

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

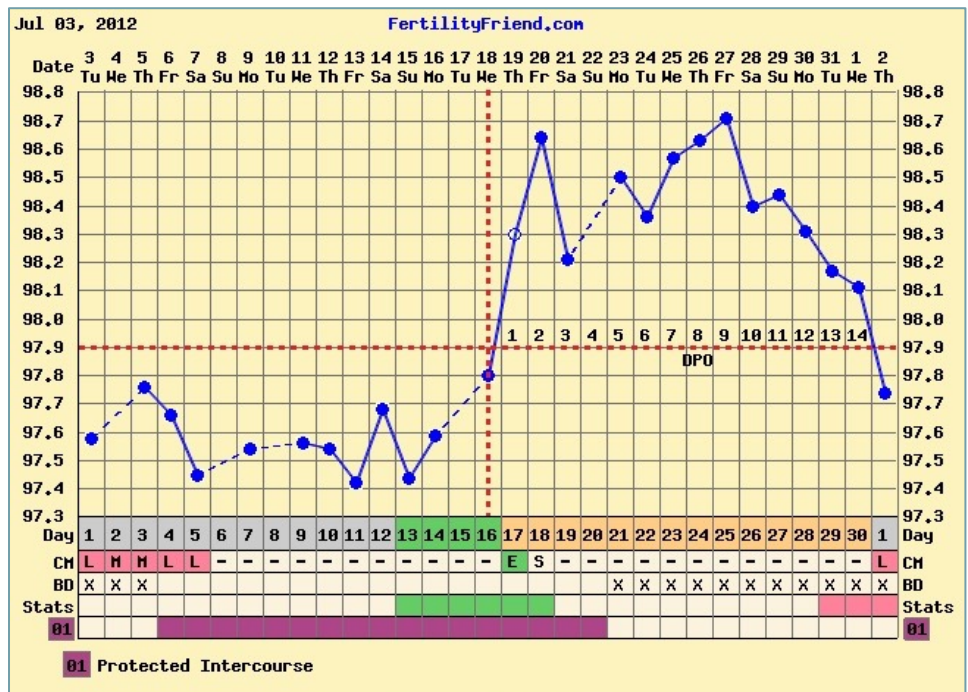
by Joni Yankus, LM, CPM



Guidelines for learning your body's natural cycles and how to achieve your family planning goals

How to Take Your Temperature

1. Use a basal body thermometer. This thermometer records your temperature in hundredths of a degree rather than tenths.
2. Take your temp around the same time every morning. On days when you are able to sleep in past the normal temperature time, set an alarm to wake up for your temp and then you can go back to sleep.
3. Your temperature can be taken orally or vaginally. Place the thermometer in place and let it sit for approximately 2 minutes before turning it on. After the waiting period, turn it on, wait for the beeps, and then record your temp.



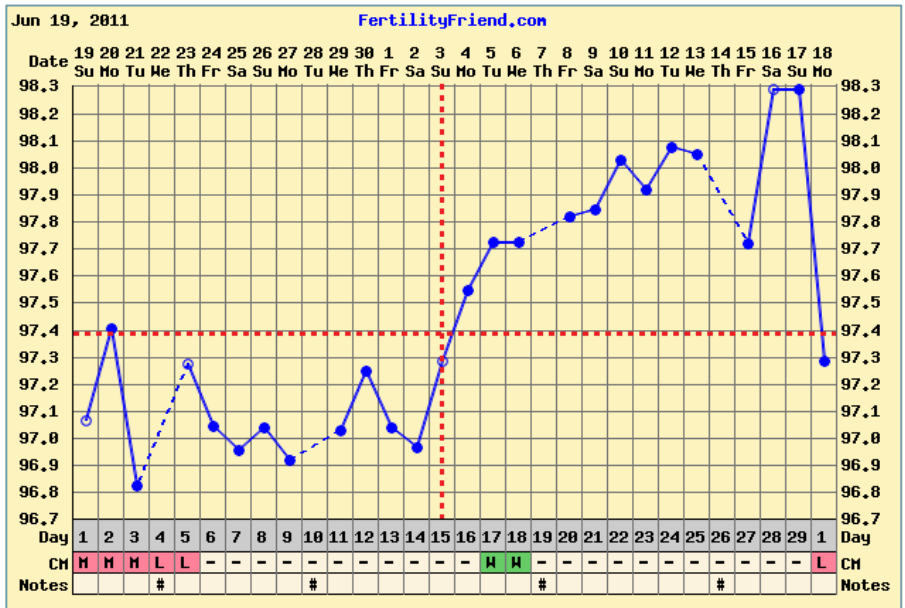
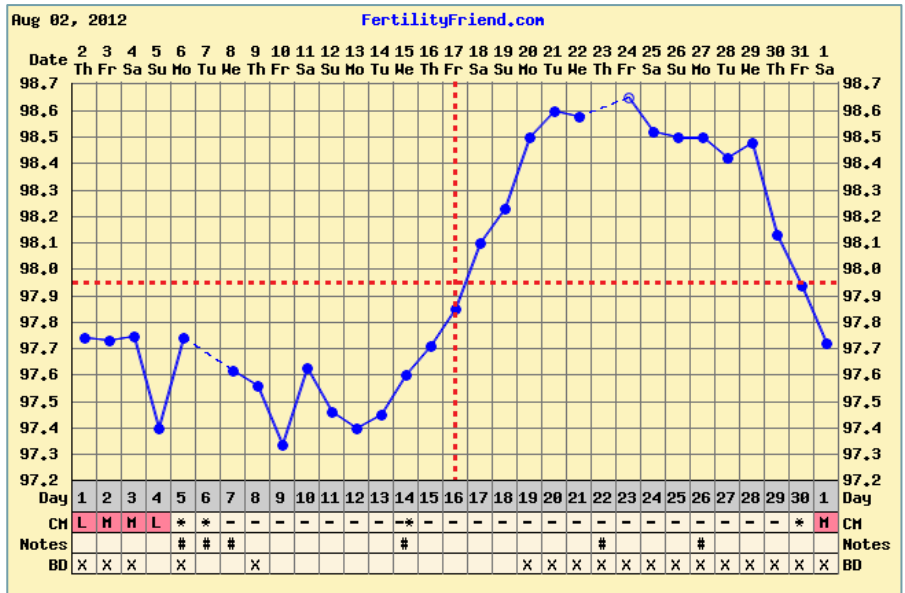
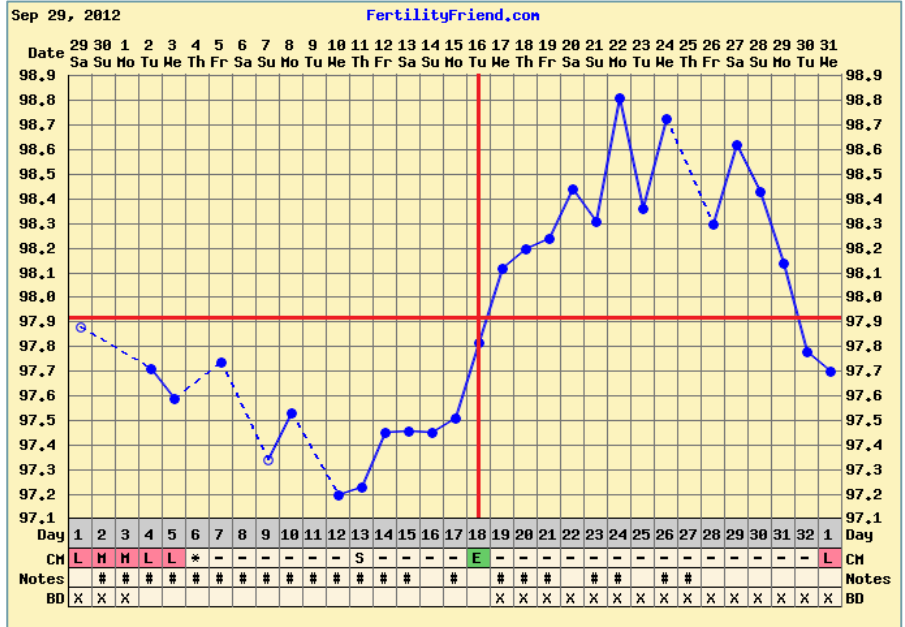
CHARTING

One of my favorite methods for keeping track of temperatures and other pieces of information related to a cycle is using the Fertility Friend app. It is free and available for both Apple and Android phones. The presentation is scientific and straightforward, making the charts easy to read and easy to share. When there are questions regarding your chart or your cycle, it can be helpful to share your chart with someone familiar with charting and natural family planning. Fertility Friend makes sharing your chart simple.

THE BASICS OF YOUR CYCLE

The first day of your period is counted as “cycle day 1” or “CD1.” At the beginning of your cycle, your temps will be lower than they are after ovulation. It is normal to see your temps hovering around the mid-upper 97s and then after ovulation around the low-mid 98s. Here are some samples of charts showing temperatures before and after ovulation. When the body releases a mature egg for potential fertilization (also known as ovulation), the body’s temperature raises in anticipation of providing a warm environment for a growing baby. If fertilization doesn’t occur, then your temperature drops and menstruation begins.

The number of days leading up to ovulation varies from month to month and can vary greatly from person to person. However, the number of days that your temperature is elevated should be 14-15 days unless there is a medical situation affecting that. (Low progesterone is one example of something that could affect that length of time.) Once your temperature shift has occurred at the time of ovulation, you’ll be able to predict either when to expect your period or when to take a pregnancy test with confidence that it will be positive.



ASSESSING CERVICAL MUCUS

Using toilet paper that is FOLDED and not wadded, wipe yourself from front to back. Do this each time you use the bathroom. Wipe every time because some days you may only see fertile mucus in one trip to the bathroom, but not in any others. Once a day still counts as a fertile mucus sighting. If the feeling is non-lubricative and there isn't any mucus on the toilet paper then you are "dry."

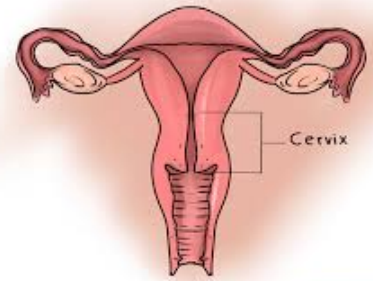
How does it FEEL when you cross the perineum?

The perineum is the area between the back of the vaginal opening and the anus. If your hand glides with great ease across the perineum (as if the perineum has been lubricated!!), then it counts as "lubricative." If your hand stutters or stops when it reaches the perineum then that sensation doesn't count as lubricative.

What do you SEE on the toilet paper?

If there is mucus on the paper then touch it and see if it's stretchy.

Stretchy mucus means lubricative and fertile.



The production and type of mucus varies through your monthly cycle and will usually increase and change consistency close to ovulation in order to better facilitate fertilization. Fertile mucus is defined as mucus that is clear, stretchy and lubricative. It is the perfect medium in which active sperm are nurtured and protected as they make their way to the waiting egg. Having enough fertile mucus during your fertile time in your cycle will increase your chances of achieving a pregnancy.

STICKY



Least fertile. Feels tacky like glue. Impedes the progress of semen.

CREAMY



Considered non-fertile. Feels like lotion and may be white or yellow. Impedes the progress of semen.

WATERY



Fertile. Clear and runny like water. May feel like urine has leaked. Supports progress of semen.

EGG WHITE



Most fertile. Looks white or clear and thick like egg white. Can be stretched up to 2". Facilitates easy movement of the sperm

HOW TO AVOID PREGNANCY



The safest way to avoid pregnancy is to use some form of protection during intercourse from the light days of your period until 3 days after your last fertile sign. A fertile sign is defined as either your temperature shift upward or the presence of fertile or lubricative mucus. If you had a temperature shift on Day 15 and then fertile mucus on Day 16, then unprotected intercourse could resume again on Day 20 (or the evening of Day 19).

BARRIER METHODS OF BIRTH CONTROL

There are only 2 methods of birth control that apply to “natural” family planning: barrier methods and abstinence. Of the many barrier methods on the market, the ones that I primarily recommend are the use of condoms or a female diaphragm. Diaphragms are somewhat difficult to secure and must be obtained with a prescription. A current company that offers them for purchase is Caya.com. Condoms are commonly available and fairly inexpensive. They come in a wide variety of options: lubricated, non-lubricated, ribbed, plain, flavored, lambskin, etc. It’s best to try several different ones until your preferred brand and variety is discovered.



HOW TO ACHIEVE PREGNANCY

Focus on having unprotected intercourse in the days leading up to ovulation and right around ovulation. It is also essential that your body is producing fertile mucus around the time of ovulation. The mucus doesn’t necessarily need to be noted on the actual day of ovulation as sperm can live in fertile mucus for up to 5-6 days. If mucus isn’t noted, then there are supplements and aids that can be added to your diet to help increase the amount of mucus your body produces. Most infertility issues can be diagnosed with the reference of a well-maintained chart.

Note about “choosing” your baby’s gender: while God is the ultimate authority on who your little one will be, there is some science that can help increase your chances of conceiving either a boy or girl. Even if you don’t have any preference in your baby’s gender, this same science can help you predict your baby’s gender based on when they were conceived during your cycle.



GIRL! The “swimmers” that make little girls swim slower and live longer than the ones that make little boys. According to this pattern, to increase your chances of having a girl, you would plan for unprotected intercourse in the days leading up to ovulation and then would start protecting again 1-2 days before ovulation.



BOY! The “swimmers” that make little boys swim fast and die faster than those that make girls. To increase your chances of having a little boy, you would have protected intercourse until the day before ovulation. On that day you would begin unprotected intercourse and would continue unprotected through ovulation.

RESOURCES

- CreightonModel.com excellent resource for finding a personal instructor in natural family planning.
- *Taking Charge of Your Fertility* by Toni Weschler
- Billings.life – home of the Billings Ovulation Method; a well researched natural fertility education resource
- Kindara.com – app and online resource for charting