

Periods and pregnancy



The menstrual cycle



Your **menstrual cycle** is the way your body prepares for pregnancy.

It ends in a period if you do not get pregnant.

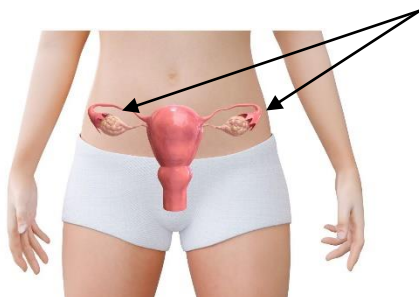
The menstrual cycle lasts about a month.

If you are having sex and you do not want to get pregnant you need to use [contraception](#).



Your **hormones** control the menstrual cycle.

Hormones are chemicals in your body that send messages from your brain to help your body work well.



Ovulation happens when an egg is released from the ovaries.

One egg will be released each month during the menstrual cycle.

An egg will live for 24 hours after ovulation.



If a male's sperm meets and fertilises the egg during sex - this will cause a pregnancy.

After having sex, sperm can live for up to 5 days inside the **fallopian tubes**.

The egg moves through the **fallopian tubes** from the uterus to the womb.



If you do not want to get pregnant, use [contraception](#).



If you do not get pregnant, your hormone levels will drop.

This causes the lining to be shed from the womb and causes a period.



A period is the part of the menstrual cycle when women, girls and people who menstruate bleed from their vagina.

A period usually comes every 28 days, but it is normal if it is longer or shorter than that.

[Find out more about periods](#)

When you are most fertile



Fertile means the time when you have the best chance of getting pregnant.

You are most fertile in the middle of the menstrual cycle.

It usually happens around 14 days after your period starts.

This will depend on the length of your menstrual cycle.



Tracking ovulation



There are different ways you can track your cycle if you want to work out when you are ovulating to plan a pregnancy.

This should not be used as [contraception](#).



Ways of tracking ovulation include:

- keeping a diary or marking the dates of your period on your calendar



- using an ovulation calculator
- using an ovulation prediction kit



- using a period tracking app – though does not work as a type of contraception



- checking your temperature and noticing changes in your **vaginal mucus**

Vaginal mucus is discharge or fluid that keeps your vagina clean and moist and protects it from infection.