

Instructions for the basal body temperature chart

Cycle

The first day of menstruation is Day 1 of the cycle. Start a new chart on that day.
If menstruation starts during the day, transfer that morning's temperature to a new chart.

Cycle no

This shows how many cycles you have charted, i.e. start with cycle no. 1 for your first charted cycle, 2 for the second etc.

Temperature

Glass/mercury or digital thermometer

If using a mercury thermometer, shake the mercury down below 35°C the night before. If using a digital thermometer, try to find one with 2 decimal points.

Take the temperature every morning immediately on waking, before getting out of bed or doing anything. If you have to get up at night, you should have had at least 1 hour of sleep or rest before taking your temperature. Note the recording time on the "Time" line at the top of the chart.

Use the same temperature-taking route every day of the cycle: either (a) place the bulb of the thermometer under the tongue in contact with the floor of the mouth, close the lips and leave for five minutes, (b) insert the thermometer into the vagina for three minutes, (c) smear a trace of lubricating jelly on the bulb and insert into the rectum for three minutes. If you use a digital thermometer, please leave it in place for 3 minutes even if it beeps earlier (temp may continue to rise). Any change in temperature-taking route should be made at the beginning of the cycle. Please note your method of temp-taking where indicated on the chart. Mark the temperature result with a dot for each cycle day, either on the line or in the middle of the box. If you use a digital thermometer with 2 decimal points, round the temperature up or down.

Clean the thermometer with a little cotton wool and cold water.

Cervical secretions

Secretions should be observed throughout the day and the chart marked each evening.

Secretions should be observed either at the vaginal opening/on toilet paper or by inserting one finger into the vagina and taking mucus directly from the cervix, but you should use the same method for the whole cycle. Secretions are observed by the feel, the look and the touch.

Describe the cervical secretions using shading in the appropriate box for "Mucus" (3 lines).

Mark peak day by extending the shaded area in the column vertically upwards to correlate with the temperature readings.

Mark each day of menstrual bleeding, including spotting under "Menstruation" (S=spotting, L= light flow, M=medium flow and H=heavy flow)

Note: Peak day is the last day of highly fertile (line 1). Peak day can only be recognised in retrospect (the day after peak) when the secretions have changed back to less fertile characteristics (line 2 or 3).

Cervix

The infertile cervix is represented by a solid black circle showing it to be closed - ●.

The fertile cervix is represented by an open circle showing the cervix is more open – ○.

The circle is placed low down in the box, showing it lower in the vagina.

The circle is placed higher in the box, showing it higher in the vagina.

Mark "F" under "Firmness" to indicate the cervix feels firm.

Mark "S" under "Firmness" to indicate the cervix feels soft.

Cyclical symptoms

Indicate cyclical symptoms e.g. 'mid-cycle' pain, breast symptoms, mood changes etc. by appropriate day.

Disturbances:

The temperature may be disturbed by

- using a different thermometer
- errors or changes in the way the temperature is taken
- varying recording times
- change in environment (travel, holidays, change in climate or diet)
- stress, physical and emotional upsets
- drinking more alcohol than usual, partying late at night
- eating late in the evening
- lack of sleep or broken sleep, late nights, late mornings
- shift work
- illness, feeling unwell
- some drugs

If any of these factors apply, you should note them in the space provided.

Sexual intercourse:

Mark with an X for unprotected or (X) for protected intercourse.