

Welcome to Natural Fertility NZ

Course Overview

You have chosen a course that will help you to meet your particular fertility goals throughout your life.

We have planned 3 sessions for you because effective use of the Sympto-Thermal Method depends totally on knowing your own unique cycle so that you can be confident in identifying your fertile time. This takes two to three cycles to learn effectively.

Sometimes it may be necessary to have more than 3 sessions if:

- Your cycles are taking a while to re-establish after stopping the pill or ceasing breastfeeding.
- You would prefer to have another complete cycle checked with your Educator
- You have marked cycle variations

Our emphasis is on tailoring our fertility knowledge to meet your individual requirements.

Session One:

- You and your Educator will review the things special to your life which will be having an impact on your cycle.
- Your Educator will teach you to identify the signs of fertility
- Your Educator will show you how to record your fertile signs.

Session Two: Three to five weeks later

You will have your own fertility information for the first time at this session, though you will have observed only part of your cycle.

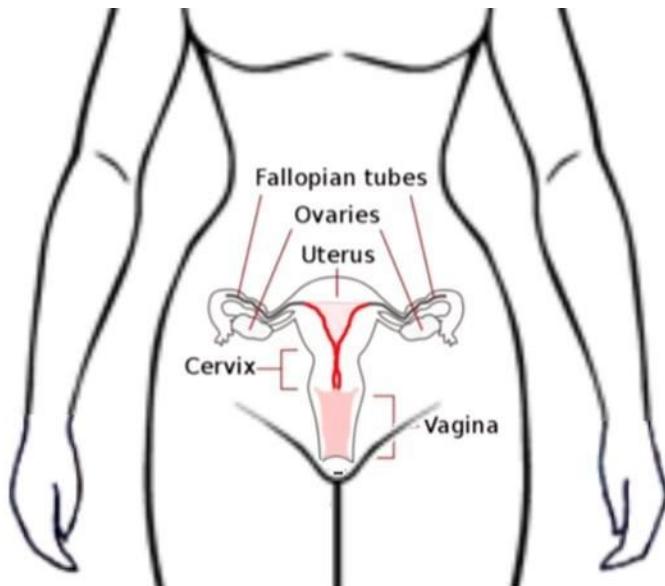
- You will be shown how to mark your chart so you can clearly tell the difference between each stage in your cycle.
- You will learn about an additional check you can make to confirm your fertile time.
- We will introduce you to another simple quick way of recognizing your fertile time, which you can use after 3 cycles have been charted.

Session Three:

This will be your third time at the clinic. You will have your first fully recorded cycle and marked chart for this session.

- We will confirm with you that you have accurately identified your fertile time.
- You will be able to compare this chart with your last one and note any cycle variation - your Educator will help you with this.
- As part of the quick way of recognising your fertile time after charting 3 cycles you will be able to use this first fully recorded cycle as a reference guide.
- We will confirm with you that you feel confident in using Fertility Awareness.
- We will work with you to determine whether a further session would be helpful.

Female Fertility



Woman - The Menstrual Cycle

Begins with the start of one period and ends with the start of the next period. The first day of the period is the first day of the cycle.

The time between the start of the period and the release of an ovum (egg) may change in each cycle. This can be influenced by lifestyle, health and stress.

The time between the release of the ovum (egg) from the ovary and the next period is usually the same in each cycle. Breastfeeding, the menopause and some post pill situations may cause this phase to alter temporarily.

The female reproductive cell is the ovum (plural ova)

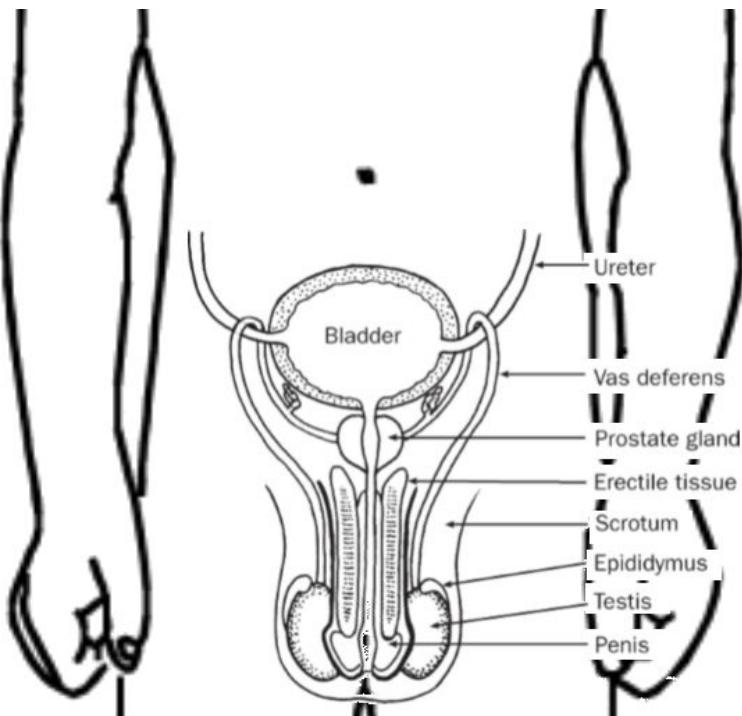
Ova develop in the ovaries. Every woman is born with a supply of ova already present in the ovaries. Each month, in most women, one grows to full maturity and is released. An ovum can be fertilised for up to 24 hours after it is released.

Female Fertility occurs in cycles

Hormones control the development of the ova and cause the cervix to produce mucus which feeds the sperm and helps them travel from the vagina to the fallopian tubes. The sperm joins with the ovum in the fallopian tubes. Fertile type mucus, which is often described as wet and stretchy, can keep sperm alive for up to 7 days.

The release of an ovum from the ovary happens 12-16 days before the next period. During that time the fertilised ovum attaches itself to the wall of the uterus and sets up its own supply of hormones. If fertilisation does not occur, the woman has her next period, which is the shedding of the lining of the uterus and the cycle begins again.

Male Fertility



Man

The male reproductive cell, the sperm is produced in the testes. Sperm production starts at puberty and continues through life.

Male fertility is constant

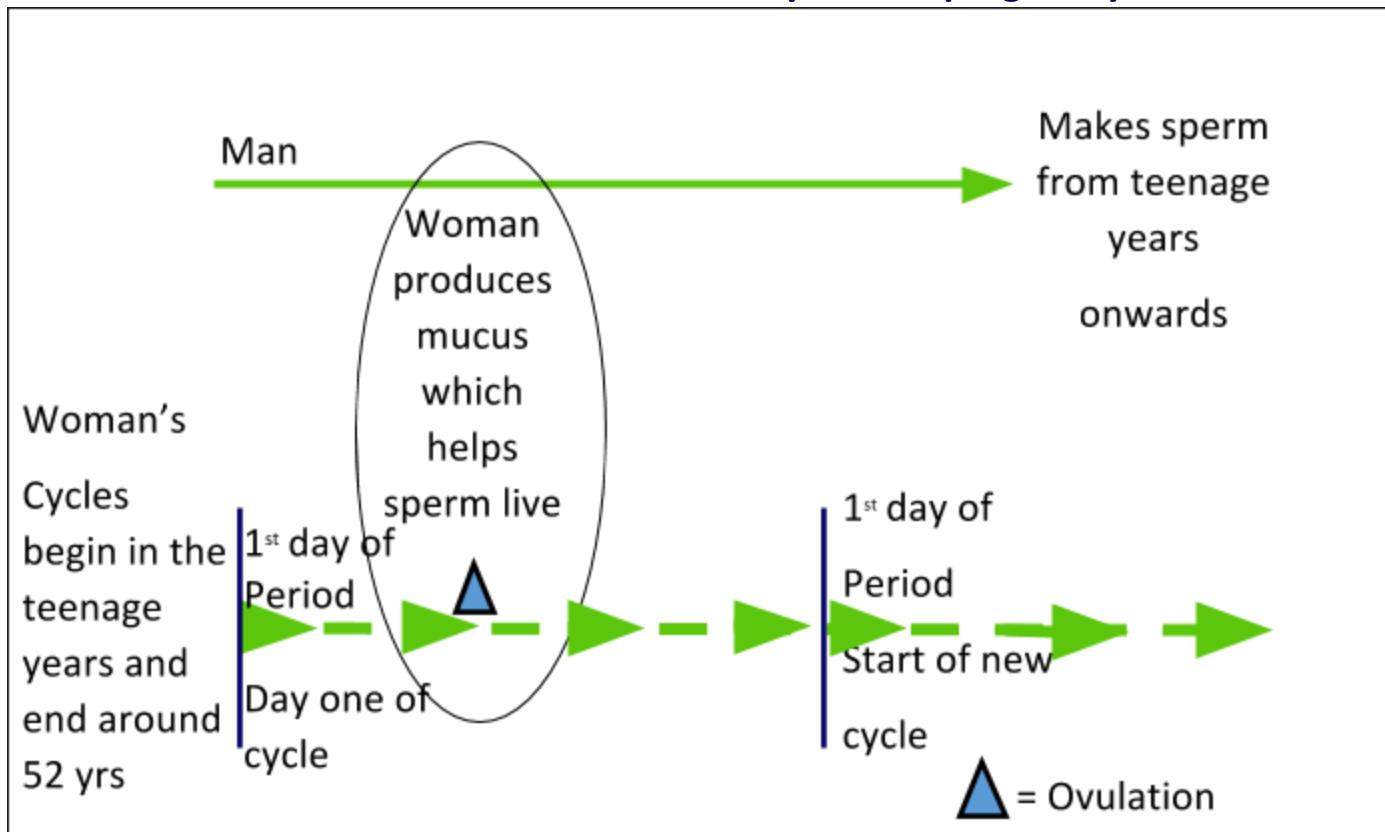
Each sperm takes approximately 100 days to mature. The sperm travel along the Vas Deferens then along the Urethra. They are expelled when the man ejaculates. It is possible for sperm to be present in the fluid which comes out of the penis before ejaculation.

Sperm can survive up to 7 days inside the woman's reproductive system if conditions are favourable.

The development of sperm can be affected by drugs alcohol, and sickness.

Combined Fertility

The time when sexual contact may lead to pregnancy



The ovum (egg), survives a maximum of 24 hours,
usually 18 hours

Sperm can survive in fertile-type mucus up to 7 days

The amount of time from ovulation until the next cycle begins is similar in each cycle (12-16 days)

Your personal NFNZ Educator will help you identify the time of your combined fertility

How to Record your Fertility

Day one of the cycle is the first day of the period

Mucus: Use words that describe colour, texture and amount such as: runny, thin, clear, slippery, stretchy, thick, white, yellow, opaque, tacky, creamy, pasty, lots, little, nothing.	Sensation: Use words that describe an awareness of a feeling at the entrance of the vagina, such as: dry, damp, moist or wet.
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Temperature Recording

- ✓ First thing, on waking in the morning
 - ✓ Before any activity
- ✓ At approximately the same time each morning
 - ✓ While you are still in bed
 - ✓ Under your tongue

(If you are a shift worker, your temperature is taken after your longest sleep and record the time on your chart.)

Record something for each day in each box on your chart

Our emphasis is on tailoring our fertility knowledge to meet your individual requirements

Recognising Fertility

Check your mucus on the toilet paper before passing urine every time you go to the toilet. You may notice that mucus changes during the cycle. Watery, stretchy mucus known as fertile-type mucus helps sperm survive. Mucus that is not watery may also keep sperm alive. Different types of mucus may be noted during the cycle. Check mucus each time you go to the toilet as it can change during the day. Some women have very little mucus. All mucus needs to be noted on your chart.

The fertile time in the cycle is determined by:

- ✓ The presence of mucus
- ✓ A sensation of moistness or wetness
- ✓ Taking into account the previous cycle history
- ✓ Establishing that ovulation has occurred

Your personal NFNZ Educator will teach you to recognise your fertile time

Handy Hints

- Every woman's signs of fertility are unique to her.
- Fertile type mucus can be produced very early in the cycle, even during the period. This means that intercourse during the period may lead to pregnancy if ovulation occurs in the early days of the cycle.
- A sustained rise of 3 higher temperatures after 6 lower ones tells you that ovulation has occurred.
- Once ovulation has occurred, the morning temperature will remain higher until the next period starts, then return to its lower level.
- Keep your thermometer close by your bed as you need as little movement as possible to take your recording.
- It is important to keep a chart each cycle, as you cannot tell in advance when your fertile time will be.
- Even if past cycles have been about the same length, it is always possible that the next cycle will be different.
- In order to use Natural family Planning, a history of cycles must be established.
- It is helpful if you and your partner check over the chart together and make sure that both of you understand and agree on the time of your combined fertility. The decisions you make will then be informed decisions.
- If you miss a recording don't "imagine" or "guess" what it might have been. Don't mark anything for that day.
- If you want extra help or backup, or your cycle seems to change its pattern a lot, check with your personal NFNZ Educator.

Charting Changes in the Cervix

Why Chart?

Changes which occur in the cervix during the menstrual cycle can be recognised by feeling your cervix with your fingers (called Cervical Palpation). For many women cervical palpation gives them useful backup information in identifying the beginning and end of the fertile phase.

This is a useful additional check when a woman observes very little mucus.

When should I check my cervix?

Wait for your period to finish.

Check the cervix about the same time every day, but not immediately after getting up in the morning or after a bowel motion. In the evening or in the shower are good times. You only need to check your cervix once a day.

How do I observe changes in the Cervix?

Insert one or two fingers into your vagina. A normal standing position, a slight squat or with one leg raised on a chair (rather like inserting a tampon) is recommended. Use the same position every day to check your cervix.

What should I observe?

Position- is the cervix low, raised or in between?

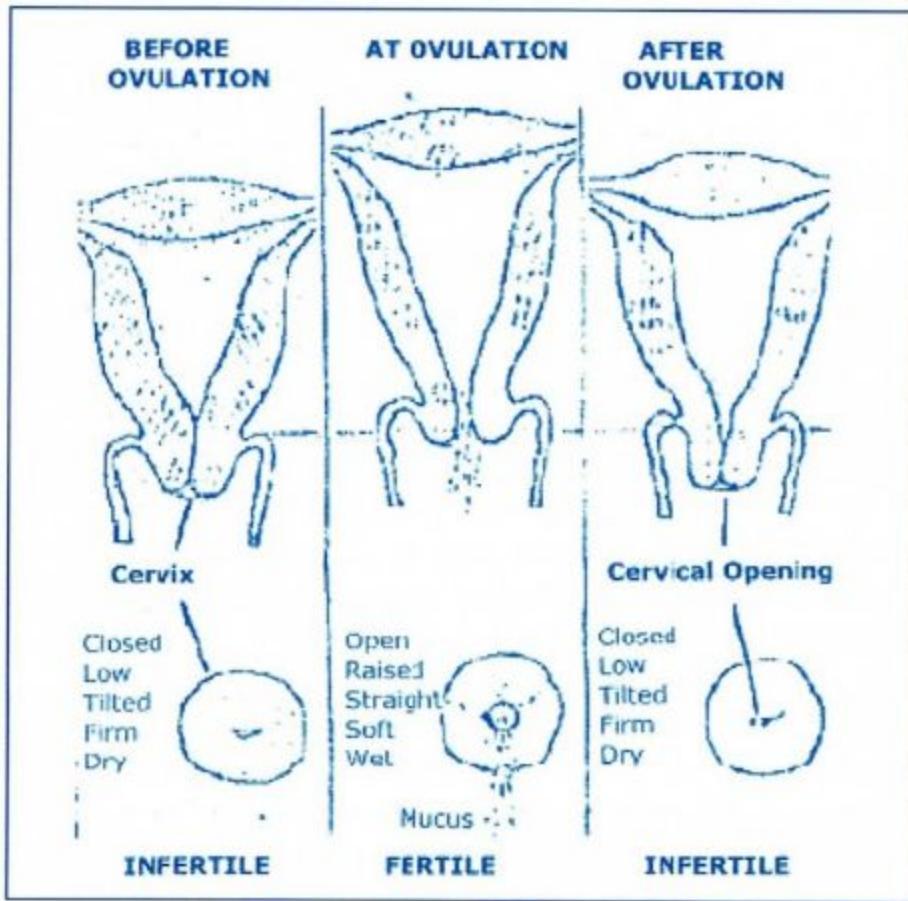
Feel- is it firm (like the tip of your nose) or soft (like your lips)?

Opening- is it open or closed?

Tilt- is it back, front or up? (Don't worry if you find tilt more difficult to observe).

During the fertile phase (4 - 5 days before ovulation) the cervix can be:

- Higher in the vagina
- Softer to feel
- More open at the dimple felt at the entrance to the cervix



How do I record?

Record the changes at the bottom of your chart. Either write in long hand or use a code like the one below.

Position: an arrow pointing up \uparrow or down \downarrow

Feel: F (firm) or S (soft)

Opening: ● = closed, ▷ = half open, • = open

Tilt: B = back, F = front, U = up

Fertile Time: the beginning

The beginning of the fertile time is marked by two indicators:

either

- The **first** day of mucus or dampness **OR**
- Your shortest cycle length minus 21 days (S-21). 21 days takes into account sperm survival of 7 days and an average luteal length of 14 days. This is called the S – 21 guideline.

WHICHEVER COMES FIRST

IMPORTANT

The **first** sign of the presence of mucus by either observation or sensation is considered the beginning of the fertile phase

**Disregard the S-21 calculation if there is mucus present
or a sensation other than dry.**

Using the S-21 Rule?

REMEMBER: Use only on **alternate** evenings for sexual intercourse until the beginning of the fertile time, as this allows a day for any change in the mucus pattern to be seen.

If in doubt ask your personal NFNZ Educator

Fertile Time: the end

The end of the fertile time is marked by:

- 3 days of change from your fertile type mucus **and** sensation
AND
- 3 days of raised Temperatures higher than the previous 6 readings

WHICHEVER COMES LAST

Working with your personal Educator you will learn to recognise your own fertile time.

This takes at least two, sometimes three cycles of observing your body changes, marking them on your chart and discussing the chart with your Educator.

The Sympto-Thermal method of Natural Family Planning offers a 98% effective method of family planning. The effectiveness of the method is reduced when barriers or devices are introduced.

Words and Phrases

Used in Natural Family Planning

Basal Body Temperature: The temperature of the body at rest. Can only be observed after waking from a minimum of two hours sleep and before any activity.

Biphasic temperature: The temperature pattern observed during a cycle in which ovulation has occurred. Before ovulation the temperature is lower than after ovulation.

Cervix: The part of the uterus (womb) which can be felt internally high up in the vagina. The cervix changes its position and consistency during the menstrual cycle.

Combined Fertility: The time where sexual contact may lead to pregnancy.

Fallopian Tubes: These link the ovary with the uterus and are the channel where fertilisation occurs and through which the fertilised ovum travels to the uterus.

Luteal Phase: The time between ovulation and the next period.

Ovum (plural ova): The female reproductive cell which lives up to 24 hours after it has been released from the ovary. Every woman has her supply of ova in the ovaries from birth.

Ovulation: The release of an ovum from the ovary. Usually this occurs monthly but not every woman ovulates every month.

S-21: The “S” stands for the shortest cycle minus 21 days. This is estimated after the completion of 3 cycles and marks the days in the pre-ovulatory phase which are safe for sexual intercourse (unless there is mucus present).

Sperm Survival: Sperm can survive in the vagina for up to 7 days when there is fertile-type mucus present.