

Fertility Awareness

In traditional Chinese medicine a fertility awareness chart can be used to provide important information for the practitioner. It can also be used by yourself to develop an awareness of your body's menstrual cycle and aid in the understanding of your fertility.

The basal body temperature. This is a recording of your body's temperature when it is at its lowest. It is important to take your temperature each morning before you raise your metabolic rate with activity. To be an accurate recording you need to have had at least three hours sleep. If this has not happened take your temperature but record this reading on your chart as a disruption.

Taking your temperature. This can be done with a mercury or electronic digital thermometer. The preferred method is to take the temperature orally. The time required differs, with FIVE minutes required for a mercury thermometer and less for the digital.

Note. If you are using a mercury thermometer its possible to take your temperature, place the thermometer on your bedside table and return a little later (after having a shower for example) to chart the reading. The temperature will not drop lower than the recorded reading until the thermometer is shaken down, though obviously it will rise if any heat source (such as a in use hair dryer) is placed near the mercury bulb.

Recording your temperature. Start a new chart on the first day of your period. If the mercury stops between two marks always record it as the one below. Place a dot in the centre of the square. If for any reason you did not take your temperature on any day leave that square blank.

Note. There are occasions such as when you have the flu or have been drinking alcohol when your temperature reading may be inaccurate, if unsure record on your chart as a disruption.

Recording mucus changes. Your mucus normally changes throughout your cycle. Following your period it acts as a barrier to the entry of your cervix but as you approach ovulation it changes to help the sperm on its journey. Termed fertile mucus, this is wet, slippery, stretchy and appears clear (rather like raw egg white). Under a microscope it has a distinctive fern like pattern. When you notice this change record it on your chart, as this marks the beginning of your fertile phase.

Using your temperature chart to record your fertile phase. As mentioned above fertile mucus marks the beginning your fertile phase. This is because although ovulation is noted by the distinct temperature rise; in reality ovulation occurs on the day before your temperature actually rises. Fertile mucus will usually appear 2-3 days prior to ovulation to help sperm released at this time travel to the egg. The egg needs to be fertilised within 12- 24 hours so you are also seen as being fertile for approximately 24 hours following your temperature rise.

Using your temperature chart to predict the arrival of your period. In a 28 day cycle ovulation occurs 14 days after the first day of your preceding period. Your next period will then occur approximately 14 days following ovulation. In women with irregular cycles it is the first part of the cycle that is shorter or longer, with your period still arriving approximately 14 days after ovulation. On your temperature chart this can often be confirmed by a temperature drop the day before your period arrives.