

## Your Reproductive Cycle

Every woman's body is different. So are her hopes and dreams. And women have the special role of bearing children as well as the special health needs that come with that. Not having children is a choice that calls for a plan. Whether you are planning to have children or not, understanding your reproductive cycle can help you be informed. Being informed can help you decide to become pregnant only when you are ready.

## Menstrual Cycle

The menstrual cycle is a woman's monthly bleeding (more commonly called a "period"). Having regular menstrual cycles is a sign that important parts of the body are working normally.



An average period lasts **3–7 days.**

On average, a woman will spend a total of **1,800 days (4.9 years)** in menstruation by the time she reaches menopause.

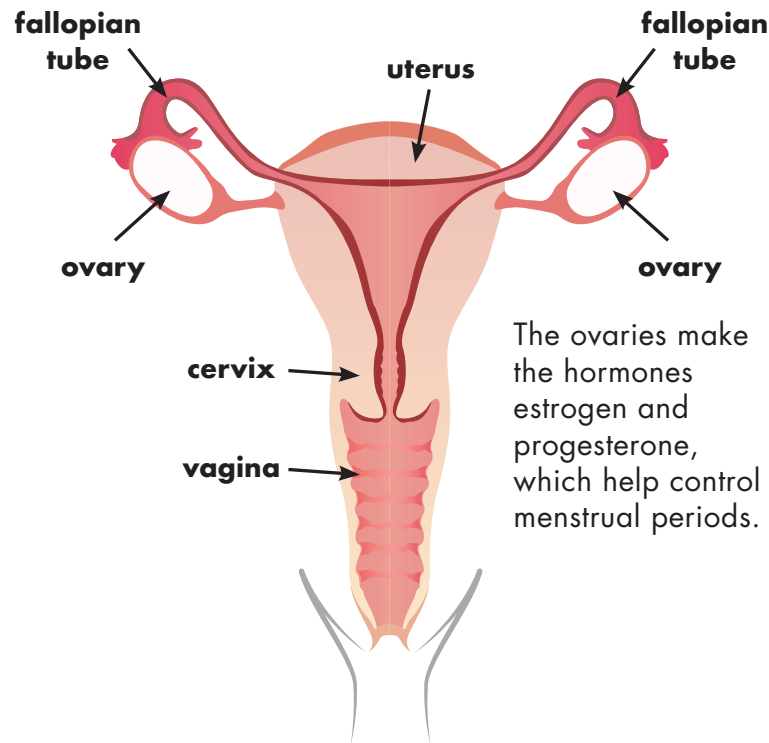


Number of menstrual cycles a woman has on average by the time she reaches menopause.

## The Ovaries

Every month, one ovary releases an egg that travels to the fallopian tube. There, the egg either gets fertilized by sperm, resulting in pregnancy, or dies, and the female gets her period.

## Female Reproductive System



The ovaries make the hormones estrogen and progesterone, which help control menstrual periods.

On average, a girl is born with up to **2,000,000** eggs in her ovaries.

On average, she'll only have about **300,000** eggs at her first period.

### Amenorrhea

Some women may experience amenorrhea, which is the lack of a period. This could be described as:

- Young women who have not started their period by age 16.
- Women who have been menstruating for at least 2 years but haven't had a period for 90 days.

### Endometriosis

Some women may be affected by endometriosis. This is a condition where stray tissue reacts to changes in hormone levels as part of the menstrual cycle, breaking down and bleeding into the surrounding areas, causing pain and inflammation.



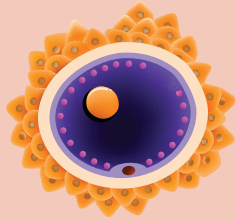
1 in 10 women will have some form of **endometriosis.**



3 in 10 women facing **fertility problems** may have endometriosis.

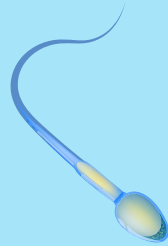
## The Egg

The female egg is the cell responsible for reproduction. **It is the largest cell in the human body.**



## The Sperm

Sperm is the male reproductive cell that fertilizes the egg cell, causing pregnancy. **It is the smallest cell in the human body.**

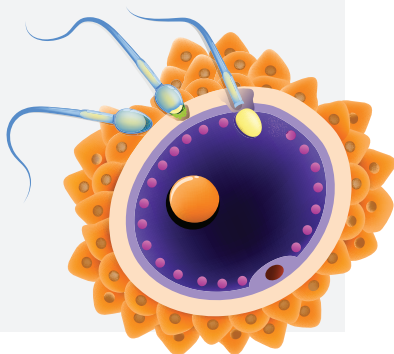


## Fertilization

After a sperm cell fully penetrates an egg cell, the egg changes its surface, locking out other sperm cells. This happens after the sperm cell has entered the egg. This is the fertilization of the egg.

### 15 Seconds

After fertilization, a blastocyst develops, which will eventually become the placenta and the fetus. These are the early stages of pregnancy.



## Pregnancy

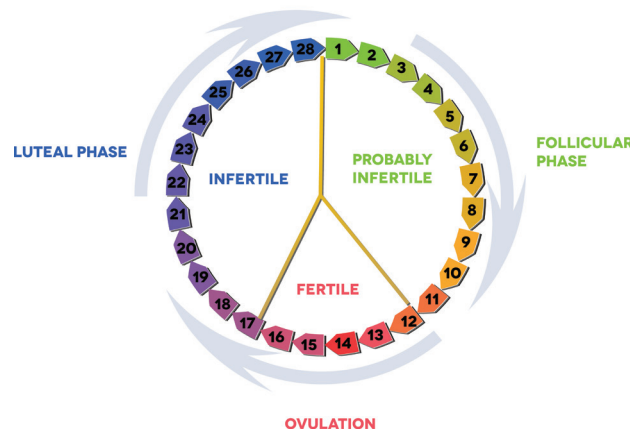
Pregnancy lasts about 40 weeks, grouped into three trimesters. During pregnancy, your body undergoes many changes. During this time, the baby grows and develops inside the placenta.



## After Pregnancy



After you have a baby, you may ovulate before your period or menstrual cycle restarts. This means you **COULD** possibly get pregnant if you are sexually active without using birth control. Having another baby too soon after giving birth comes with risks, including premature birth and health problems. Allow your body to heal and recover. Space your pregnancies at least 18 months apart. Make sure to go to your postpartum visit to talk with your provider about your health needs, including birth control.



## Fertility Cycle

A woman is the most fertile and most likely to get pregnant when she is ovulating. However, it is possible to get pregnant at any time during the fertility cycle, even during the infertile phase.

## Additional Resources

Whether you are planning to get pregnant, wish to not get pregnant, or have already had a baby, visit **DEThrives.com** to access tools and tips for achieving better health, becoming a new mom, and making a reproductive life plan. You can also find women's health resources and more!



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