



*This information is provided to help you chart your cycle, it is not medical advice and you should speak to your primary health care physician if you are concerned about abnormal or irregular cycles*

## **Charting the menstrual cycle, how it can help you understand you cycle and get pregnant**

My favorite job in clinic is to educate women about their fertility, bodies and overall health in order to empower women to take control of their own cycle. This is what we in the field call FERTILITY AWARENESS! Fertility awareness involves the understanding of if you are fertile, when you are fertile and when you are not by observing your body's cyclic changes mostly though observing cervical fluid! It can be used to get pregnant and can be used to prevent pregnancy.

Most patients I see in the clinic are seemingly healthy, and often fairly young, yet have significant problems with hormones, their menstrual cycle and getting pregnant. To me as a Chinese Medicine practitioner working with women trying to conceive for 12 years ovulation is the most important factor when it comes to regulating a cycle. If you don't ovulate you wont get a period, simple as that so focusing on ovulation is the key.

Although in face ovulation merely marks the release of a ripe egg, a woman is actually fertile when she produces cervical fluid, which can keep alive sperm for up to 5 days – until she ovulates. If the sperm are in the cervix (more accurately cervical crypts) or if the couple has sex while an egg is alive in the fallopian tube cervical fluid can provide a conduit for sperm to swim up through the uterus and the fallopian tube and then try to fertilise the egg.

So as you can clearly see that careful observation of cervical mucus can show us not only how fertile a women is but also when she is fertile, and when she is not. So in clinic I focus on cervical charting as the most common form of charting. I use a simple method which is easy to follow and more importantly easy to do.

There are many other ways to observe fertility including ovulation predictor tests and basal temperature charting (BBT) but these only show that ovulation has occurred and frankly in the case of BBT it can be downright stressful to take you temperature on rising the same time EVERY day!

However with my physician hat on for just a second, I can say that BBT charting gives me a whole lot of information that can be useful in treatment, particularly for those who have very irregular cycles or struggle with mucus charting. So if you wanted to give BBT a go I highly recommend [fertilityfriend.com](http://fertilityfriend.com) website / APP is a good starting point.

Before we start, it is also important to note that there are some situations in which your mucus may be affected by external factors, including:

- Stress
- Medications or drugs (including Clomid)
- If you may be pre-menopausal
- Illness
- Dieting, weight change or fasting
- Travel
- Or any other major environmental or emotional changes

### *So, How Do You Observe Cervical Mucus?*

There are three ways you can do this, depending on what you are most comfortable with. Keeping in mind that for the first few cycles you will be learning a great deal; firstly about your body and its cycles and symptoms, second, about your ability to observe them. As you become more familiar with the workings of your body and the implications of these changes, the whole process will become second nature. Once learned it is not unlearned so it can be combined with condoms and withdrawal as a useful contraceptive method between children.

- Toilet Paper – By observing mucus found after wiping
- Externally – With your fingers, feeling for mucus around the opening of your vagina
- Internally – Checking mucus from the cervix by inserting two fingers (index and third finger) into your vagina and gently sweeping the cervix

Once you have some mucus on your fingers, between your thumb and index finger, press them together and stretch the mucus – take note of what the mucus does. Does it stretch? Does it stay in shape and is tacky? Is it slippery? Is it clear, yellow or cloudy?

#### ***Infertile mucus***

After your period for 3 to five days, you may find that you have no mucus (dry). Any mucus that is seen at this time is infertile. If you do find mucus, it will likely be sticky and may come out as a blob.

*Words women use to describe their infertile mucus at this time include:*

- Thick
- Dense
- Sticky
- Flaky
- Tacky
- Paper paste

Infertile mucus feels drier to touch than fertile mucus. It may be yellow, white or opaque. Upon observation by touch between your thumb and index finger, you will find that it does not stretch or move – it is quite thick.

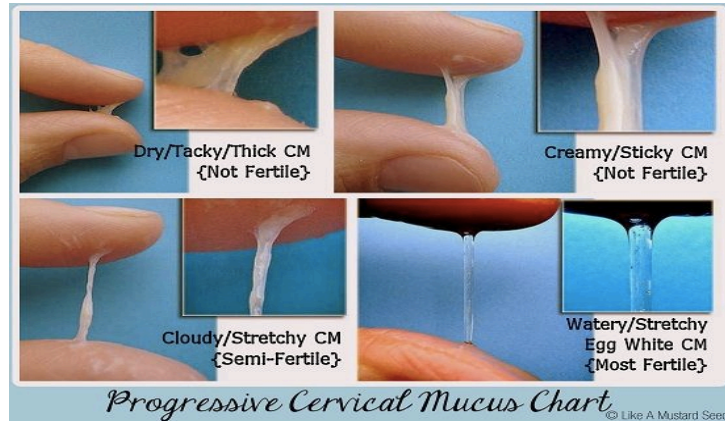
#### ***Fertile mucus***

Cervical mucus will become moist but sticky, about the consistency of a hand lotion product, just days before you ovulate. At this stage, the colour will range from white to cream-colored. If your cervical mucus appears this way, there is some chance for conception.

When you are ovulating, you will have the most cervical mucus. The cervical mucus should be about the same texture and have a similar appearance to an egg white; at this stage, it is often referred to as “egg-white cervical mucus.” This is the time, during ovulation, when you are most likely to become pregnant.

*Words women use to describe their fertile mucus include:*

- Wet
- Slippery
- Watery
- Clear
- Thin
- Fluid



### What is a 'normal menstrual cycle'?

I think at this point is also important to talk about what is considered a 'normal' menstrual cycle. Many women's cycles fall out of what is considered a 'normal' menstrual cycle however this does not always spell disaster to their chances of conception, many changes can be rectified with Acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine or may not even need to be!

So below is a chart of what could be observed if you have a 'normal' menstrual cycle;

Day of cycle	Observation	Information
1	Period	Starts before 12 noon; observe signs such as pain, colour, consistency, flow and the presence of clots
2	Period	
3	Period	
4	Period	
5	Period	
6	Dry	
7	Dry	
8	Dry	
9	Dry	
10	Moist	The three days before ovulation are consider the most 'fertile time' you will see moist, wet discharge with a cold sensation.
11	Moist	
12	Moist	
13	Wet	
14	Wet	
15	Wet + Cold	
16	Dry	
17	Dry	
18	Dry	
19	Dry	
20	Dry	
21	Dry	
22	Dry	
23	Dry	
24	Dry	
25	Dry	Observe and take note of physical and emotional symptoms such as moodiness, sore breasts, cramps and so on
26	Dry	
27	Dry	
28	Dry	

- See on next page; A chart showing chance of conception on relevant days.

On the last page of this document you will find a chart that I recommend printing and filling in, by actually filling this chart in it will make sure that you are making full observations about your mucus rather than guess work.

### ***The normal period***

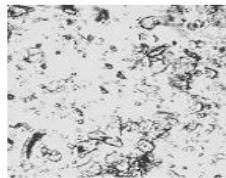
A normal period should ideally last from 3 – 7 days with fresh bright blood with no clots or mucus present (although it is common to occasionally see clots when using tampons, any more than a few should be mentioned to your acupuncturist). On the heaviest day you should use 3 – 5 sanitary items, heavy blood loss should again be addressed with your acupuncturist and herbalist, as we can assist to reduce this. This could also be a sign of other more serious problems such as fibroids so important to note.

If your period is very short and consists dark blood with no proper flow then please again mention this to your acupuncturist or fertility specialist as this could mean that you are not ovulating and your treatments will be adjusted accordingly.

We recommend that women use either menstrual cups or pads during a period. This allows flow to leave the body more effectively than tampons.

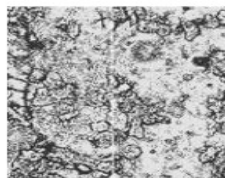
### ***After your period and before ovulation***

After your period you will have several 'dry' days before you start to notice a small amount of mucus, followed by feeling of wetness and cold. As discussed cervical mucus is essential for conception; it is the sperm's mode of transport up the fallopian tubes and egg. The cervix secretes this vital fertile mucus. When the semen is ejaculated in the vagina, the sperm will make it's way up the cervical crypts, before it continues on up to where it will meet the egg. If you take a look at cervical mucus under a microscope you will see that it has many little channels – unlike infertile mucus, which is a criss-cross pattern, which makes it impossible for sperm to swim through.



#### **Non-fertile**

Only dots and some lines appear



#### **Transitional**

Some fern patterns start to appear



#### **Fertile**

A lot of ferning patterns appear

### ***Ovulation***

At the time of ovulation you should feel a wet and cold feeling, you may see the fertile mucus described above. However do not despair if you do not actually see the mucus as long as you can feel the sensation then the mucus is present. Fertile mucus can last for several days. Ovulation isn't the day that you see the most fertile signs – it is the LAST day that you see or feel it! So for instance, if it is cycle day 15, even though your fertile mucus has been present for 3 days it is only when it stops that you will know that you have ovulated. However you can conceive outside of these exact days but the chances are slim.

### ***After ovulation***

From now right through till day 28 you will notice very little if any mucus. This is normal. This is call the luteal phase and the length is dependant on your amount of the hormone progesterone. If this is too short then you have luteal phase deficiency, if this is longer than 18 days then you might be pregnant and should do a pregnancy test.

### ***What happens if you have a cycle that differs from the above described?***

If you cycles are different to the described 'normal cycle' above – say your ovulation is occurring earlier or later or you experience a lack of fertile mucus at the appropriate times – it is something to have checked out by your practitioner, so let us know. It may be that you are lacking a hormone and be a consequence of sub infertility. This means you are potentially fertile, but hormonally imbalanced. So for example you are ovulating on day 9 is a problem because an immature follicle is being released – making it

almost impossible to be fertilised. Or your luteal phase (remember the time from ovulation to period) is too short, meaning that if there is a growing embryo, it cannot continue to grow and thrive without the hormonal support.

In a general sense periods between 26 and 36 days in duration with ovulation between the cycle days 10 and 20 are considered to be the most fertile however I have seen many pregnancies result outside these times. It may mean that you need a little hormonal support to nudge you into the right direction towards pregnancy.



**Thanks for reading I hope this helps you start your fertility journey. However if you need more assistance I am here via appointment. See our website [here](#) for more details**

**Lauren Lanzoni,**

**Acupuncturist & Chinese Herbalist**

# YOUR CHART

Date of start of Period \_\_\_\_\_ Bleed duration \_\_\_\_\_ Cycle duration \_\_\_\_\_

Day of cycle	Observation	Information
1		
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