Kristin Beckedahl B. HlthSci (Nat), GradDip CBE, Adv. Cert. NFM, Member ATMS
NATUROPATH, HERBALIST, NUTRITIONIST, NATURAL FERTILITY

Temperature Charting for Fertility

Your basal body temperature is the *basic* temperature that your body sits at when it's doing the least amount of work. This reflects your metabolic rate, which is largely determined by hormones secreted by the thyroid gland. Your fertility cycle may also be monitored using your temperature, as other hormones are also involved in the rising and falling of your temperature.

When used in conjunction with cervical mucus observations, it provides a insightful and very reliable method of natural fertility management. By collecting your daily basal body temperatures and matching it against the temperature graph, you can confirm when and whether or not ovulation has occurred. You may also be able to pinpoint when ovulation actually occurred. Knowing the most likely day for ovulation can help you with your attempts for conception, as well as contraception. It often confirms the changes in the cervical mucus patterns if these are being monitored concurrently.

Digital thermometers are often more convenient. Your temperature may be monitored for either your thyroid function and/or your fertility cycles. Temperatures consistently below 36.4 – 36.3 can be indicative of an underactive (or suboptimal) thyroid gland.

To monitor your fertility cycle, begin each new chart on the first day of your period (day 1). Continue recording temperatures and symptoms etc until the first day of your next period when you again start a new chart.

How to get started

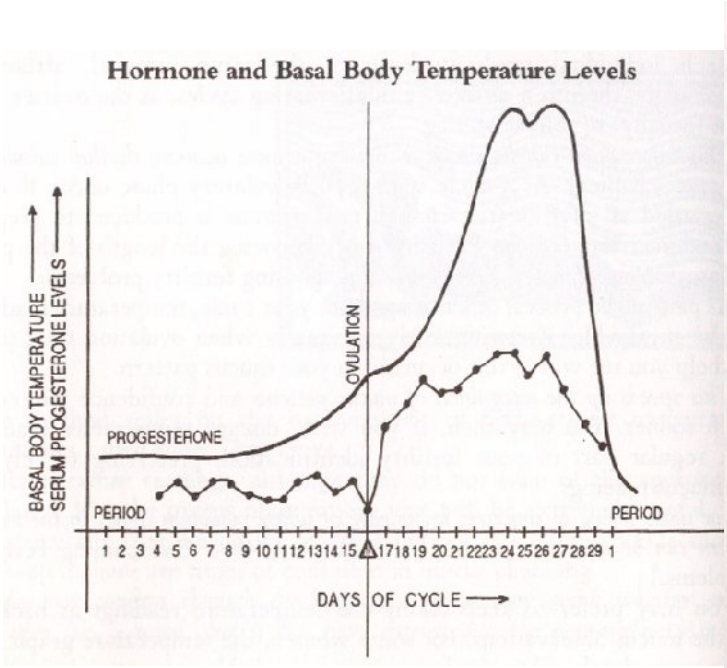
- Start recording your temperature on the first day of your (next) period or as otherwise instructed.
- Ensure the thermometer is close to or by your bed each night. It is best to leave it in easy reach, so you won't have to sit up, stretch too far or move much to reach it.
- Record your temperature orally when you first wake up; i.e. before getting out of bed, eating or drinking, or moving too much in bed.
- Place a cross in the box of the recorded temperature on the corresponding day. You may join the crosses at the end of your cycle or leave for your next visit.
- For greater accuracy is best to take you temperature at the same time each day. If this is not possible and you rise earlier or later, you need to apply the temperature adjustment rule (see below) OR make a note of the time the temperature was taken and I will adjust this for you if you're not sure at your next visit.
- If your temperature is not taken on any day, leave that line blank and **do not** join the crosses on either side of that day.

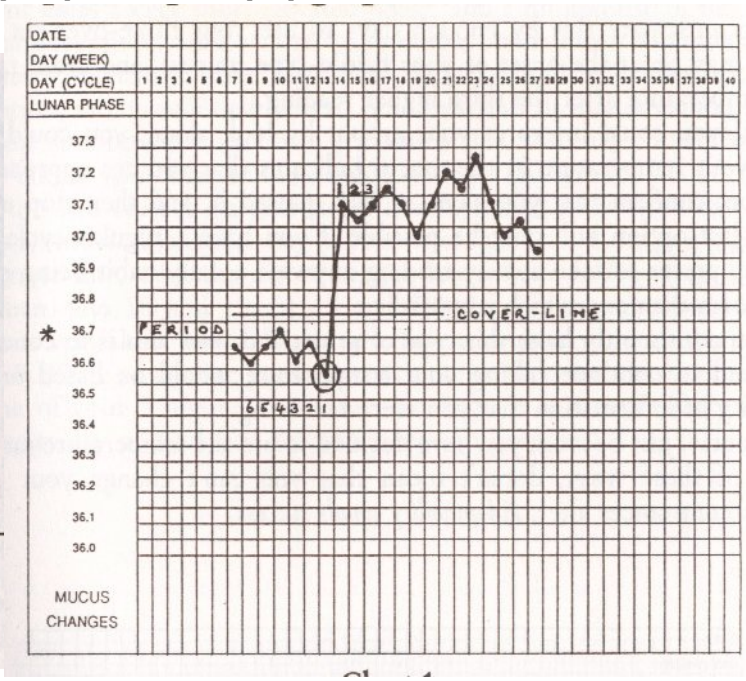
~ TEMPERATURE ADJUSTMENT RULE ~

If you rise earlier – adjust the temp UP by 0.1°C (1 box) for each hour you have risen early.
If you rise later - adjust the temp DOWN by 0.1°C (1 box) for each hour you have risen later.

(Remember to mark these days on your chart as being different even though you have or have not adjusted them)

The hormonal interplay of your monthly cycle





Ref: Naish, F. Natural Fertility

The two graphs above show how the temperature chart should look and how the hormones are released throughout the cycle. A monthly 'cycle' starts at the beginning of the period and lasts about 28 days; with the period lasting approximately 5 days and ovulation around Day 14.

On Day 1, the Follicle-Stimulating hormone (FSH) rises; this picks up a follicle from the ovary. The FSH then drops away and the Oestrogen rises, feeding and nourishing the follicle, before dropping away again. The FSH again rises at ovulation as the oestrogen levels drop, and the Lutenising hormone (LH) also comes in and rises at this time.

The LH provides the mucous and this is what comes away at ovulation. At/after ovulation the FSH and the LH drop away, but the oestrogen and progesterone levels rise, with progesterone peaking on Day 21. Progesterone is the dominant hormone in the second half of the cycle if a healthy ovulation has occurred. This hormone is known as the 'heating hormone' and will cause the rise at midcycle and the continued 'higher' temperatures until the end of the cycle. If no conception has occurred the temperature drops away and the cycle starts again. If conception has occurred the temperatures will stay consistently elevated.

Every time there is a drop in the hormone production there is a drop in the temperature; and it is this dropping (and rising) of the hormone production that we are recording. Ideally the temperature must drop to **36.2 at ovulation**, this is because the sperm are stored at 36.2 degrees and are best transferred with the minimum of interruption to their environment. The average human internal temperature is 36.6 (approximately) and this temperature of course is too hot for sperm unless we take the temperature up very gradually.

When does ovulation occur?

The most likely day for ovulation is at the *beginning* of the temperature rise. This is usually, but not always, the lowest temperature recorded in the cycle. You can pretty safely assume 3-5 days before and after the rise, is your highly fertile time. This of course differs among individuals.

Can you have false temperature readings?

Yes. The following may cause freak highs; as infection (however slight), medications, drugs (prescribed or recreational), moving quickly across time-zones (air travel), severe over-heating in bed (electric blankets), hangovers, stress, or a late rising time of a day. Always record your temperature, but make a note of any unusual circumstances.