

What is
happening
during the
menstrual
cycle?

in the
womb

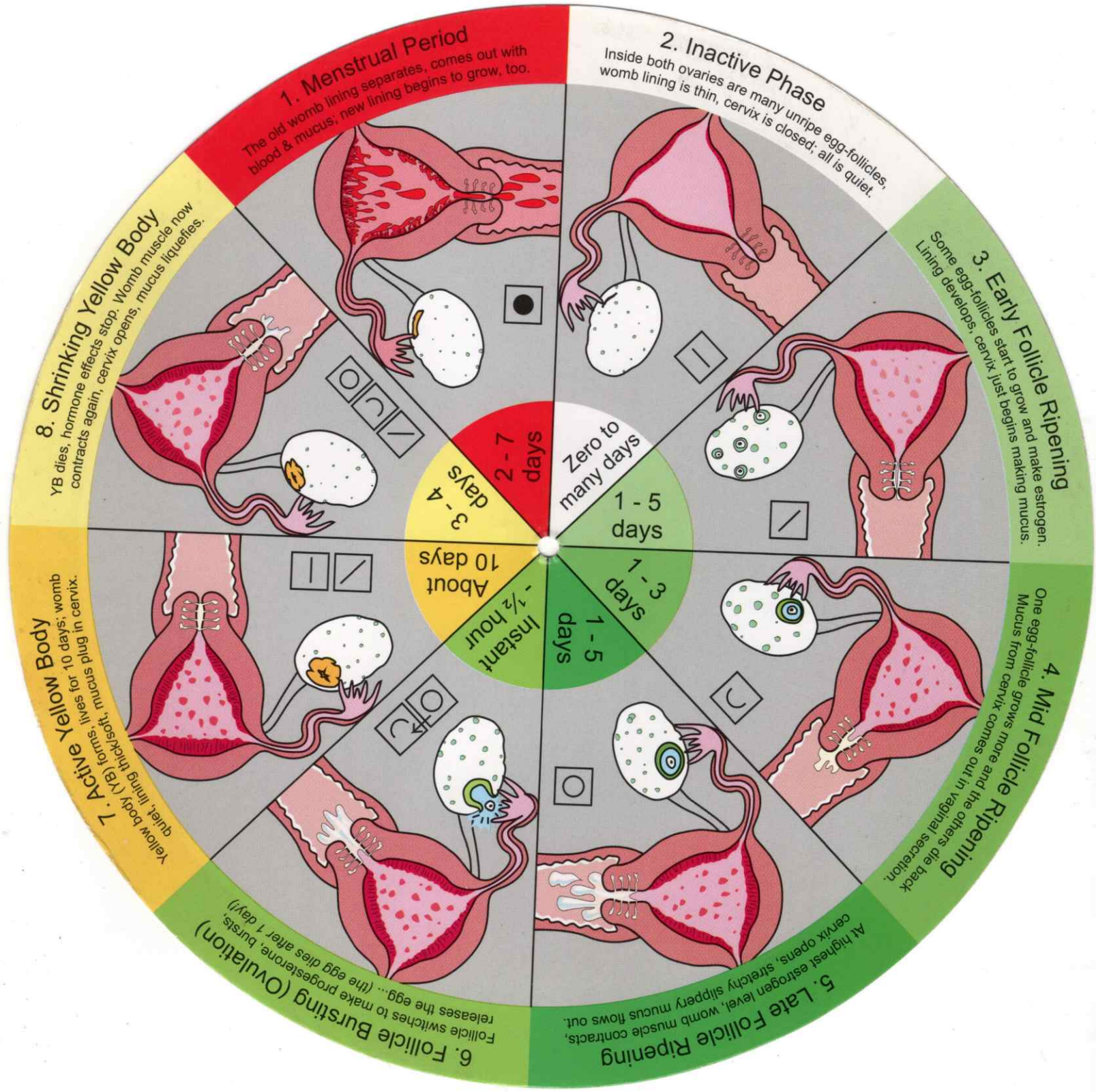
in the
ovary

for how
long?

(symbol)

cervix &
secretions

9



1. Menstrual Period

The old womb lining separates, comes out with blood & mucus; new lining begins to grow, too.

2. Inactive Phase

Inside both ovaries are many unripe egg-follicles; womb lining is thin, cervix is closed; all is quiet.

3. Early Follicle Ripening

Some egg-follicles start to grow and make estrogen. Lining develops; cervix just begins making mucus.

4. Mid Follicle Ripening

One egg-follicle grows more and the others die back. Mucus from cervix comes out in vaginal secretion.

5. Late Follicle Ripening

At highest estrogen level, womb muscle contracts, cervix opens, stretchy slippery mucus flows out.

6. Follicle Bursting (Ovulation)

Follicle switches to make progesterone, bursts, releases the egg... (the egg dies after 1 day!)

7. Active Yellow Body

Yellow body (YB) forms; lives for 10 days; womb quiet, lining thickens; mucus plugs in cervix.

8. Shrinking Yellow Body

YB dies, hormone effects stop. Womb muscle now contracts again, cervix opens, mucus liquefies.

3-4 days

2-7 days

Zero to many days

1-5 days

1-3 days

1-5 days

Instant

About 10 days

Menstrual Cycle Wheel

This *Wheel* is meant to help a woman learn about what happens inside her body, in a menstrual cycle, especially in the womb and ovaries. It shows the changes in 8 phases, co-related with the two ovarian hormones, *estrogen* (made with the egg) and *progesterone* (for possible pregnancy). Also shown is the mucus coming from the cervix, emerging as vaginal secretions. With other body signs at the same time, it tells about one's 'fertility'.

Misbeliefs about menstruation are rooted in society and in women's minds, too. Clarifying its scientific basis is the real aim of the *Menstrual Cycle Wheel* and its companion *Slide-Rule*.

The main menstrual cycle event is that from one of the ovaries a tiny egg is produced and released (ovulation), and the menstrual period comes about 2 weeks after that. No cycle is exactly the same but we can see a pattern in the process. The *Slide-Rule* helps to see how cycle length is related to ovulation. [In Our Hands, Tathapi's workbook for women on fertility and sexuality awareness, gives more information.]

The outer band briefly describes the 8 phases. **Colour key:** red = 'period' days, white = 'idle' days, green = **estrogen** ('made with egg') hormone days, yellow = **progesterone** ('pregnancy-protector') days. Also see green/yellow colours where the hormones are made, in the 'egg-follicles' and the 'yellow body'.

Some egg-follicles start ripening to make estrogen (phase 3), but later only one grows and lets the ripe egg burst out. After that the **egg** lives only 24 hours. If egg + sperm unite, it must be within 12 hours... if not, the egg *disintegrates* & disappears in the tube. (That is why you can't see the egg after phase 5!)

The empty egg-follicle becomes the **yellow body**... it has a normal 'life-span' of 10 days. After that it shrinks and dies, so the hormone effects stop. But if pregnancy starts (needing progesterone) the YB doesn't die.

Discussion Qs: How big is the egg and where does it go? What is the yellow body's importance? What is estrogen made for? What is progesterone made for? What hormone effects can we feel in our bodies?


Try to notice the changes in your **body signs**, e.g. different vaginal secretions, feeling in vulva ('yoni'), sexual ideas/attraction, mid-cycle abdominal sensations/pain (first due to womb contraction, then to egg-follicle bursting in one ovary), breast sensations and changes, skin changes, etc.

Simple symbols for recording the secretions are:




= dry (no secretion)




 = pasty, creamy or sticky



 = semi-stretchy, breaks



 = very stretchy, slippery, slimy



= bleeding (in or out of period)

Each woman's experience varies from cycle to cycle. Observe it and learn!



tathapi

'Women and Health'
Resource Development

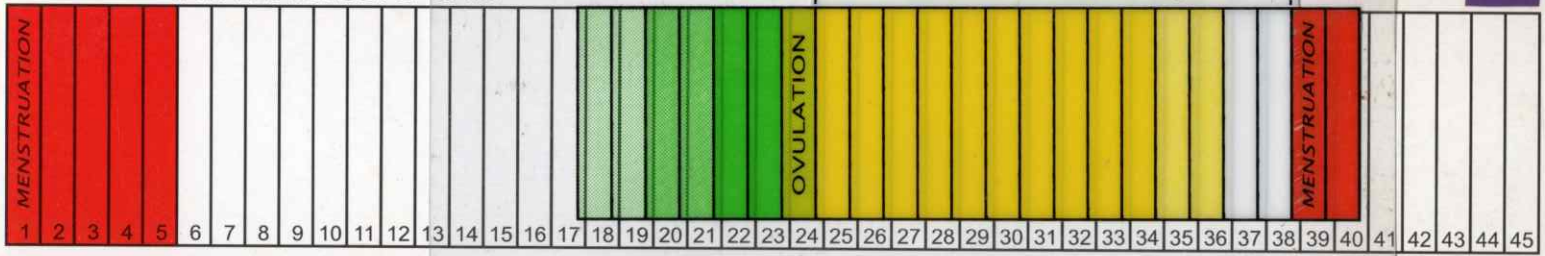
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MENSTRUAL CYCLE 'SLIDE-RULE'

VARIABLE NUMBER OF DAYS

CONSTANT NUMBER OF DAYS
(Between 12 AND 16 days)



EXAMPLE OF A 29-DAY CYCLE

Secretion Signs →

