

Basal Body Temperature (BBT)

As part of a woman's menstrual pattern, one change that ordinarily takes place is that her body temperature is lower during the first part of the cycle, called the follicular phase. With ovulation, the temperature usually rises by .5 to 1 degree and will remain elevated through the second part of the cycle, called the luteal phase. The monthly cycle is influenced by two key hormones, estrogen in the follicular phase and progesterone in the luteal phase.

Recording the basal body temperature each day not only helps to indicate when ovulation has occurred, but also may help to uncover some potential problems relating to fertility problems such as anovulation, hypothyroidism, luteal phase defect, etc. As part of a traditional Chinese medicine perspective, charting your BBT can give us keys to help focus your treatment.

For the best results, we recommend using a digital basal thermometer, but most thermometers will do.

Taking your Basal Body Temperature

Take your temperature every morning as soon as you wake up before any other activity (going to the bathroom, talking on the phone, etc.). It is best to take your temperature at about the same time each day. If you end up taking your temperature at different times (due to sleeping in, travel, etc.), make sure to record the time it is taken so an adjustment can be made. Before taking your temperature, a minimum of 3 hours consecutive sleep must have been had.

Charting your Basal Body Temperature

Record your temperature on the graph soon after it is taken each day. Chart the dot on the appropriate temperature for given days and connect the dots with a straight line. Note the time temperature is taken and events such as illness, alcohol use, stress, etc., which might change the temperature. You may notice a slight temperature dip on the day of ovulation which is caused by an estrogen surge.

Another tool to predict ovulation timing is to track your cervical mucus. After your period ends, cervical mucus is usually sticky or chalky and begins to thin as ovulation approaches. Around ovulation, the mucus turns to the consistency of egg whites and signals heightened fertility. After ovulation, the mucus begins to thicken. Cervical mucus can be checked externally if enough fluid can be felt. Or, you can do an internal check by most easily using a clean index finger to reach up towards your cervix.

You can use the chart we provide or there are also various free online BBT charting websites, such as Fertility Friend (hyperlink www.fertilityfriend.com) or Fertility Now (hyperlink to www.fertilitynow.net).

For more information, we recommend the book Taking Charge of Your Fertility: The Definitive Guide to Natural Birth Control, Pregnancy Achievement, and Reproductive Health by Toni Weschler.