

Natural Family Planning and Fertility Awareness

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Thermometer

My temperature chart is a pain.
Each morning it drives me insane.
I wait for a rise,
While my poor husband sighs,
"Do we have to do it again?"

Gail Krause

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Overview of Class

- Female Anatomy Objectives
- Male Anatomy Objectives
- Menstrual Cycle
- Factors of Fertility
- NFP/FA Definitions
- Advantages and Disadvantages
- BBT Method
- Mucus Method
- Sympto-Thermal Method – Putting it all Together
- Home Exercises

Pre Test and Post Test

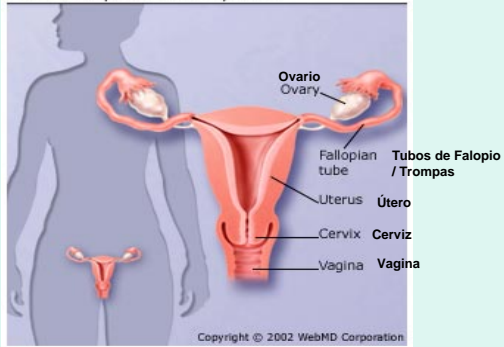
Purpose

To assess current knowledge level of participants

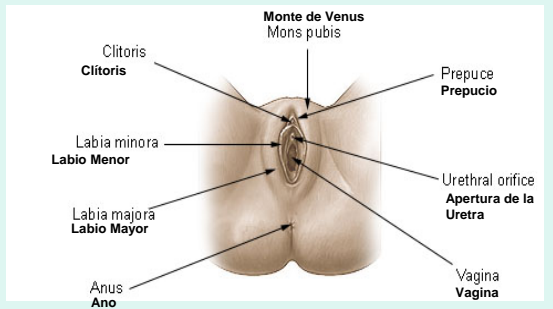
To make sure everyone has the same understanding at the beginning of class

To assess how much follow up a woman or couple might need

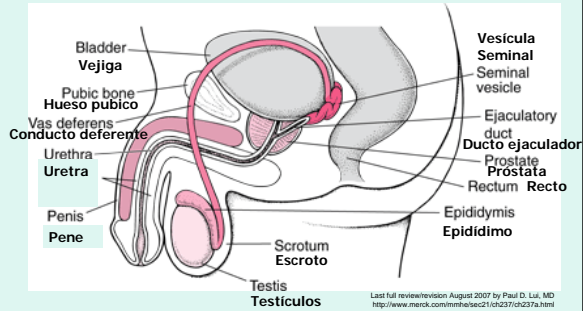
Sistema Reproductivo Femenino Female Reproductive System



Female Anatomy (External) Anatomía Femenina (Externa)



MALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM



Factors of Fertility

- The male is always considered fertile
- The female has periods of fertility and infertility
- The survival of the egg and sperm are critical factors in determining the fertile days of the menstrual cycle.
- The ovum will live from 12 to 24 hours
- An early ovulation may occur in any women's cycle and is usually preceded by a changing mucus pattern

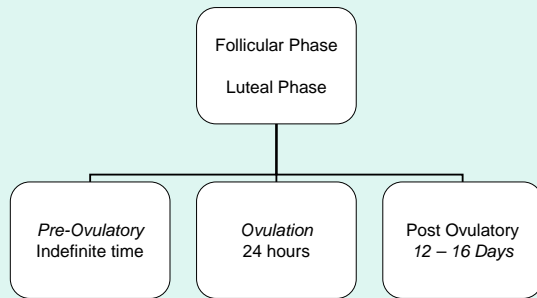
Factors of Fertility

- All days of bleeding are considered potentially fertile due to the possibility of an early ovulation.
- Any genital contact may result in pregnancy during days of fertility.
- The period of time from the disintegration of the ovum to the beginning of the next cycle is considered infertile.

Ovum and Sperm Life Span

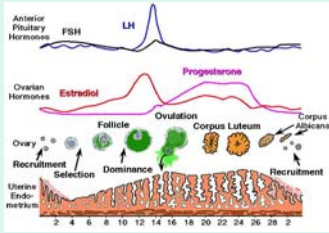
- *The ovum will live from 12 – 24 hours.*
- *In the absence of cervical mucus, sperm life is anywhere from half an hour to 24 hours, depending upon the acidity of the vaginal tract. With cervical mucus present, the survival time is usually 3-5 days, but under ideal conditions it may be as much as 7 days.*

Menstrual Cycle

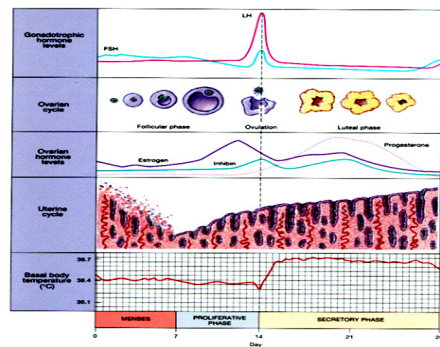


Ovaries	Immature Egg matures	Mature egg is released from ovaries	Corpus luteum develops and is maintained
Hormones	Estrogen	_____	Progesterone
Uterus	Sheds old lining, begins to build new	Lining is at its peak, Possible spotting or bleeding.	Lining maintained becomes more nourishing and thick
Cervix	Begins to secrete fertile mucus with estrogen build-up.	Clear, stretchy mucus, cervix pulls up in pelvis, os dilates	Disappears or becomes tacky, sticky, yellow
Temp	Low	Shift	Higher
Other S/S		Breast tenderness, abdominal fullness, fluid retention	_____ _____ _____

The Menstrual Cycle



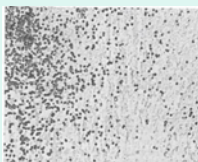
Ovulation



Female Reproductive Function

Cervix Cycle

- As the follicular phase progresses, estrogen stimulates increasingly copious amounts of watery mucus, which enhances penetration by sperm.
 - Spinnbarkeit - mucous stretches to 10 cm.
 - Ferning



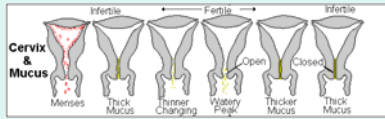
Cycle Day 5



Preovulatory

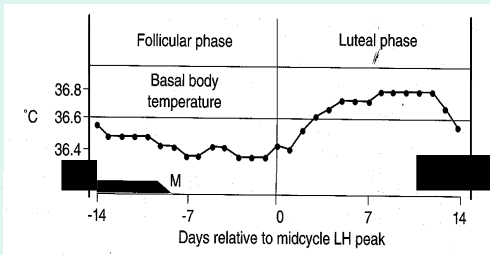
Female Reproductive Function Cervix Cycle

- During the luteal phase, progesterone inhibits the secretory activity of cervix, producing small volumes of thick mucus, inhibiting sperm penetration.



Female Reproductive Function Hormonal Cycle

Basal Body Temperature



Advantages

- No interference with natural body functions
- Responsibility may be shared
- Always accessible
- Woman centered, woman controlled
- Requires no chemicals
- No medical contraindications
- Effective
- Safe
- Can be used to achieve pregnancy

Disadvantages

- Requires responsibility
- Requires ongoing decision making
- Limits intercourse
- Decreases spontaneity
- Requires time to learn and practice
- Requires touching body (may be difficult for some women)
- Not suitable for everyone
- Possible sexual dysfunction issues for female

Definitions – What is NFP and FA?

- **Natural Family Planning** is only using the BBT, Mucus and Sympto-Thermal method to determine signs of infertile and fertile days of a woman's cycle.
- **Fertility Awareness** – allows people to use other methods of birth control plus fertility signs to avoid or to achieve pregnancy naturally

Calendar and Rhythm Methods

- Methods which are based on mathematical calculation of a woman's cycle. Rhythm was the earliest scientific approach to periodic abstinence as a BC method.
- The Rhythm method was the first method accepted by the Catholic church. It is also practiced widely in Japan.
- Works well for women with regular 28 cycles.
- Need to track menstrual cycles for 6 to 12 months.
- Must determine the length of each cycle and note the longest and the shortest cycles in your menstrual history.
- Subtract 18 days from the shortest cycle and then subtract 11 days from the longest cycle to predict the latest ovulation.
- $27-18=9$ and $30-11 = 19$
- Days 9 – 19 potentially fertile

Basal Body Temperature Method

- BBT is a temperature recorded at rest.
- Varies in cyclic patterns throughout the day
- Lowest in the early morning and highest in the afternoon

Based on a woman's basal temperature rise after ovulation has occurred. Does not predict ovulation.

The safe days are after you are sure you have ovulated.

BBT

- Temperature Charts
- Basal body thermometer
BBT records in 1/10th of a degree compared to a regular thermometer which records in 2/10th of a degree.

BBT – 95 – 100 degrees

Regular – 94 – 108 degrees

Measure every morning at the same time

May take your BBT orally, vaginally, or rectally

BBT Changes

- Alcohol
- Illness
- Emotional upset
- Altitude changes
- Jet Lag
- Electric Blanket
- Water beds
- Irregular schedules

Using your Thermometer

- Take your temp first thing every am after at least 3 hours of sleep.
- Take for 5 minutes and at the same time
- Read and record when you are awake
- If the mercury is between two numbers, read the lower number
- Shake the thermometer down below 96.5 and put away in its case
- Store away from heat
- Use cool water to wash off thermometer
- If you have the same reading for several days, try a new thermometer

Finding the Safe Days

- Start recording the temp on the first day after your menstrual period
- You will need at least six readings before ovulation to use as a baseline. Draw a cover line at 0.1 degree above the highest of the first six readings.
- Watch for a rise of **.4 - .6** degrees over the cover-line. This is called the ***Thermal Shift***.

Safe Days - BBT

- When your temperature has stayed up for 3 consecutive days, you can assume ovulation has occurred.
- ***Your safe days begin on the evening of the third day of the thermal shift. The remainder of your cycle is considered safe.***
- You may see your temp fall at the end of your cycle. This signals that your menses will begin within a day or two.

Variations BBT

- Chart any changes in your routine
- Illness
- Medications
- Slow rise – thermal shift longer than 2 days
- Anovulatory cycles- can tell because there is no thermal shift
- Can predict an early pregnancy – no drop in temperature

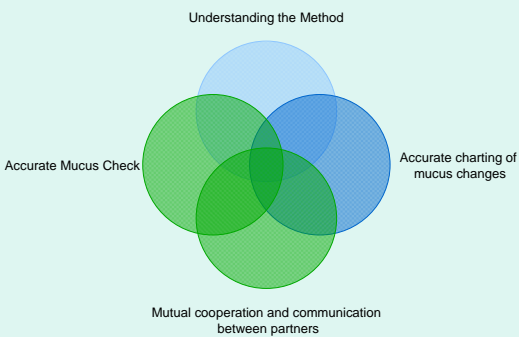
The Mucus Method

- Ovulation Method or Billings Technique
- Dr. John and Lyn Billings, an Australian couple, began in the 1950's recording changes in the cervical mucus to identify patterns in her menstrual cycle. They discovered that changes in cervical mucus allow a woman to **predict** ovulation.

Mucus Method and BBT

- Use of the mucus method and the BBT together especially during the first several months of use help the couple to identify the mucus changes and correlate them with ovulation.
- Avoid intercourse during the first month to observe cervical mucus changes.
- Observe to see if thermal shift correlates with peak mucus.

Successful Use of the Mucus Method



Normal Patterns of Mucus

- Menses: Menstrual flow disguises mucus
Dry days may follow menses
- Early Mucus: Plug at cervix, white, yellow, opaque, **tacky**, gummy, viscid, thick, sticky, poor sperm penetration

Mucus Signs

- Developing: White, yellow, opalescent, rubbery, jelly-like but not stretchy, some ferning
- Peak Mucus: Streaming, watery, white, clear, glossy, egg white, stretch, ferning, sperm penetration is excellent, amount peaks one day before quality peaks

Mucus Signs

- Progesterone Type or Late Mucus:
Thick, opaque cords at cervix, cloudy, yellow, tacky, crumbly, dry, decreased amount

Check for mucus 4 – 6 times a day before urinating. Chart your mucus signs.

The Mucus Check

- Contract and relax pubococcygeal muscle
- Using your finger feel at your cervix, feel the mucus between your fingers. Observe its color, texture, stretchiness, and wetness
- Record your most fertile sign

Factors affecting Mucus Signs

- Douching
- Nylon underwear
- Sexual excitement
- Vaginal infections
- Hormonal methods of birth control

Finding the Safe Days

- All Days of bleeding or spotting are fertile because bleeding/spotting can mask the mucus.
- All pre-ovulatory days of mucus are fertile. This includes developing and peak mucus.

Safe Days

- **Dry Day Rule**
Dry Day = Safe Night, Abstain the next day and night.

This rule refers to dry days after the menses and before developing mucus. This can also be used if you have 1-2 days of fertile mucus, then dry days again.

- **Peak Day Rule** – Peak day plus the next three days are fertile. The evening of the fourth day is safe.

- This should be used after a mucus patch (3 or more consecutive days of mucus without an identifiable peak mucus day). Count the last day of the mucus patch as the peak day and add three more days.

Normal Variations and Exceptional Situations

- Second mucus buildup- applied Peak day rule, example stress delaying true ovulation
- Mucus Patches – no ovulation
- Lactation, Weaning, menopause, Long cycles
- Missed Menstrual period
- Mid-cycle bleeding or spotting
- Vaginal infections
- Hormonal methods of birth control

The Sympto –Thermal Method Putting it All Together

- Cervical changes *before* ovulation

Cervix feels softer,
Os is slightly open
The cervix lifts to a higher position in the vagina

- *After* Ovulation

- The cervix becomes firmer
- The os or opening at the uterus constricts and becomes smaller
- The cervix moves down to a lower position in your vagina

Other Body Signs

- Breast sensitivity, nipple sensitivity
- Swelling of the vulva or vaginal lips
- Mittelschmerz or abdominal discomfort
- Increased libido
- Abdominal bloating
- Spotting
- After ovulation – you may notice breast tenderness, fluid retention or increased libido

Safe Days

- *The definite infertile phase of your cycle begins on the **evening of the third** day of the thermal shift which has been preceded by the appearance of the mucus sign and accompanied by the disappearance of the mucus and cervical signs of fertility.*
- *The rest of cycle is considered safe.*

Using the Charts and Home Exercises

- Chart Daily
- Record the first day of your period and begin charting
- Record any medication or illness
- Use the correct symbols or write explanations of what you mean.

Follow-up

- Make an appointment to review you charts or send charts to the address below.
- Call with any questions
- Remember the method is only as effective as how you use it.

- Call or write Linda Johnson WHNP,
303-442-5160

Boulder Valley Women's' Health Center
2850 Valmont Road
Boulder, Colorado, 80301

References

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- Fertility Awareness. Retrieved 2/8/2010, from <http://www.birth-control-comparison.info/fam.htm>
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- Natural Family Planning. Retrieved 3/17/2010, from <http://www.teensource.org>.

Other Resources

- Couple to Couple League in your area
- Resolve
- Churches
- Creighton Method Resources (on line)
