



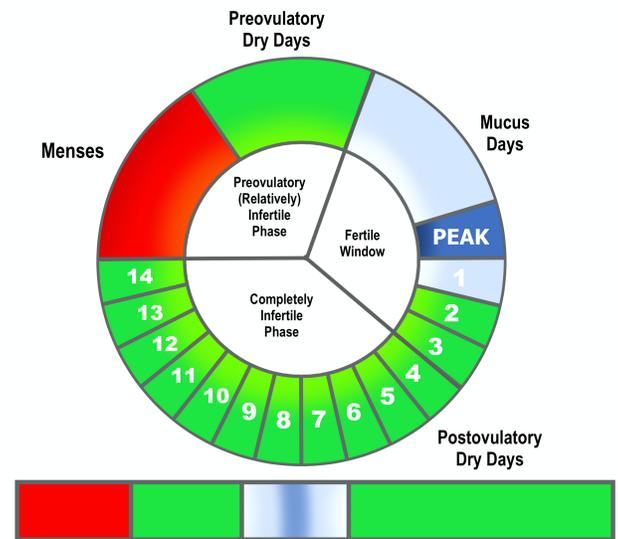
The Cross-Check Method

The *cross-check method* allows you to combine the cervical mucus (CM) rules with the basal body temperature (BBT) rules when confirming ovulation. Using the cross-check method is one of the ways to ensure maximum efficacy of the sympto-thermal method (up to 99.4%).

The cross-check method helps you accurately determine when the postovulatory (completely) infertile phase of your cycle begins. Pregnancy is not possible for the remainder of your cycle once you've confirmed ovulation using the cross-check method.

How do I confirm ovulation with my cervical mucus?

To confirm ovulation, you must wait until your CM has “dried up.” The shift from CM to dry days marks the beginning of the postovulatory phase. To do this, you first identify your **peak day** (the last day of CM that is clear, stretchy, or lubricative). Your peak day is followed by a **count of 3**. The 3 days after peak day are considered fertile. You may confirm ovulation on the 4th day after peak, provided it is a dry day (no mucus).



Why do we use the count of 3?

1. To confirm if you've ovulated, and
2. To allow your vagina to revert back to an acidic pH once your mucus has dried up.

When do I use the count of 3?

The count of three is used in the preovulatory phase following:

- The last day you observe peak mucus (on peak day or on any single day of peak mucus),
- Unusual bleeding or spotting (preovulatory),
- Any day you're in doubt, or you miss a day of charting, or
- After 3 or more days of non-peak mucus (*Justisse*).



When am I fertile?

- On all preovulatory days of either peak or non-peak mucus,
- On all preovulatory days of abnormal bleeding or spotting (plus a count of 3),
- On any day you forget to check for mucus (plus a count of 3), or
- On any day you feel confused by your observations or are otherwise in doubt (plus a count of 3).

When am I infertile?

- Your postovulatory infertile days (once you've confirmed ovulation by cross-checking your cervical mucus and BBT),
- The evening of your preovulatory dry days before you have entered into your fertile window (see the **preovulatory rules** below for additional details),
- Days of heavy or moderate bleeding during your true menstrual period (12–14 days following a confirmed ovulation), or
- The light and very light days of your period, provided you have checked for mucus to confirm that they are, in fact, dry days.

Is my period fertile?

The answer is “yes *and* no.” During the moderate and heavy days of your true menstrual period, your hormone levels are too low to trigger ovulation. However, you may start producing CM on the light and very light days of your period in the event of an early ovulation. You must first learn to identify if you are having a true menstrual period (and not spotting or anovulatory bleeding). Then, since you can't predict ovulation ahead of time, you must check for mucus on the light and very light days of your period to verify if they are dry days (infertile) like you would on any other day of your cycle.

Period guidelines:

- When you can confidently identify if you are having a true menstrual period (by confirming ovulation 12–14 days prior), you can consider the heavy and moderate days of your period infertile.
- Check for mucus on the light and very light days of your period (and record your observations) as you would on any other day to determine if you are fertile or infertile.
- If you observe what appears to be peak or non-peak CM on the light and very light days of your period, consider those days fertile (plus a count of 3 if you observe peak CM).



What is peak day?

- Peak day is the *last* day that you observe any mucus that is clear, stretchy or lubricative/slippery (not the day you observe the most cervical mucus).

What is the difference between peak and non-peak mucus?

- Non-peak mucus is white, cloudy, lotiony, sticky or tacky.
- Peak mucus is clear, stretchy, and/or causes you to experience a lubricative/slippery sensation.

What is a dry day?

- On a dry day you will observe either a dry or smooth sensation. When you check the toilet paper there will be no mucus you can pick up and test between your fingers.
- The toilet paper may be completely dry (0), shiny (4), slightly damp (2), or you may see a wet spot on the toilet paper (2W). These are all categories of dry.

What if I see non-peak mucus in my postovulatory phase?

It's not uncommon to observe non-peak mucus for a few days after ovulation, particularly as you approach menstruation. Once you've confirmed ovulation using the cross-check method, postovulatory CM is not considered fertile. Once you've ovulated, the egg only survives for 12 to 24 hours if not fertilized, your vagina reverts back to an acidic pH (hostile to sperm), and your cervix closes and fills with a thick G-type mucus plug that prevents sperm from entering your cervix and uterus. This is why we consider the postovulatory phase to be your *completely* infertile time, as pregnancy is not possible.

Confirming ovulation with your cervical mucus

- Peak day is highly correlated with ovulation, with ovulation occurring on peak day up to 80% of the time.
- Once you have identified your **peak day** + a count of 3, *and* your mucus has dried up, you can confirm ovulation.
- Consider yourself infertile the evening of the 4th day after peak, provided your mucus has dried up.



Confirming ovulation with your basal body temperature

- Ovulation occurs the day prior to your temperature shift.
- To confirm ovulation with your BBT you must see a **sustained thermal shift** — 3 *normal* temperatures that are higher than your previous 6 *normal* temperatures.
- Your first postovulatory infertile day based on BBT is the evening of your 3rd high temperature.
- Your temperature shift must be clear, obvious, and your temperatures must stay above the baseline/cover-line.
- If one of your temperatures dips below your baseline, you will require a total of 3 temperatures above the baseline to confirm ovulation (3 out of 4). In this situation, the third high temperature must be at least 0.2°C or 0.36°F above the baseline (see **advanced BBT rules** below).

Using the cross-check method

- Confirm ovulation by cross-checking your CM and BBT observations!
- Your postovulatory infertile phase starts either the **4th day after peak day**, or the **evening of your third (normal) high temperature** — *whichever is later*.
- These two signs must match up before you can confirm ovulation.
- Note both signs on your chart (the 4th day after peak, and the evening of your third [normal] high temperature), and identify which is the *later* day.
- Also, pay close attention to your cervical position as an additional sign of fertility. It will align with your CM and BBT observations after ovulation.

Advanced BBT rules

1. To confirm ovulation, the third high temperature must be at least 0.2°C (2 boxes)/0.36°F (3.5 boxes) higher than the baseline.
2. If the 3rd high temperature is not at least 0.2°C (2 boxes)/0.36°F (3.5 boxes) higher than the baseline, a 4th high temperature is required. The 4th high temperature must be above the baseline, but it does not need to be 0.2°C/0.36°F higher than the baseline. In this situation, you are confirming ovulation with 4 temperatures above the baseline instead of 3.
3. If one of the temperatures falls below the baseline, 3 temperatures above the baseline are required to confirm ovulation (3 out of 4 in this case). In this situation, the third high temperature must be at least 0.2°C (2 boxes)/0.36°F (3.5 boxes) higher than the baseline.





Preovulatory Rules

The Day 6 Rule & The Döring Rule/Minus 8 Rule

The addition of the Day 6 Rule & the Döring Rule enhances the efficacy of the symptothermal method in the preovulatory phase of the menstrual cycle. These rules provide you with a specific **last preovulatory infertile day** calculation, giving you an additional layer of protection *in addition to your mucus observations*.

In addition to your daily CM observations, consider yourself fertile from day 7 until you confirm ovulation with the cross-check rule during the first 6 cycles you chart. Note that if your cycles are still normalizing post-pill, postpartum, or otherwise in flux, you may require up to 12 cycles to fully establish the Döring Rule/Minus 8 Rule. Once you've tracked a minimum of six cycles, determine the earliest day you've had a sustained thermal shift, and subtract eight (8) days — this will be your *last preovulatory infertile day*. Continue to monitor your thermal shift (ovulation day) in future cycles and adjust when necessary.

Döring Rule/Minus 8 Rule (and the Day 6 Rule):

- Consider yourself *fertile* from cycle day seven until you've confirmed ovulation with the cross-check rule during the first 6 cycles you track.
- Once you've tracked a minimum of 6–12 cycles, determine the *earliest day* you've had a *sustained thermal shift*, and *subtract eight (8) days*.
- **This will be your “cut off” day — i.e. the last preovulatory infertile day.**
- For example, if the earliest day you've had a sustained temperature shift is day 15, the last day you would have unprotected sex (preovulatory) is day 7 of your cycle ($15 - 8 = 7$).

A study published in Human Reproduction (2007) applied this rule in addition to the symptothermal method, and had the participants subtract 7 days from the day of the earliest temperature rise within the last 12 cycles. Prior to acquiring 12 cycles, the participants were instructed to consider themselves fertile during the preovulatory phase (starting on day six). The result was 99.4% efficacy in a cohort of 900 women contributing over 17,638 cycles. A much earlier study published by DK Döring in 1967 also reported over 99% efficacy (13 pregnancies reported in 48,387 cycles). When combined with the *cross-check method*, the Döring Rule greatly increases overall efficacy of the symptothermal method.



Why does fertility awareness fail as birth control?

Fertility awareness is an entirely *user-dependent* method, meaning that the vast majority of failures are *user failures* as opposed to method failures. A user failure occurs when you aren't following the rules (i.e. you have unprotected sex on a fertile day, and become pregnant). Pregnancy can only occur from sex during the preovulatory phase of your cycle, so managing this phase correctly is crucial to your success!

Fertility awareness fails when:

- You have unprotected sex on a day of peak or non-peak mucus during your preovulatory phase (because you think some mucus is “more fertile” than others);
- You stop checking and recording your fertile signs each day, and have (blind) unprotected sex during your preovulatory phase;
- You adopt “rhythm method thinking” and start having sex based on when you *think* you should be fertile or infertile vs what you actually observe;
- Your app gives you the green light for preovulatory unprotected sex, but you haven't actually checked your cervical mucus (*i.e. rhythm method!*);
- You have underlying doubts about your ability to conceive, or you think your cycles are too “messed up” to get pregnant — so you test the waters;
- You find yourself thinking: “what are the chances?” or “it was only a tiny bit of mucus” and you take a risk (consciously or subconsciously);
- You have sex up to 5 days prior to ovulation during a “dry cycle;” or
- The condom breaks, your partner fails to withdraw in time, or your chosen barrier method fails on a fertile day.

Guidelines for limited mucus and/or dry cycles

Limited CM and/or dry cycles (cycles with ovulation, but little to no visible CM) may occur for various reasons including recent hormonal contraceptive (HC) use, recent use of fertility drugs (like Clomid/Tamoxifen), current antihistamine use, a history of cervical surgeries for dysplasia or abnormal cells, and/or other health issues that impair CM production.

- Remember that **pregnancy is possible in any cycle with ovulation**. If ovulation takes place, pregnancy is possible from sex up to 5 days before.
- Check your cervical position daily as a secondary sign. Note when it begins to feel different (you'll want to check daily for one full cycle before you begin relying on it).
- Consider avoiding unprotected sex during your preovulatory phase until you're able to rely on CM again in future cycles.
- Use the **Day 6 Rule** and the **Döring Rule/Minus 8 Rule** to give yourself a *last preovulatory infertile day* “cut-off” after which you do not have unprotected sex until you've confirmed ovulation.
- When you're not able to rely on CM as your primary sign of fertility, you must be cautious and consider your preovulatory phase fertile when in doubt!

