is dry and thick is not as easy to swim through than mucus that is wet and slippery.
Observing cervical mucus is simple. You are only interested in the mucus that is readily observable at the mouth of the vagina. You need only touch the mouth of the vagina (no need to touch inside), the outside of the opening or alternatively wipe the vaginal mouth with a tissue and feel mucus from that.

**Dry or none = infertile,**
**Wet, profuse and slippery = fertile.**

The changes from dry to wet indicate that fertile phase is coming. Please remember that **any presence of wet, (or whatever your experience of fertile mucus) fertile mucus is an indication of possible fertility** and coming ovulation...

Factors like illness, intercourse (sperm left in vagina) and infection can all affect mucus observation, which is why proper instruction in these methods is vital.

The following diagram also shows the cycle of cervical mucus. Diagram is taken from Natural Fertility, pg 43.
Mucus observation is one indicator of fertility. The other time you can be potentially fertile is during your natal lunar phase.

**What is a natal lunar phase?**

The natal lunar phase is the angle between the sun and the moon at the time a person is born.

For example, if a person is born on a new moon, when the sun and moon are said to be conjunct or together, the natal lunar angle is 0 degrees. Conversely if a person is born on the full moon, when the sun and moon are opposite each other the natal lunar angle will be 180 degrees.

**So every month as the moon goes through its changes, an individual will have their particular natal lunar phase repeated when the moon is in the exact position relative to the sun as it was at their time of birth.**

For example, if a person has a new moon natal phase, the natal phase is repeated whenever the moon is new regardless of the moons zodiacal or astrological sign. This time is a potentially fertile one and a woman may spontaneously ovulate. Often these spontaneous ovulations are triggered by intercourse itself!

**The Rhythm Method?**

The rhythm method of gauging fertility is not very reliable, as ovulation does not always happen on day 14 or 15 etc.

If you are only counting days and not observing mucus, you run a real risk of missing your fertile time.
Taking Your Basal Temperature

Your Basal or "at-rest" temperature can be observed to assist you in determining your fertile status.

The basal temperature will tell you when ovulation has occurred after it has occurred. It is useful for telling you that you have ovulated but not much good at warning you that ovulation is going to happen.

For general observation and charting purposes, it is not necessary to take your basal temperature. But you may wish to if you want to know more precisely when you have ovulated. This will help you in determining your mucus pattern and general fertility cycle.

The Basal Temperature method works on the fact that your "at rest" body temperature will drop slightly before ovulation and then rise by 0.5 degree Celsius / 1 degree Fahrenheit after ovulation has occurred. It remains raised until you bleed, when it will drop again, to start the cycle anew.

Your Basal Temperature is measured by taking your temperature in the normal fashion each morning as soon as you wake up and before you do anything else (including going to the toilet, having a cup of tea etc). Write the temperature down on your chart, and soon you will notice a pattern.

As it can be tricky to spot the rise, see a Natural Fertility Counsellor, if you want to use this method comprehensively.

Ovulation Prediction Kits

An ovulation predictor kit is a simple and effective way to detect ovulation. These kits detect the ‘L.H. surge’ that occurs in your body before ovulation begins helping you to work out the best time for
intercourse. Ovulation generally occurs about 24 -48 hours after the LH surge.

Most kits are relatively inexpensive and they can be purchased at most pharmacies, online or at some doctor’s offices. There are many brands available and they vary in price, the number of tests contained in each kit, and amount of time and steps necessary to complete each test. All kits can be used in the privacy of your own home.

There are two different types of ovulation Prediction kits – those that test your urine and ovulation microscopes.

How do Urine Kits work?

Ovulation prediction kits work by indicating the level of lutenizing hormone (LH) in a woman's urine. LH is present throughout the menstrual cycle see how menstruation works, but increases significantly 24 to 36 hours prior to ovulation. This rapid increase is called the LH surge. By identifying the LH surge with the ovulation predictor kit, a couple can then time intercourse to occur during the most fertile time in the female's cycle.

How do Ovulation Microscopes work?

Ovulation microscopes are based upon the principle that saliva forms a “ferning” pattern when dried which indicates the biochemical and hormonal changes (estrogen) taking place in the body during ovulation.

To use the microscope you simply take a saliva sample each morning (before eating or drinking anything), place it on the microscope lens and wait for it to dry. When its dry you look through the microscope and observe the patterns. It’s a good idea to use this method in line with other
fertility observation because it can take a couple of months to learn your particular signs.

**Is an Ovulation Predictor Kit necessary?**

It is probably only necessary to use a kit if you are having trouble determining ovulation or if your cycle is still irregular. It may also be a useful tool when you are learning about your own body’s fertility signals if used in tandem with mucus and body symptoms. In many cases using ovulation prediction kits are not essential, ultimately it depends on the individual.

**Choosing a Kit for you**

Each Ovulation Prediction Kit on the market works in the same fashion. There is plenty of information on the Internet to help you choose a kit, so it is a matter of doing some research to see what best suits your needs. Follow the instructions carefully, and remember that although the kits are accurate they can produce false positives at times.
THE MECHANICS OF CONCEPTION

How Does Conception Occur?

Conception occurs when the male’s sperm fertilises the females egg. For this to occur they must meet. This meeting usually takes place in the female’s fallopian tubes.

For the woman - her egg is released from the ovary during ovulation. It floats into the fallopian tube where it stays for its short life. The egg generally lives for only 12-24 hours.

For the man - Sperm can live for up to 72 hours although the average life-span of a sperm is 16-18 hours. Ideally the sperm should be ready and waiting in the fallopian tube for your egg to make its grand entrance.

To make this happen - observe your body and its fertile mucus - when the mucus is wet and profuse have intercourse so that the sperm can make its way into the fallopian tube where it is ready to greet and fertilise the emerging egg.

The arduous journey of the Sperm

Although men produce on average 280-400 million sperm in each ejaculation. The sperm must undertake a difficult journey to reach the egg. It takes about 30-60 minutes for the sperm to reach the fallopian tubes.
Once deposited into the vagina, they need to swim into the cervix, through the uterus and choose which fallopian tube the egg will be waiting in.

- Some sperm are abnormal - they can't swim properly, are too slow or damaged.
- Some sperm get lost in the uterus swimming round and round,
- Some sperm choose the wrong fallopian tube and some get caught in the cervical crypts.

So even though a huge number of sperm start the journey not all the sperm make it to the end.

And if it is the wrong time of the month - when the woman is not fertile and does not have any fertile mucus (and it is not her lunar fertile time) then the sperm may not get into the cervix at all.

So you can see, that it is critical to have sex at the right time so that the sperm can make it to an egg.
Fresh Eggs and Sperm are Vital

As illustrated above sperm can have a hard time getting to the egg. That’s why it is essential to take steps to ensure you have the best chance to make a healthy viable baby when that sperm does meet the egg.

If either the sperm or the egg is not at its peak freshness, then it can affect the viability of the foetus and pregnancy. So it is important to make sure that both the sperm and egg are at their best.

1. **Abstain from sex for a 3-5 days before ovulation is due** – you don’t want old, stale sperm getting to the egg first. Then about a day before ovulation is due you should have sex frequently, every day or so until ovulation occurs so that there is plenty of FRESH sperm ready to meet the FRESH egg.

2. Just like sperm, eggs can get old and stale so it is best to **avoid having sex after ovulation has occurred**. Therefore after ovulation has occurred abstain from sex. More info in “Getting the Timing Right”.

3 Critical Conception Factors

The three factors essential to successful conception are:

1. the manufacture of eggs
2. the manufacture of healthy sperm
3. healthy fallopian tubes

Eggs

If you want to conceive you need to make sure that you are ovulating. Generally if you are bleeding regularly then you are ovulating. Sometimes bleeding can occur if you aren’t ovulating but it is rare.
Usually if you don't have a period for an extended time - it is because ovulation is not occurring (unless you are pregnant). Therefore if you have an irregular period where you don't have a period for extended times - get it checked out straight away. You may not be ovulating regularly, which will make it difficult for you to conceive.

Another critical factor is the **Sperm**

Healthy sperm is essential for successful conception. Up to 40% of infertility problems can be attributed to the male partner.

Sperm quality is diminished when there is:
- low sperm count (not enough sperm per millilitre of seminal fluid)
- poor motility (sperm do not swim well)
- not enough seminal fluid
- abnormalities

Factors that affect sperm production include smoking, alcohol, and exposure to chemicals and heat.

If you have been trying to conceive for a while and the female is menstruating regularly then make sure the male is checked out too.

**Fallopian Tubes**

As was explained in “How does Conception Occur?” the fallopian tubes are the meeting place for the sperm and the egg. If the tubes are blocked then the sperm and the egg cannot meet and you cannot conceive.

Blockages in the fallopian tubes can occur due to infection to the pelvic cavity for example endometriosis, pelvic inflammatory disease PID, chlamydia, ghnorrhea, IUD use and curettage.
Tests are available to diagnose blocked fallopian tubes and sometimes surgery is successful in clearing blockages. Natural therapies can assist in minor blockages.

Blocked Tubes account for 20% of infertility cases and treatment such as IVF may be needed to successfully conceive.

**The Pill and TTC**

Any hormonal medication that you take (for example, the Birth Control Pill or Depo provera) to help you avoid pregnancy overrides your bodies natural hormonal system.

This means that for the time you are using these medications, the medication runs your menstrual cycle and fertility not your body.

**When you stop taking the medication it takes some time for your body to regain its natural menstrual cycle.** How long it takes to do that depends on:

- the individual
- their lifestyle
- which medication they were on
- How long they took the medication.

If you are trying to conceive and have been on the Pill or others, you cannot necessarily assume that you will fall pregnant straight away. It takes time for the artificial hormones to be released from your body and for your body to get back into the swing of running its own menstrual cycle and fertility again.
You should allow at least 3-6 months to get the Pill out of your system. If you are older (over 30 years) or have been on the medication for over 3-5 years then you may need to allow 12 months to resume a natural cycle.

Remember that a healthy regular cycle represents a healthy fertility system, which is far more likely to have a healthy pregnancy and carry a baby to full term. Keep this in mind if you are tempted to hurry the process along.

There are things you can do to speed up the coming off medication process see the next few chapters on increasing the odds.

**INCREASING THE ODDS OF CONCEPTION.**

**Increasing The Odds**

You can do specific things that will put you into prime preconception condition and help you conceive successfully.

Your partner should also improve his health, after all he supplies 50% of the genetic material to your new baby.

It takes 3 months for new sperm to be created in the man, and 3 months for a new egg to start from a group of follicles and the be released during ovulation.

When embarking on a plan to have a baby it is advised that you spend about 4 months getting ready to conceive. This allows you to wean yourself off any toxic addictive substances, get rid of residual Birth Control Pill effects, and improve your fertility and general health.
The Steps to follow in this 4 months are:

- eat a **healthy diet** see diet guidelines

- See a **nutritional therapist or supplement your diet.**
  Seeing a nutritionist who can assess your vitamin and mineral deficiency's can be a good idea. These professionals can prescribe supplements to return you to tip top medical condition so you can conceive more easily and ensure that you have the nutrients within to support a pregnancy. See more at Helpful Supplements.

- Adopt a **healthy lifestyle** - give up smoking, drinking, exercise more, manage stress etc.

- Be **screened for infections** - Ensure both you and your partner are checked by a doctor for genito-urinary infections. It is important to do this before any other medical tests to check for infertility (as these can spread the infection further into your reproductive organs). Also if you have suffered miscarriages - it can be due to genito-urinary infections.

- **Avoid environmental hazards** - review the chemicals and toxins that you and your partner are exposed to at work and home. Reduce toxicity wherever possible.

  Exposure to chemicals and toxins can affect fertility in both men and women. You may be exposed to more toxins than you are aware of. Consider exhaust fumes, work hazard’s (hairdressing, motor mechanics, painters etc), paint, toxins in harsh cleaning goods, toxins in food, insecticides, garden care goods.

  Reduce exposure anywhere you can. For example, replace harsh cleaning goods in the home with eco products that are naturally based eg, Melaleuca, Tri Nature or Enjo to name a few. Review the
personal care products you are using eg, shampoo, soaps, skin care.

- **Explore the possibility of investigating your fertility status**
  through medical channels if things are happening slowly. How soon you start investigating your fertility depends on a few factors.

- **Age**
  Your age does affect your conception chances - the older you get the more difficult it can become, especially if you have a problematic fertility history or have spent much of your reproductive life on hormonal contraception.

  If you are under 35 take the four months and then try for 6 months to get pregnant on your own - if nothing happens start investigating you and your partner.

  If you are over 35 - get the fertility checks done in the preconception 4 months just to make sure everything is OK.

- **Fertility History**
  If you have a history of fertility problems you may choose to get yourself checked out medically in the preconception 4 months.

- **How long you have been trying to conceive.**
  If you have been trying longer than 12 months to conceive, and you have explored issues with timing, and you maintain a healthy lifestyle then it is probably a good idea to be checked out.
Diet Guidelines When TTC

Eat healthily to maintain a normal weight for you. Include plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables (organic preferably), complex carbohydrates, dairy, meat or other protein if you are vegetarian.

The quality of your food is very important, as is its freshness. Eating food as close to its natural state as possible ensures maximum nutrition.

Often we have a very busy lifestyle - if your eating habits need to be improved. Take it in small steps - reconsider your takeaway options - opt for a healthy salad rather than greasy burgers or fish and chips.

Eat fruit rather than biscuits, yoghurt instead of ice cream.

Moderation in everything is the key.

The next section illustrates a healthy menstrual diet in more detail and can be used as a guide for preconception.

- Reduce (or eliminate) coffee, alcohol, cigarette intake.

- Alcohol, cigarettes and other recreational drugs can affect fertility markedly. You should stop taking these drugs at least 4 months before you plan to conceive.

- Smoking constricts your blood vessels which reduces nutrient intake, it can affect ovarian function, reduces the success of IVF treatment and adversely affects the unborn child - it is not good for you or your baby - give it up.
• **Alcohol** affects male sperm production, lowers female fertility and increases defects in babies.

• **Marijuana** affects the menstrual cycle causing irregularity and sometimes stopping the cycle altogether. It reduces the levels of FSH and LH in men which is needed to make healthy sperm.

• **Cocaine** lowers sperm count, motility and increases the incidence of abnormalities

**Foods for a Healthy Menstrual Cycle.**

This is an excerpt from “The Wild Genie” by Alexandra Pope.

The following dietary guidelines are ideal for continuing wellbeing for all women, but particularly for those who suffer from any menstrual problem including premenstrual syndrome (PMS), endometriosis and dysmenorrhoea, fibroids, cysts, PID and an irregular cycle.

It's important to remember that each person's needs are unique. No one diet fits everyone, but there are some useful guidelines.

Many women ask me: "How long do I have to be on this diet?" This is like asking: "How long is a piece of string?" It's a difficult question for me to answer, partly because I would never recommend going back to a poor nutrient deficient diet.

You may in the future be able to enjoy foods on the "to avoid" list, but they would be occasional rather than a regular feature of your diet. It also greatly depends on what your overall health is like. So how long you stay on the diet depends on each individual woman.
As a general guideline, you need to give yourself at least three months on your new diet to allow for any health changes. Give yourself longer, say five or six months, if you are a bit on again/off again with the diet.

No matter how small the changes you've made to your diet, you may have days when you can't do it. This is perfectly normal, so don't beat yourself up for eating inappropriate foods - enjoy eating them, and then continue again the next day with the healthier plan. Do it consciously, plan treats for yourself, rather than furtively react to that "damn diet".

If life without chocolate, for instance, feels unbearable, treat yourself occasionally to a small amount of the best! Consider also buying organic chocolate with unrefined cane sugar - it's delicious. My only word of caution: try not to break the health rules in the few days before and during your period.

**Foods that promote health**

**Whole foods and minimally processed foods.**

Examples of whole foods are brown rice rather than white rice, brown flour rather than white flour. Minimally processed foods include tofu and fermented foods such as miso and yoghurt.

**Fresh food.**

I have a contract with myself not to eat food that's more than a day old. For example, I might make enough dinner so there's some left over for a lunch box the next day, but if I haven't eaten it by then I throw it away. It's important to avoid food that has gone mouldy, particularly if you have allergies. Remember to enjoy foods in season.

**Organically and biodynamically produced food.**
Organically and biodynamically produced food is much tastier and contains more vitamins and minerals than conventionally produced food. Most importantly, it doesn't contain the pesticides, chemical fertilisers, growth hormones, antibiotics and vaccines that regular fruit, vegetables, meat, eggs and dairy products contain. Avoid genetically engineered food at all times. Buying certified organic food is one way to ensure you're not eating genetically engineered food.

**The greatest possible variety.**

You're more likely to get the range of nutrients your body needs if you have a varied diet. You're also less likely to develop an allergy, which can occur if you repeatedly eat the same foods.

**Vegetables.**

Most veggies are rich in vitamins and minerals. Particularly good ones for women with menstrual problems are root veggies and the green leafy varieties. Make fresh vegetables the mainstay of your diet.

**Whole grains and whole grain cereal.**

These include brown rice, corn, oats, rye, millet, buckwheat, quinoa, amaranth and wheat. Wheat can worsen bloating and gas, a sign that you could be allergic to it. In your quest for menstrual health, I would even go so far as to say that wheat be one of the foods you consider giving up first.

**Legumes.**

These include lentils, kidney beans, azuki beans, chick peas, haricot beans, lima beans, black-eyed beans, black beans, split peas.

**Seeds and nuts.**
Avoid peanuts and peanut butter, as well as pistachios, as they usually contain mould. Unlike meat and fish, beans, nuts and seeds are not complete proteins. However, by coupling them with a grain, you have a complete protein. You don't need to eat them in the same meal to get the benefit of the protein. It's important to store nuts, seeds, and their spreads, in the refrigerator to prevent them from becoming rancid. Eat nuts and seeds within a few weeks of purchase and only buy from shops where there's a high turnover of stock. Avoid stale nuts and seeds at all costs.

**Fruits.**

Enjoy fruits that are seasonal. Fresh fruit is a good source of vitamins and fibre.

**Oils.**

Use only cold-pressed, unrefined oils. Olive (virgin only) and sesame are the best for every day use. Avoid canola oil. Ideally buy oils in brown bottles, to minimise the deteriorating effects of light, and keep them in the refrigerator. Don't even think about buying the de-odourised, sanitised (hydrogenated) versions you find in supermarkets. Hydrogenation creates an immune damaging fat so these oils have no goodness left in them and may even be bad for you.

**Essential Fatty Acids (EFAs).**

Essential for good health, EFAs are particularly important for women with menstrual problems. We need them for the formation of the "friendly" prostaglandins that help to case cramping. Particularly rich sources of EFAs are flaxseed (linseed), evening primrose, raw goat's milk and the oil in fatty fish. Enjoy freshly ground linseed sprinkled on you food as an economical and easy way to get these nutrients.
Tofu.

Made from soy beans, tofu is a good protein source. Soy beans are a source of plant oestrogens which may help relieve PMS symptoms by competing with your own level of oestrogen when it's too high. Tofu is not fermented, so if you have severe health problems or very poor digestion, avoid eating it.

Shoyu or tamari.

These are fermented soya products made from water, salt and soya beans. Use as a salt substitute as it contains much less sodium.

Miso.

A fermented soya bean paste, miso contains protein and helps fight fatigue. It's a great aid to digestion - as long as you don't boil the paste - and a good salt substitute.

Tempeh.

An Indonesian food, tempeh is fermented soya beans (again!). It's very nutritious and an excellent protein product. Although an acquired taste for some people it's worthwhile learning some tasty recipes.

Seaweeds.

A powerhouse of minerals, vitamins and amino acids, seaweeds are an excellent source of iodine, calcium and iron in an easily assimilated form. Never mind diamonds being a girl's best friend, minerals are - seaweeds are a great way to ensure you get plenty of them! Seaweeds will help prevent damage to tissues from chemicals, heavy metals, and certain types of radioactivity; offset stress, boost stamina, and restore sexual interest (Weed,1989). Types of seaweed include nori, arame, kombu,
wakame and Tasmanian float leaf. You can also buy kelp seaweed in tablet and powdered form, using the latter as a salt substitute if you wish.

**Water.**

Essential for all chemical processes in your body, water also helps memory and flushes toxins from the body. I suspect that premenstrual headaches have a lot to do with dehydration. Start drinking more water from today, particularly in hot weather or if you exercise heavily. Because of the many chemicals used in our water supply, a water filter is essential. A reverse osmosis filter system is the best, but initially buy whatever you can afford. Or buy bottled water in clear plastic or glass bottles only.

**Helpful Supplements**

There are many natural products in the market place that can assist you in improving your fertility and preconception health. Some are available through chemists, health food shops, and supermarkets or through specialised practitioners.

If you have a long standing history of irregularity or other infertility problems then the quickest route to optimum preconception health is probably through a natural health practitioner who can individually assess your situation and prescribe especially for you.

If you only have a minor irregularity or have recently given up smoking or have come off the birth control Pill then using some off the shelf products can be just what you need to speed up the process.

**Maca Powder**

Maca, *Lepidium Meyenii*, is a root vegetable cultivated high in the Andean Mountains. Its use as a food and a medicine dates back 10,000 years.
This plant has been used traditionally:

- as an **aphrodisiac** for both men and women
- to **increase vitality, energy, stamina and endurance** in athletes
- promotes **mental clarity**
- to **improve male fertility** - increases seminal fluid, sperm count and mobility, for impotence and erectile dysfunction
- to **improve female fertility** - menstrual irregularities, preconception care, hormone imbalance including menopause and perimenopause

Maca Root contains significant amounts of amino acids, complex carbohydrates, Vitamins B1, B2, C, E and minerals including calcium, phosphorous, zinc, magnesium and iron.

**Maca is a whole food.** It is adaptogenic meaning that it will work on the body according to needs, age and gender of the person taking it - allowing males and females of all ages to benefit from taking it regularly.

What makes Maca so effective, especially in the areas of fertility imbalance is that rather than introducing hormones from outside whether chemical or natural -

Maca encourages the glands in the body to produce the hormones it needs itself according to the individuals unique requirements. That means that Maca will help your body regain hormonal balance, which is essential for healthy menstrual cycle and fertility.

**Vitamin / Mineral Supplements**

There are many different vitamin / mineral supplements available on the market specially formulated for menstrual irregularity / regularity and pre-
conception care for both male and females. Some brands include Pro-Ma, BioCare, Solgar, Foresight and Fertility Plus. Most nutrients work in tandem with others, so taking a balanced group is often better than lots of one particular nutrient. Ideally a healthy diet provides most nutrients, however realistically with modern lifestyle - supplements with superfoods are the way to go.

The nutrients required for optimum pre-conception health include:

**Vitamin B** - needs to be replenished all the time, as it a water-soluble and is passed out of the body with urination. Vit B6 and B12 are particularly important for fertility and hormonal function.

**Folic Acid** - a member of the Vitamin B family, Folic Acid is essential for the production of genetic material in conjunction with Vit B12. The body cannot store Folic Acid so it must be replenished regularly. In addition, Folic acid can be deficient in people with coeliac disease and Crohn's disease, and alcohol, the contraceptive pill and other drugs can cause Folic Acid to be excreted out of the body. It is found naturally in dark green leafy vegetables, apricots, avocados, carrots, egg yolks, liver, melons, whole grains, and yeasts.

**Zinc** - is an essential component of genetic material and plays an important role in the fertility of men (affecting sperm count) and women. Zinc is vital to healthy cell division, so healthy zinc levels are essential at conception. Zinc occurs naturally in oats, rye, almonds, pumpkin seeds and peas.

**Selenium** - is an antioxidant protecting the body from free radicals. For men it is especially important for healthy sperm production.

**Essential Fatty Acids** (EFA's) work on every system of the body and are essential for healthy hormone production. EFA's can prevent blood from clotting inappropriately which can be helpful to women who have suffered from recurrent miscarriages (if clotting was an issue). In pregnancy EFA's are crucial for the development of the babies brain, eyes and central
nervous system. EFA's can be taken in the form of Fish Oils, Evening Primrose etc.

**Vitamin E** - is an antioxidant. Low Vitamin E levels can be a cause for subfertility in men and women. Ensure you take natural Vit E (look for d-alpha-tocopherol on the label) and not synthetic (dl-alpha-tocopherol) as natural Vit E is absorbed better into the body. Found in wheat germ cereal, sunflower seeds, dark green leafy vegetables, nuts, brown rice, eggs, milk, organ meats, Soya beans and sweet potatoes.

**Vitamin C** - is an antioxidant, helpful to sperm production and may play a role in healthy ovulation. Vitamin C is essential to the normal healthy functioning of many systems in the human body. Excellent sources include blackcurrants, raw red peppers, guavas and citrus fruits such as oranges and grapefruits. Other good sources include strawberries, kiwifruit, broccoli and Brussel sprouts.

**Manganese** - an essential trace element needed for healthy skin, bones, cartilage, helps regulate blood sugar levels.

**Iron** - aids in the production of red blood cells and carries oxygen around our bodies. The body can lose iron through periods, childbirth or blood loss (including blood donation). Get your iron levels checked, and only take an iron supplement if you are deficient. Low iron levels can be a factor in subfertility.

**Vitamin A** - an antioxidant essential at conception for the developing embryo. There has been some confusion over the amounts of Vitamin A needed and the form it should take so do your research on this well, high doses of Vit A (over 10,000iu a day) may be harmful to developing babies but it is not necessary to take such high doses. 5000iu per day is sufficient. Natural sources include carrots, tomatoes, cabbage, spinah and broccoli and taking a non animal form of Vitamin A is much better for you (no links to birth defects).
**L-arginine and L-carnitine** - two amino acids essential to healthy sperm production.

**Herbs**

There are many herbs that can help improve reproductive function and fertility. If you want to take herbs I think it is best to see a qualified herbalist and have them individually prescribed.

**Meaningful Charting**

When you are trying to conceive, charting your menstrual cycle in a meaningful way is important so you know what is going on with your body.

Before you choose the method you will use to track your cycle. Consider what type of information you need to keep track of. There is no point in tracking irrelevant information or making it too hard for yourself as this is the sure path to failure.

**So if you haven't already, ask yourself - Why am I tracking my cycle?**

- Is it just so you know when your next period will be?
- Is it to track PMS because unmanageable emotions are impacting your relationships?
- Is it to gather as much information about your body as possible to determine fertility?

Depending on the answer to these questions - you will be able to work out whether you just need to note down bleeding each month on a calendar or
whether you need to track cervical mucus, temperature, moods, other symptoms and therefore need a more sophisticated system.

Another question - is what type of person are you?
- Are you into details, or do you hate them?
- Do you want a comprehensive system or a simple one?
- Do you want to note down the details each time you go to the loo, or
- Are you more comfortable using the computer?

If you like simplicity - keep it simple - just record the bare minimum but do it regularly. It is far better to pick one signal you will track eg. mucus and do it religiously than to overwhelm yourself with too much information and do it sporadically.

There is a great deal of information that your body will tell you about your fertility status throughout the menstrual month - it is just a matter of finding a method of keeping track of it that you like. This way it is easy to keep track and it becomes a habit.

You have the free paper chart system, which takes into account your lunar fertility, and leaves you space to record temperature, mucus, libido etc. You just print out the blank chart each month, fill in the dates and lunar phases and place this chart somewhere convenient, for example, the bathroom/toilet so you can record the information regularly.

Alternatively, you can use a ready made menstrual calendar eg Moon Diary WallChart - although these may not have sufficient room to list symptoms and additional information.

You can also use your FREE TRIAL of the Hormonal Forecaster Software. Hormonal Forecaster is an excellent software program that makes tracking your fertility easy. It covers a myriad of options, from counting the days, tracking mucus, temperature plus a number of other events.
This software is the only one of its kind that lets you track lunar phases in addition to all the other fertility signals. Bear in mind though, that the graphics for the moon phases suit the Northern Hemisphere. This means if you are using the software in the Southern Hemisphere and want to check out the lunar phases in the sky. The first quarter and third quarter moons will appear differently to you in the software than in the sky. See Recognising Lunar phases in the Sky in your CAP for clarification.

**Getting the timing right**

Timing is everything when it comes to falling pregnant - **you need to have sexual intercourse during your fertile time in order to conceive.**

So when is your fertile time?

A woman is fertile during mid cycle ovulation and during her lunar fertile time.

Mid cycle ovulation generally occurs 14 days before the start of the next period. That is around day 15 on a 29 day menstrual cycle.

**To successfully conceive - it is best to have intercourse in the fertile window of opportunity starting at about 1-2 days before ovulation.**
Sperm can live for up to 3 days in the right conditions, and it is the fertile cervical mucus present in a woman’s cervix and vagina in the few days leading up to ovulation that creates these perfect conditions for sperm.

There are a couple of ways to find out when your fertile time is - by counting the days (the rhythm method) or observing fertile mucus.

**Counting the days**

Day 1 of bleeding is the first day of your cycle. So when you are charting this is where you start. Grab a calendar or diary and start marking the days of your cycle and after a month or two or four you will have a pretty good idea of what your body does each month.

Counting the days or using the rhythm method might be fine if you have a very regular cycle but what if you don't? Well if your *cycle varies from month to month you can observe your fertile mucus to tell when you are fertile.*

Your body starts preparing for ovulation a few days before it happens. Hence, the fertile window before ovulation. Cervical mucus is a great fertility indicator. Observing mucus is covered in detail on this page Mucus.

The bottom line is **Cervical Mucus is one of the most important indicators of fertility. It will change throughout the menstrual cycle from being dry, thick or pasty (infertile) to being wet and slippery (fertile).**

It is the job of the cervical mucus to either restrict or allow sperm penetration through the cervix. Getting to know your body and its types of mucus is a very important step in this process. Different women have different symptoms or characteristics of mucus, differences in the wetness, colour, smell, pastiness, so it only by "Knowing Thyself" that you...
can know what your own personal pattern is... Personal observation is extremely important.

**So to achieve pregnancy - OBSERVE WHEN YOU ARE FERTILE - count mid cycle days or observe fertile mucus (or any other method you are using) and THEN HAVE SEX.** Getting the timing right in this way helps enormously.

But there are a couple of other guidelines which will increase you chance of conception. Lets return to the principle **that “Fresh Eggs and Sperm are Vital”**

Using a 29 day cycle as our base – see the diagram below as your guide to having sex at the right time to ensure that only fresh sperm are waiting for the egg in the fallopian tubes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 10–13</th>
<th>Day 13 – 15</th>
<th>Day 15</th>
<th>Day 16-18</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstain so that old sperm does not reach egg.</td>
<td>Have sex every day or so until ovulation occurs</td>
<td>Ovulation – egg is released – lives for only 12 –24 hours</td>
<td>Abstain for a few days after egg is released so that an “old egg” is not fertilised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

So abstaining before ovulation is important so old sperm does not reach the egg. In addition if you are having sex frequently in the first half of your cycle, a few days abstinence gives your partners sperm time to build itself up again.

Abstaining afterwards is important so that an old egg is not fertilised.
What about Lunar Fertility?

There is one more window of opportunity and that is lunar fertility. How you use your lunar fertile information depends on if your mid cycle ovulation is synchronised to your lunar fertile time or not.

As outlined in your CAP, you know that synchronising your mid cycle ovulation to your natal lunar phase fertile time can give you that extra oomph to help you conceive.

Or if the two times are not synchronised you can try to conceive during your lunar fertile time using the guidelines in the CAP.

I wont repeat the detailed information about Lunar Fertility here because its all there in the CAP Book.

Stress Management

Trying to conceive can become stressful for many couples. Things may not be working out as they thought they would and it can be difficult not to feel disappointed, angry, upset or depressed if this is the case.

It is an emotional issue. Some women may be surprised just how strongly the urge to reproduce can hit them. It can become an all-consuming exercise, which in itself can start to cause all sorts of stress in your life and relationships if things aren't moving as quickly as you would like.

Being aware of your thoughts and emotions is very important. Awareness is the first step to changing anything. By listening to the voices in your head and the feelings in your body you may uncover obstacles, beliefs and negativity that are hindering the conception process. See more on this in the Mind Body Connection.
Utilising effective stress management techniques is essential to maintaining your equilibrium and minimising the impact of stress on you which in turn will ensure you are relaxed and able to conceive easily.

Perversely, a woman under great stress is less likely to conceive easily - which is possibly an old survival technique employed by Mother Nature.

Everyone is different and every one of us reacts to situations differently so its important to go easy on yourself.

What is an effective stress technique for one may not suit another, some suggestions are:

- regular exercise
- good diet - eat when your hungry - enjoy your food
- time out for meditation or daydreaming
- reduce unnecessary tasks / activities in your schedule.
- get adequate sleep
- journal writing
- regular bodywork - massage, acupuncture, reflexology, facial, whatever works for you
- have fun
- read a good book
- watch funny movies
- hang out with supportive, positive friends and avoid those who are negative or want to share their conception / pregnancy / birth horror stories.

Try to maintain your usual life without allowing the trying to conceive process overrun your whole life - this can be difficult for some, but is essential to maintaining a positive outlook. Take some time to spoil
and nurture yourself in preparation for the spoiling and nurturing you will give to your baby.

Complimentary Therapies

Modern lifestyle can deplete energy and cause imbalance in your body that can affect your fertility and ability to conceive. There are many healing modalities that can address imbalance, return you to optimum health and help you achieve pregnancy.

The following is just a brief description of the options available, some will suit you and some will not. Whichever option you feel you want to try, ensure you see a qualified professional practitioner.

There is lots of information on the net, the links provided are just a start.

Herbalism

Herbalism is an ancient form of medicine that uses plants to heal. There is evidence that herbs were used for healing as early as 60,000 years ago. There are also different forms of herbalism for example, western or Chinese, and each are effective for treating menstrual and fertility issues. See [http://www.ibiblio.org/herbmed/](http://www.ibiblio.org/herbmed/)

Homeopathy

Based on the laws of like cures like. It is a gentle healing system where the remedies are prepared to precise standards and these remedies stimulate the body to heal itself. See [http://www.indiaspace.com/homoeopathy/abouthom.htm](http://www.indiaspace.com/homoeopathy/abouthom.htm)
**Acupuncture**

Ancient Asian medical system where special acupuncture needles are gently inserted into the body to stimulate the flow of energy around the body.

**Massage**

Deep tissue or relaxing, the rubbing of the body to release tensions and promote health.

**Chiropractic / Osteopathic**

The mobilisation and manipulation of the skeletal and muscular systems to remove blockages and regain balance.

**Kineseology**

A system uses the body to access the mind. A kineseologist uses the muscles of the body to form a feedback system, through testing the muscles they can discover blockages and issues that stress the body, and thus remove them. Effective for physical, emotional and belief patterns.

**Neurolink**

A specialised branch of Kineseology where the brain is used the treat illness and disease. see [http://www.neurolinkglobal.com/](http://www.neurolinkglobal.com/)
Naturopathy

A system of health care that can encompass many natural healing arts eg herbalism, nutrition, acupuncture etc

The Mind Body Connection

The mind has a powerful influence over the body and you can use this influence to help you achieve your goal of having a baby.

I am not suggesting at this point that it is only the mind that controls conception. But it would be foolish to overlook it as the mind controls so much in our lives, and it should certainly be considered as a piece of the puzzle, just as you would consider nutrition, medical factors or the environment.

But first things first, let have a brief look at the mind. When we speak of the mind we must remember that the mind is made up of two parts - the conscious and subconscious mind.

The conscious mind makes up only 12% of the mind and controls such things as rational/logical thought.

The subconscious mind makes up 88% of the mind and stores the following -

- habits and beliefs
- memory
- personality
- self image.

The Reticular Activating System (R.A.S)
In between the conscious and subconscious mind is a filter called the Reticular Activating System (R.A.S). This filter essentially scans all the incoming stimuli or information from our world - all our senses and decides how important each item is.

Some information is sent straight to the conscious mind and some is sent to the subconscious mind.

For example, have you ever had the experience of buying a new car, say a red Mazda and then when you are driving around suddenly you begin to see every red Mazda that is driving in your area. This is selective attention.

It is as if the radar in your brain, in this case the Reticular Activating System, has tuned into Red Mazda's as an important factor in your life. It suddenly chooses to bring every red Mazda you see into your consciousness for a time, - probably until the novelty or focus of having your new car wears off.

The R.A.S chooses what gets through to the subconscious mind, and science estimates that less than 30% of the input your conscious mind deals with gets through to the subconscious mind.

But there are ways to bypass or relax the R.A.S. so that new information can get into your subconscious mind and the key is relaxation. When you relax, and slow down your brain, the RAS filter opens up and allows information to flow between the two minds.

The bottom line is if you are trying to achieve something using only rational thought you are only using 12 % of your mind - not very efficient or effective. It is far more powerful to employ the section of your mind that holds the lions share of the power.
Another important factor to bear in mind is that the **conscious mind** uses the information stored in the subconscious mind eg beliefs as the program to run your life.

**Picture it as a computer system.**

The **conscious mind** is the **hardware** performing the active functions.
The **subconscious mind** is the **software** telling the computer how to work.

If you have faulty or outdated software – that is beliefs and thought patterns, then you are not going to be creating the sorts of results you are looking for in your life now.

Unfortunately most of us are running on beliefs or thought patterns that were laid down a long time ago – in our early formative years. **And these patterns were laid down because we were exposed to the same messages, feelings, and behaviours time and time again, essentially burning pathways in our body mind.**

**Learning New Things**

When we are exposed to NEW information and the RAS goes to work filtering what is what. It uses our “software” (our beliefs, thoughts etc) to decide what gets through to the subconscious mind and what doesn’t.

*If the new information supports our existing “software” it generally gets through and if it doesn’t then 9 times out of ten it is rejected.*

If the new information does not relate to our beliefs systems then the RAS has no frame of reference for the new information and therefore can’t integrate or put it anywhere.
Scientific research has provided abundant evidence that new ideas heard or read only once are certain to disappear out of your awareness very quickly. One study has shown that 50% of new information learned is forgotten within 48 hours, and 90% is lost within 16 days if that new information is not reinforced.

Therefore when you are trying to learn something new or create something new in your life, then it is absolutely vital to present the new information to your mind as often as possible so that it can get through to the subconscious mind and starts reprogramming the “software”

The only way for new information to get through to our subconscious minds and become part of the "software" that’s running our lives is through repetition.

To get the most out of your Conception Action Pack and the info in this ebook, you need to be referring to it often, you need to be using the exercises and you need to be positively affirming your desire for a baby to come into your life.

Guard the Gatekeeper – Be Aware of the Information coming in.

Maintaining a positive outlook is crucial when you are trying to become pregnant.

Being aware of your thoughts and emotions is vital. Awareness is the first step to changing anything. By listening to the voices in your head and the feelings in your body you may uncover obstacles, beliefs and negativity that are hindering the conception process.
You may discover outmoded beliefs or thoughts about:

- children,
- old wives tales about pregnancy or birth,
- horror stories from friends and relations regarding pregnancy, birth or babyhood / childhood / teenagers and parenting in general
- other peoples expectations,
- Your body or fertility
- Fears of what the future and parenthood may bring.

All these things are perfectly normal, as they are just a result of the things we have picked up in life's journey. The point is, is that they may or may not be relevant to you now, and if they aren't relevant or helpful to your goal of getting pregnant then they could be slowing you down.

**Awareness is the key**

For example, If you find yourself, berating yourself because you are not yet pregnant, with thoughts like - "My body is infertile", "I'll never get pregnant", "its taking too long", "I'm too old" etc. **STOP THAT THOUGHT.**

When you catch yourself – you might-
- say out loud “Stop” or
- you might picture a big red cross going through that thought in your mind.
- Or you may picture it dissolving like coffee granules in hot water –
Whatever you do; that action has to signal to your mind that that thought is cancelled.

Those negative thoughts, eg “I’ll never get pregnant” or “it’s taking too long” affirm what you don’t want. Said repetitively without awareness, these thoughts effectively reinforce themselves in your subconscious.

You may have heard of the saying “Garbage in, Garbage Out” – if the input coming into your mind is garbage then the output coming into your life will be garbage too.

Your subconscious is not discerning – it just works on the information or programming that is present. It does not really decide whether the programming is good or bad.

Affirm instead that you are doing everything that you can, and that you are ready and open to fall pregnant now.

(This is just a general affirmation and finding a more specific antidote to your own criticisms may be more helpful. This is covered more specifically in the section on Affirmations in your CAP.)

What usually happens next, is that your mind comes back right at you with a thousand reasons why such and such is not happening - listen attentively.

If you do journal writing, having a dialogue with yourself can be useful so you can write down those negative treasures (the software Sculptor allows you do just that), as unlocking these criticisms and turning them around is a really helpful process.

Trying to conceive can be stressful and highly emotional, if you can at least stop yourself from being self critical then that is one less stress to cope with. Be good to yourself. Nurture yourself, just as you are preparing to nurture another human being.
The mind is a powerful tool and it can be used to create a positive fertile space within you to help you make a beautiful baby.

**Your Mind cannot tell the difference between Reality and Fantasy.**

It’s a fact. Your mind cannot tell the difference between fantasy and reality. It essentially treats all information coming to it in exactly the same way even though consciously you may be able to tell the difference.

For example, if you are watching a movie, you know it’s a fantasy but your subconscious mind just takes it all in without differentiating this input from the other real stuff in your life like walking the dog or making dinner.

The principle is both frightening and liberating. Frightening if you start to consider some of the kinds of negative or “garbage” input that you may be allowing into your life and liberating if you start to control the input and purposefully add positive life affirming input into your life.

**PREGNANCY - TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF**

**Early Pregnancy Signs and Symptoms**

There are a few common symptoms that let you know that you are pregnant.
They are:

**Missed period** - If you have a regular 28/29 day cycle, then being late or missing a period is a pretty good sign that you may be pregnant.

However there are other factors that can delay periods so it’s usually
better to look for more than one sign of pregnancy. If you have a more irregular cycle, or have just come off the Pill or other hormonal contraception, then a late period may NOT be an indication that you are pregnant.

**Nausea or morning sickness** - can occur not just in the morning but all day long. It can be as severe as throwing up just about all day and night or it can be much less severe - just feeling off your food.

Most women find that their sense of smell is heightened during pregnancy, and smelling food cooking can make you feel sick. You may also find that you are absolutely starving but the thought of actually eating food is revolting or alternatively finding something that you feel like eating is very difficult.

Nausea or morning sickness generally wears off at the 12 / 13 week point. Not all women feel nauseous and different pregnancies can produce different symptoms.

**Frequent urination** - the desire to pee frequently is a pretty good sign of pregnancy and can start very early.

**Sore Breasts** - are another sign of pregnancy but some women experience sore breasts before bleeding. Increase in breast size, soreness and the darkening of the nipple area are key.

**Fatigue** - it takes ALOT of energy to grow a baby, so you may feel really tired during pregnancy. Take it as a hint and rest up, cause once that beautiful baby arrives regular sleep can be a thing of the past for quite some time.

**Mood Swings and raging hormones** - the sudden changes in hormone activity as your body adjusts to its new pregnant state can cause emotionality and mood swings. Again this can be pre-menstrual, but if it
continues and your period just doesn't come, then it could be a sign.

**Spotting** - A woman may spot (lightly bleed) 9-10 days after fertilisation. It is not a normal period and it is perfectly normal. However, it should not go on for days. If you do bleed at all during pregnancy see your doctor.

So these are the *most common signs of pregnancy*, some of them can be confused with PMS so the *more you have the better*. If you think you may be pregnant, take a home pregnancy test or see your doctor and find out for sure. Then, take good care of yourself.

**Eating Well**

Eating well during pregnancy is much like eating healthily at any time. Eat fresh food and avoid refined foods. **You need to ensure that you are getting the most nourishment out of your food because your body is supporting two people now and that takes huge resources. If the baby does not get these resources from the food you eat then it will take it out of your body reserves – so eat healthily.**

You will eat a lot more than you usually do. You may be surprised at how quickly you digest and use up the food you have eaten. Eating small nutritious meals / snacks is probably the best. Avoid fast food and empty calories.

Consider taking a quality pregnancy multi vitamin – talk to your health practitioner about what’s appropriate for you. Don’t over medicate with these as large amounts of some supplements eg Vit A can be harmful during pregnancy.

**Foods to Avoid**

When you a pregnant you need to avoid Lysteria. Lysteria is a bacteria found in soft cheeses and uncooked meats. It can infect the fetus and cause miscarriage, still or premature births.
Foods that may contain Lysteria are

- Soft cheese
- Uncooked meats eg pate, deli meats
- Shellfish
- Left overs
- Raw Eggs

All the other pre-conception "No No’s" like alcohol, smoking and recreational drugs still apply. Cut down on caffeine too.

**Get Moving**

Exercise is important during pregnancy. Good choices are swimming, walking and cycling. Yoga under instruction is great for keeping you limber and flexible.

Generally if you had an active lifestyle before pregnancy playing specific then you can continue those for at least some of your pregnancy. Its not a good idea to suddenly take up a vigorous high impact sport when pregnant.

As a guide, keep hydrated, stretch and don’t over do anything.

In this way, keeping active will tone your cardio vascular system, keep you fit and flexible and ensure you’re in the best shape for child birth.

**Avoiding Morning Sickness**

Morning Sickness often occurs in the first trimester of pregnancy. Morning sickness symptoms are different for each woman and even for different pregnancies.
Your changing body causes morning sickness. All of a sudden you have different hormones racing around your system, increased fatigue, increased sense of smell and excess stomach acids. Nausea can strike morning, noon or night or even all day.

You probably find that your sense of smell is acute and will soon discover that any smells will trigger that sick feeling – unfortunately.

- Eat small meals high in carbohydrates or protein.
- Avoid spicy, rich, fatty foods.
- Keep dry biscuits, starchy foods on hand eg rice, pasta
- Keep dry biscuits by your bed, nibble a few in the morning and rest for 10-20 minutes before trying to have breakfast.
- Take antenatal vitamins with meals or if you have a severe case of morning sickness you may have to stop taking them at all until it passes
- Iron supplements can make nausea worse – only take these if you absolutely have to
- Try not to let your stomach become totally empty but graze frequently through the day. A totally empty stomach may make nausea worse.
- Ginger ale or ginger tea can be settling. Avoid Peppermint tea in the first trimester
- Keep well hydrated
- Vitamin B6 can help but consult your doctor first.
- Try acupressure bands available at most pharmacies to help with travel sickness.
- Take frequent naps and rest breaks as tiredness increases morning sickness.
- Get lots of fresh air, if cooking keep the kitchen well ventilated.
- Try putting a few drops of essential oil (eg lemon see below for oils to avoid during pregnancy) on a handkerchief and keep it close by to smell whenever you come across a small that sets you off.
- Eating something salty before a meal can help you finish the meal
Essential Oils to avoid during pregnancy

Aniseed, armoise(mugwort), arnica, basil, clary-sage, cypress, fennel, hyssop, juniper, marjoram, myrrh, origanum, pennyroyal, peppermint, thyme and wintergreen oils as they can either harm mother or child. Some may induce menstrual flow, risking miscarriage.

During the first 3 to 4 months avoid fennel, peppermint, rose and rosemary oils. Jasmine, lavender and chamomile oils are to be used in small amounts only. Also avoid drinking peppermint tea.

In the last few months, lavender and rosemary oils are great in a massage blend to relieve back pain.

Clary-sage, geranium, lavender, rose-geranium and jasmine are great to have on hand for the birth. Clary-sage aids contractions and the respiratory system, while geranium calms and is great after the birth.

The End

If you have any questions or you have some suggestions of how we can improve The Conception Success Handbook – please let me know by email infocap@conceptionactionpack.com
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Nadia Macleod
PO Box 5197
South Murwillumbah NSW 2484
Email – infocap@conceptionactionpack.com
Phone - +61 266723065