

Identifying your PEAK DAY of Fertility

Your PEAK DAY

Your chances of getting pregnant are not the same every day. Each woman has about six days each cycle when pregnancy is possible. Some changes in your body that you can see and feel can help you identify and predict the days when you are more likely to get pregnant. In this brochure, we will describe how to pay attention to your cervical fluid to determine the day when you are most likely to get pregnant. This is called your PEAK DAY. It's not the only day that you can get pregnant, but your chances are greatest on that day. The purpose of this brochure is to help you identify your PEAK DAY if you are trying to get pregnant. This brochure is NOT enough for you to avoid pregnancy with natural family planning.

Cervical fluid — What is it?

You may have already noticed that some days the outside of your vagina feels more wet or slippery than others. You may have even noticed that some days there is fluid you can see as a wet spot on your underwear or on the toilet tissue when you wipe. This substance is your cervical fluid. On other days your underwear stays dry and nothing collects on the tissue. These are the days when you have little or no cervical fluid.

The job of the cervical fluid is to prepare your body for sperm. When the outside of your vagina feels dry and there isn't fluid, then you aren't likely to get pregnant. As you approach your PEAK DAY of fertility, the feeling of the cervical fluid will change to more wet and slippery. That wet, slippery cervical fluid helps sperm travel through the vagina to meet and fertilize your egg. Without wet, slippery cervical fluid to help, sperm can't travel easily through the vagina and won't live long enough to reach your egg.

Being aware of the changes in your cervical fluid can help you plan for pregnancy and help you recognize other symptoms you may experience that happen around your PEAK DAY. For example, some women feel cramping as their egg is released and some women have spotting around that same time.

Your fertility chart

You should record your cervical fluid observations (instructions on next page) on your fertility chart each day. Most women find it convenient to do so at night, and may keep their chart on the bedside table.

For your **first** chart, record the date you start under **Cycle Day 1** and begin tracking your observations, regardless of where you are at in your menstrual cycle. Cycle Day 1 for the remaining charts will begin the first day that your menstrual cycle starts. Fill in the **date** on **Row 1** (for example, 7/10) and the **day of the week** on **Row 2** (for example, M, T, W, Th, F, Sa, Su). **Row 3** is where you record your **vaginal bleeding**. Enter an H for heavy, M for medium, L for light, or VL for very light. Leave blank if there is no bleeding. **Row 4** is where you record whether there is **any cervical fluid**. Mark an X if there is any fluid, then proceed to Rows 5-7. If there is no cervical fluid, leave Rows 4-7 blank. **Rows 5-7** are where you record **important characteristics** you might see or feel in the **cervical fluid**. You might notice cervical fluid, but it is not slippery, clear nor stretchy. In that case, you would mark an X in Row 4 but leave Rows 5-7 blank. Based on what you write in Rows 5-7, you decide which day was your PEAK DAY and mark that in Row 8. The gray section at the bottom is for recording your waking temperature. Taking your waking temperature is optional. You can't use your temperature to predict when your PEAK DAY is approaching, but you can use it to confirm when your PEAK DAY has passed. If you choose to observe your waking temperature, you should circle the temperature each day.

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Observing your cervical fluid and identifying your PEAK DAY.

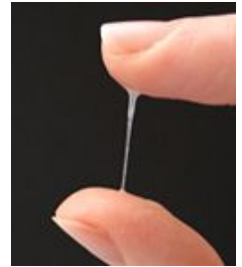
How to observe cervical fluid

During the day, each time you use the toilet, observe your cervical fluid before you urinate. Either touch your clean finger to the outside of your vagina or wipe from front to back with toilet tissue. If there is fluid, mark an X in **Row 4** and then describe the fluid in **Rows 5, 6 or 7** (see below for instructions). If there is no fluid (i.e. the outside of your vagina feels dry), then leave Rows 4–7 blank.

1. Notice if there is any fluid (**Row 4**). If there is, rub the fluid between your fingers and decide if it feels slippery (**Row 5**). As you get closer to your PEAK DAY, the fluid will usually start to feel slippery. Some women especially notice the slippery feeling when they wipe and the toilet tissue slides very easily across the vaginal opening. Some women might notice the slippery feeling while walking throughout the day.

2. Look at the color of the fluid (**Row 6**). As you get closer to your PEAK DAY, the fluid will usually become clear or mostly clear.

3. Touch your thumb to the fluid and gently separate your thumb and finger. Does the fluid stretch at least 1 inch without breaking (Row 7)? As you get closer to your PEAK DAY, the fluid will usually become stretchy. Some women notice that it looks and feels like raw egg whites.



In summary, *wipe* to feel if it's **slippery**; *look* to see if it's **clear**; *touch* to see if it's **stretchy**.

Keeping track of what you see and feel throughout the day

You should examine your cervical fluid several times a day, each time you use the toilet. At the end of the day, you should mark an X in each row that you answered yes at least once.

For example, if the fluid is slippery and clear in the morning but not stretchy, keep checking, because it may become stretchy later in the day. If you don't notice any fluid in the morning, keep checking, because you may notice it later in the day.

Identifying your PEAK DAY

Your PEAK DAY of fertility is the **last** day of your cycle for which you marked an X in **any** of the **Rows 5, 6, or 7**. When you find this day, mark an X in that column in **Row 8**. Please note: You will only be able to determine your PEAK DAY after it has passed since it is the last day of slippery, clear or stretchy fluid.

When you identify your PEAK DAY – please write the date of your PEAK DAY in the upper right corner, then turn the fertility chart over and answer the questions on the back. The questions should be answered as soon as you have identified your PEAK DAY (the day after any slippery, clear or stretchy fluid).

Identifying your PEAK DAY of Fertility

Your waking temperature (optional)

Your body temperature is not the same all of the time. Because of hormonal changes that happen in your body around your PEAK DAY, your waking temperature will rise after your PEAK DAY. Measuring your waking temperature can help you know when your PEAK DAY has passed.

To measure your waking temperature

Use a basal digital or glass thermometer that measures temperatures as low as 96°F and that you can easily read to the tenths place (the one after the point). When you awaken after your longest sleep period of the day, usually first thing in the morning, take your temperature *before you do anything else*, even before going to the bathroom. Keep the thermometer next to the bed so that you can take your temperature without getting up. Record the temperature reading by circling the value on your fertility chart. Most women experience a rise in their waking temperature of at least 0.3°F a day or two *after* their PEAK DAY. Their waking temperature stays at the higher level until the next menstrual cycle starts. Keeping track of your temperature can help you confirm that you correctly identified your PEAK DAY based on your cervical fluid observations.

Three sample fertility charts are included.

On Sample #1: This is the woman's first chart. On her first day of observation, July 10, she noticed slippery cervical fluid. On Cycle Day 2 she recorded both slippery and stretchy fluid. On Cycle Day 3, while she did notice cervical fluid, it was not slippery, not stretchy, and none of it looked clear. Since Day 2 was the last day of slippery, stretchy, or clear fluid, she selected July 11 (Cycle Day 2) as her PEAK DAY. On July 12th (the day this woman identified her PEAK DAY), she answered the questions on the chart back (not shown). She continued to observe her cervical fluid on chart #1 until the first day of her period, at which time she started a new chart. This woman decided not to record her waking temperature.

On Sample #2: This woman's menstrual bleeding lasted for 7 days. She first noticed clear, cervical fluid on Cycle Day 15 which continued through Cycle Day 18. The fluid felt slippery on Cycle Days 16-18, and on Cycle Day 18 the cervical fluid was stretchy. On Cycle Day 19, there was cervical fluid, but it was not slippery, not stretchy, and none of it looked clear. Since Cycle Day 18 was the last day of slippery, stretchy, or clear fluid, she selected May 23 (Cycle Day 18) as her PEAK DAY. This woman also decided not to record her waking temperature.

On Sample #3: This woman observed two different times during this cycle when her cervical fluid felt slippery, clear and/or stretchy. This is an example of why it can be helpful to measure your waking temperature. After the first time of cervical fluid, her waking temperature did not change. She identified April 21 (Cycle Day 19) as her PEAK DAY because it was the *last day* in the cycle with slippery, clear or mostly clear, or stretchy cervical fluid. The rise in temperature of at least 0.3°F helped her know that her PEAK DAY had occurred.

More help is available on our website: <http://medicine.utah.edu/dfpm/peakday>

You can also call our office at (801) 587-3316 or email peakday@utah.edu

