

eLearning Series: Reclaiming Your Fertility

Part 1



Thank you for subscribing to our free eLearning Series, *Reclaim Your Fertility*. Over the course of the next few weeks, we will be sending you one email per week with tips and tools for enhancing your fertility and reclaiming your vitality on the levels of body, mind, and spirit. We hope this series will help clarify any questions you may have about your own fertility and also be a support to you on your family-building journey. If you have any questions along the way, please don't hesitate to [email me](#) or call us at [303-929-9582](tel:303-929-9582). You can also check out our [website](#) for more information about the clinic!

As experts in the field of Oriental Reproductive Medicine, we sometimes forget to start with the basics when it comes to getting pregnant naturally. I can't tell you how many times I have come to realize that new clients have some common misconceptions (pardon the pun) around issues like timing intercourse, using lubricants during baby-making sex, or not understanding simple fertility signs. Three very easy ways you can begin understanding your cycle and timing sex for optimal chances of conception are to begin basal body temperature charting, becoming aware of cervical mucus changes prior to ovulation, and using an ovulation predictor kit. A great resource for charting temps online is [fertility friend](#). I have been recommending this free charting site for many years to my patients. The site includes a wonderful guide for learning more about BBT charting as well as galleries of charts and online forums.

Here are the quick and dirty rules for BBT charting:

- Use a BBT thermometer (Fairhaven Health is a good brand which we sell at our clinic or that you can order online).
- Take your temperature immediately when you wake up, before moving much, at roughly the same time each day. If you have not slept for a solid three hours before taking it, it could be off. Also, if you drank alcohol the night before or took it much later than usual, the temp might be elevated. If you sleep with your mouth open or take it much earlier than usual, it might be lower than normal. It's not rocket-science and many things can effect temps, so don't obsess with irregularities or inconsistencies too much. I highly advise not getting too caught up in the temps and just using them to keep track of ovulation and length of follicular (pre-ovu) and luteal (post-ovu) phases.
- Your temps should rise about 4/10 of a degree the day after ovulation. In general (and I mean very in general, but not for everyone) most people have follicular BB temps in the range of 97.2-97.5, with some being lower or higher. Luteal phase temps generally range from 97.9-98.3. Again, some people are lower or higher. So, for example, you might have temps in the low to mid 97s for 12-14 days and then have a spike in temp that goes up to the high to mid 98s after day 14 and stays in that range. That would indicate ovulation on day 14 and a biphasic (ovulatory) chart. The luteal phase should last 11-14 days. Again, everyone is different, but closer to 14 days with no spotting prior to menses generally indicates a healthy luteal phase with good progesterone levels.

What's the deal with cervical mucus and do I really need to even keep track of it? I say YES! It's amazing!

- In terms of noting cervical mucus, as ovulation approaches, cervical fluid should increase in the days prior to ovulation and at peak fertility days become slippery, clear and stretchy (like raw eggwhites). For some people, this fertile cervical fluid window is shorter, while for others (like our teenage friends) it can last for 5 days or more. Once ovulation has occurred, the cervical fluid typically becomes sticky and dries up a bit. Many people admit that they don't notice much cervical fluid at any time and seem squeamish about getting that up close and personal with their body fluids. One good opportunity for noting the cervical fluid is when you wipe your urine side after a BM. The downward pressure can force more mucus to the surface so it's noticeable when you wipe the urine side. For those of you for whom this is not already TMI, you can also manually palpate your cervix prior to ovulation and find the mucus with your finger.

You'll also notice that the cervix is soft, high, open and like "lips" before ovulation and during peak fertility while it is lower, harder, closed, drier and more like a nose when you are not fertile.

Finally, how to best can you use those overpriced OPKs (ovulation predictor kits)?

- You can purchase OPKs at a drugstore, Target, or online (cheaper versions often are for sale on amazon.com). I recommend the simple urine sticks rather than the more expensive computerized fertility monitors (which are used with urine sticks also but which measure both estradiol and luteinizing hormone or LH).
- Most OPKs include two lines (the control and test line). As the LH level peaks prior to ovulation, the second line should become darker than the control line (ideally). The quest to get a darker test line has driven many a woman over the edge in my experience, so if you want to take the guess work out of it, I suggest you use the Clear Blue Easy smiley-face tests which simply reveal a smiley face when LH peaks. Usually, LH peaks 24-48 hours before ovulation. So that's the time to get busy! Some people advise using OPKs in the afternoon rather than with the first morning urine since the LH may not show up in the AM. However, for an adequate concentration of LH, you should hold your urine for 4 hours prior to testing. So good luck with that!! However, some people still get clear surges despite taking the tests in the AM or within 4 hours of urinating. Some people never seem to get a very clear surge, despite having normal ovulatory cycles. If this is the case for you, I would advise trying to test in both the morning and the afternoon of each day for a few days. Also, some women who don't ovulate but have abnormally elevated levels of LH (like in some cases with PCOS) will not have luck using the tests. Again, don't let it drive you crazy and only use this tool if it proves to be a stress-free and useful one for you!

Another common misconception I want to mention in this very basic email is timing intercourse and ejaculation frequency. Studies have shown that for men with adequate or high sperm concentration, more frequent ejaculation (like daily for 7 days) improves sperm quality and reduces DNA fragmentation. So don't have your male partner hold back prior to ovulation since you want good, fresh sperm coming in when it matters most! Also, fertile cervical mucus can keep sperm alive for days, so being sure to time sex for the days prior to ovulation is very crucial since once the egg is released, there is a very limited time frame during which the egg can fertilize (12-24 hours). So ideally, the sperm should have already swum up to meet the egg by the time it is released from the follicle.

And one more thing-- all lubricants besides PreSeed and eggwhites (yep, I mean eggwhites) are toxic to sperm. So be sure to avoid lubricants besides the above mentioned options around your fertility window. We have PreSeed ("the sperm friendly lubricant") for sale at [Acupuncture Denver](#). It's one of our clients' favorites products, especially for those with scanty cervical mucus or for those who are on drugs like clomid and are experiencing vaginal dryness as a result. So just say no to the Astroglide or KY-Jelly or even saliva when it really matters in the cycle (again, I know, TMI!).

I promise the next email will be less basic and more filled with more wisdom and ancient Chinese secrets, but I always like to cover the basics first. Sending good vibes your way for a family-building journey filled inspiration, joy and love. Feel free to [email me](#) or give us a call at the clinic (303.929.9582) if you have questions or if you'd like to learn more about our treatment programs, workshops or classes.

Take care,
Jane Gregorie

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