



## **PREDICTING OVULATION**

### **WHAT IS OVULATION?**

Normal menstrual cycles follow a pattern: ovulation (the release of the egg), then either fertilization and pregnancy, or no pregnancy followed by shedding of the endometrial lining. For a normal menstrual cycle to occur, there must be hormonal communication between the pituitary gland, ovaries, and endometrium (the lining of the uterus).

### **WAYS TO PREDICT OVULATION**

Several measures can be used to determine if you are ovulating. One general method is based on the regularity of your menstrual cycles. If you have monthly menstrual cycles at regular intervals, with associated breast tenderness and abdominal cramping, you most likely are ovulating. Most women ovulate approximately 14 days before their menses begins.

One way you and your physician can predict ovulation is by measuring your basal body temperature. By taking your temperature each morning immediately upon waking, you will notice the distinct increase in basal body temperature after ovulation. Ovulation is thought to occur approximately 1 day prior to the first temperature elevation.

Your physician may measure serum progesterone levels approximately 7 days after suspected ovulation to determine if ovulation has occurred. If this value is greater than 10 ng/ml you most probably are ovulating. If this value is less than 5 ng/ml you probably are not ovulating.

An additional test is home urinary LH testing. LH (luteinizing hormone) is a hormone produced by the pituitary gland. Immediately prior to ovulation there is a large surge in this hormone. Urine testing involves placing a small indicator in your urine that measures LH. When your urine dipstick turns positive you can expect ovulation in approximately 36 hours.

Finally, your physician may suggest a test known as endometrial biopsy. This test is performed approximately 2 to 3 days prior to your menses and involves removing a portion of your endometrium and sending it for pathologic evaluation. The pathologist can determine by looking at the biopsy under the microscope whether there are signs of ovulation.

## **WHY IS PREDICTING OVULATION IMPORTANT?**

Predicting ovulation is important for two reasons: (1) To avoid unwanted pregnancies, and (2) to increase your likelihood of conception. If conception is the goal, predicting ovulation can help ensure that the prospective parents have time to make all the lifestyle changes necessary to give their baby the best possible chance of developing normally. Also, predicting ovulation can help with family planning, i.e., spacing the births of siblings and determining how large you want your family to grow.

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