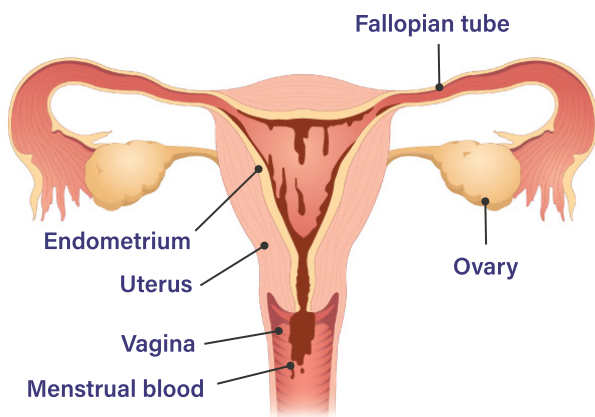


The menstrual cycle is the monthly process of changes that occur to prepare the body for possible pregnancy. A menstrual cycle is defined as the first day of menstrual bleeding of one cycle to the first day of menstrual bleeding of the next cycle. The average menstrual cycle lasts about 28 days.

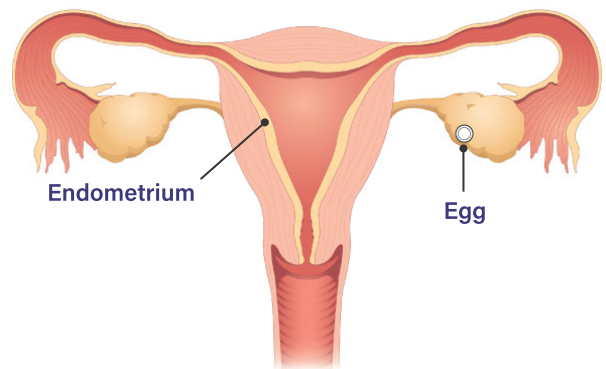
DAY 1

The first day of your menstrual period is considered day 1 of your menstrual cycle.



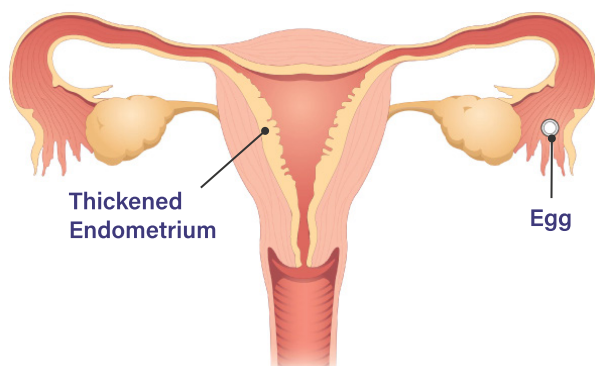
DAY 5

Estrogen levels start to increase. Estrogen causes the endometrium (the lining of the uterus) to grow and thicken.



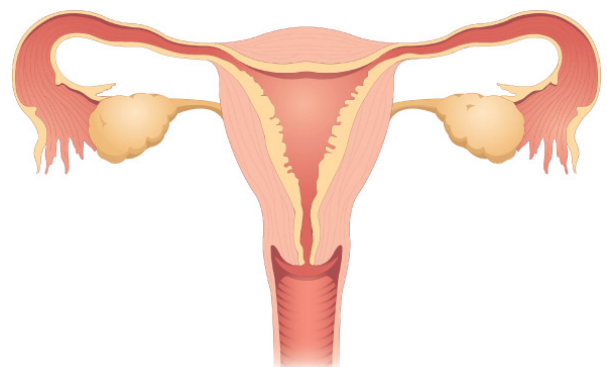
DAY 14

An egg is released from the ovary and moves into one of the two fallopian tubes (ovulation). After ovulation, progesterone levels begin to increase, while estrogen levels decrease.

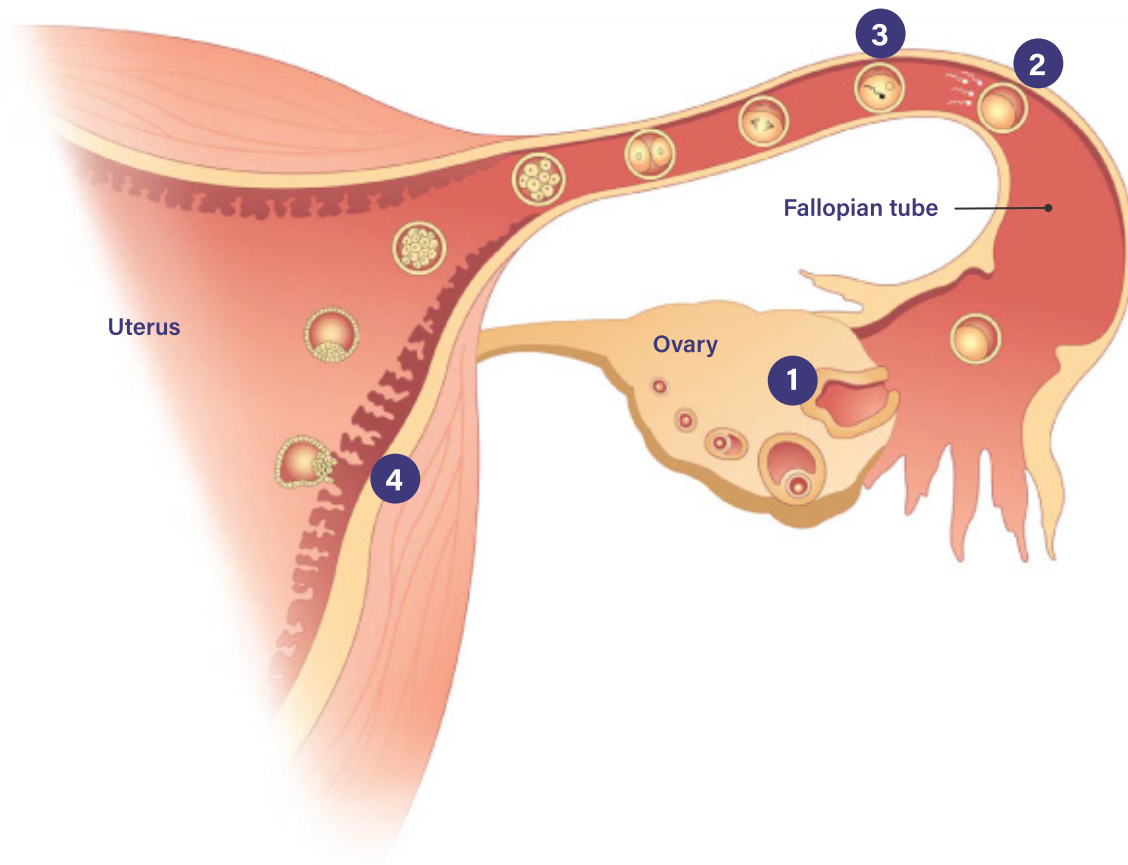


DAY 28

If the egg is not fertilized, progesterone and estrogen levels decrease, and the endometrium is shed during menstruation.



How Pregnancy Occurs



- 1 Each month during ovulation, an egg is released.
- 2 The egg moves into one of the fallopian tubes. If you have unprotected sex around this time, an egg and sperm may meet in the fallopian tube.
- 3 The egg and sperm may join.
- 4 If they join, the fertilized egg then moves through the fallopian tube into the uterus and attaches there to grow during pregnancy.

PFS1033. This information is designed as an educational aid for the public. It offers current information and opinions related to women's health. It is not intended as a statement of the standard of care. It does not explain all of the proper treatments or methods of care. It is not a substitute for the advice of a physician. For ACOG's complete disclaimer, visit www.acog.org/WomensHealth-Disclaimer.

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