



# MORE THAN FERTILITY

SAFEGUARDING YOUR  
REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH WITH THE  
BILLINGS OVULATION METHOD™

# Introduction

If you have heard of the Billings Ovulation Method™, you probably associate it with teaching women how to avoid pregnancy. It certainly does this, and with optimum results... with pregnancy rates of zero to 0.5 percent!

You may even know that the Billings Ovulation Method™ has helped thousands of women having difficulty conceiving to achieve pregnancy. It is really good at this too: [a recent trial](#) demonstrated a pregnancy rate of 78 percent, with a 65 percent success rate in sub-fertile couples.

But did you know that the Billings Ovulation Method™ can also help you to

**safeguard your reproductive health?**

The Billings Ovulation Method™ can arm you with the information you need, not just to regulate your fertility, but to monitor your reproductive health.

The Billings Ovulation Method™

- ✓ Puts YOU in control. It allows you to actively participate in your reproductive health.
- ✓ Enables you to understand your body in a practical way. It teaches you to recognise any changes which might need early medical investigation.
- ✓ Works with YOUR unique pattern of fertility and infertility so that you can recognise what is and isn't normal FOR YOU.

This is knowledge that every woman ought to have. It is knowledge that YOU ought to have. So read on!

**"The Billings Method will be recognised in medical history as one of the greatest discoveries of the 20th century."**

Thomas W. Hilgers,

Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, Omaha USA

# Contents

1: Brace Yourself... I'm going to talk about Cervical Mucus! .....	5
Learn to Identify Your Pre-Ovulatory Pattern of Infertility .....	6
Learn to Recognise the Signs of Beginning Fertility .....	7
2: Pinpointing the Peak .....	8
3: Take Control by Charting Your Unique Pattern .....	10
How to Keep the Chart .....	10
4: Knowing what is normal for you... and what isn't .....	11
Forearmed is Forewarned! .....	13
5: BONUS .....	13
6: So Now You Know... ..	13
7: References .....	14



It is truly amazing how wonderful the human body is and how by just being aware of different signs and symptoms from your body you are able to realise when you are more fertile."

Susan, 24 years and Jason, 25 years

# 1: Brace Yourself... I'm going to talk about Cervical Mucus!

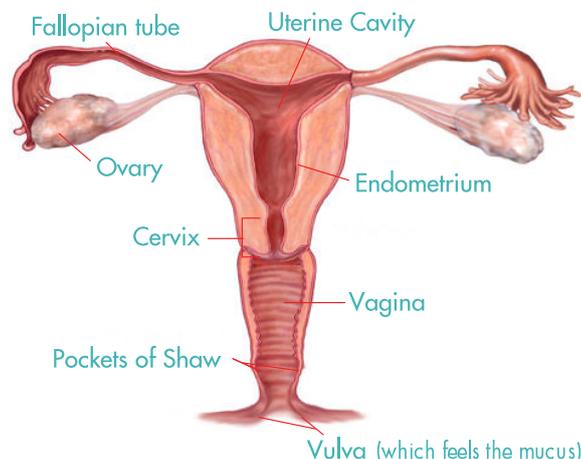
Yes, it's all about the mucus! If you have no idea what this has to do with safeguarding your reproductive health, you are not alone. A recent Australian study found that less than one in five women had correct knowledge about their body's signs and symptoms of fertility and infertility, and the importance of cervical mucus in achieving pregnancy and safeguarding reproductive health.<sup>1</sup>

Even so, you have probably noticed different types of cervical mucus during your menstrual cycle, and thought nothing of it. But far from being nothing, this mucus, which is produced by the cells of the cervix for a few days before ovulation, is essential for fertility and an important sign of good health. The sensation and appearance of this mucus at the vaginal opening (called the vulva) help you to identify the fertile and infertile times in your cycle. It can also help you identify irregularities in your unique pattern that may need further investigation.

"It just seems so obvious. I don't know how I didn't notice it before."

Kate, 28 years

## The Female Reproductive System



<sup>1</sup> The Ovulation Method Research and Reference Centre Australia. (2010). *Pregnancy outcomes associated with peak fertility.*

So let's take a look at how it all works when things are going right...

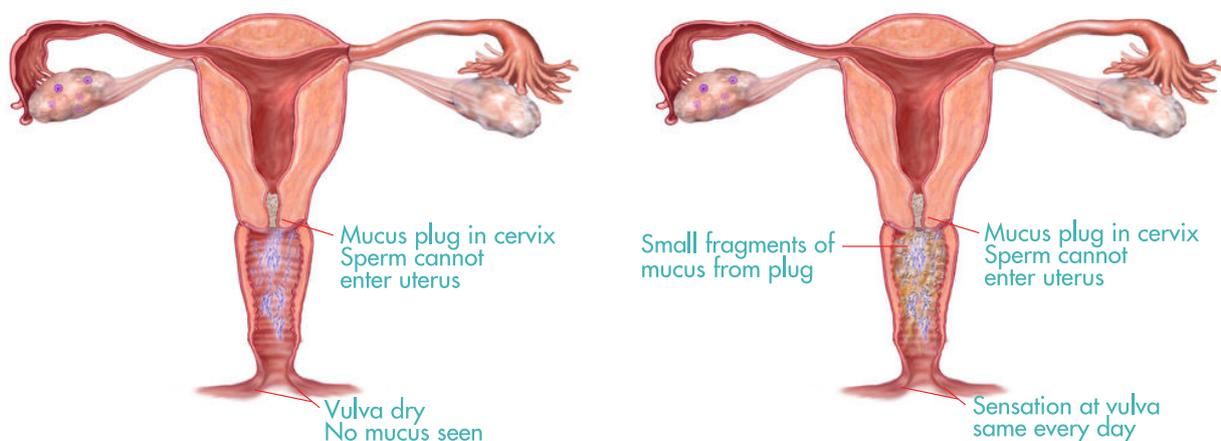
## Learn to Identify Your Pre-Ovulatory Pattern of Infertility

Following menstruation your hormone levels are low. Your cervix becomes blocked by a thick plug of mucus that prevents sperm from entering the uterus. This means that you are infertile. For many women the sensation at the vulva during this time is one of dryness. This is described as a *Basic Infertile Pattern of dryness*. Other women notice a pattern of discharge that does not change. It has the same sensation and appearance day after day. For these women, this discharge also indicates infertility. This is described as a *Basic Infertile Pattern of discharge*.

"Fertility is associated with rapid changes in hormone production. Anything static must be infertile. This is the basis for the Basic Infertile Pattern."<sup>2</sup>

Basic Infertile Pattern of Dryness

Basic Infertile Pattern of Discharge



<sup>2</sup> M. Corkill & M. Marshall, (2008, December 19), Natural fertility regulation – the Billings Ovulation Method. *Australian Doctor, How to Treat*.

## Learn to Recognise the Signs of Beginning Fertility

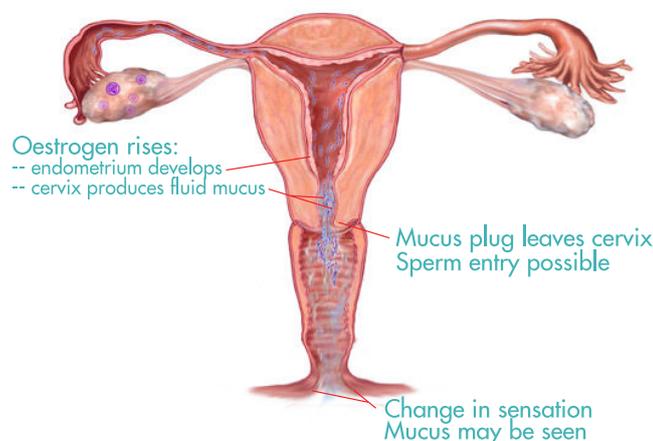
The fertile phase of the cycle begins when the ovaries start to produce oestrogen as the egg develops. This hormone stimulates the cervix to produce different kinds of mucus. A change in the sensation and appearance of the mucus at the vulva is nature's way of letting you know that you are now potentially fertile.

One of the types of mucus produced by the cervix dissolves the mucus plug. This means that sperm can now enter the uterus. Another type of mucus acts as a filter, destroying unsuitable sperm cells. Yet another type of mucus forms channels which help the sperm travel through your reproductive system to meet and fertilise the egg. This mucus also protects and nourishes the sperm, helping them to live up to 5 days.

As the ovaries produce increasing amounts of oestrogen you will notice a changing pattern of mucus and a difference in the sensation the mucus produces. The mucus becomes progressively wetter and then slippery. You may notice the mucus becomes thinner and clearer. But even if you don't see any mucus, the sensation of slipperiness means that you are fertile.

Every woman is an individual with her own individual pattern of cervical mucus. And her unique pattern is a remarkably accurate reflection of her reproductive hormones.

### Changing Pattern of Fertility





## 2: Pinpointing the Peak

The last day of the slippery sensation is the most fertile day of your cycle. It is called the Peak of fertility, and is very close to the time of ovulation. You can be sure that if you recognise the Peak of fertility then you have identified the time very close to ovulation.

It is important to realise that the Peak is not necessarily the day of *most* mucus. The amount of mucus may decrease but the slippery sensation may continue for a day or two — the sensation is the most valuable symptom.

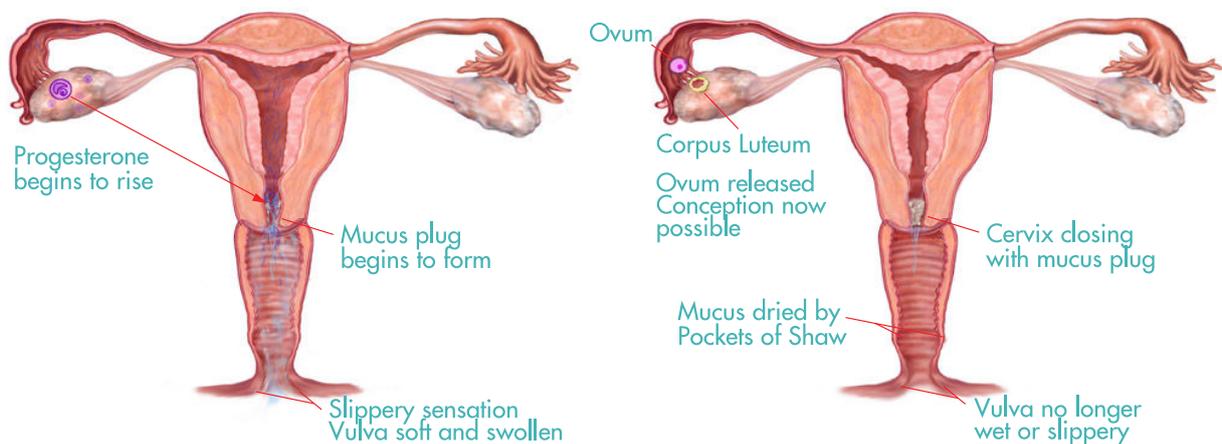
Just before ovulation another hormone called progesterone starts to be produced. This hormone prepares the lining of the uterus in case there is a fertilised egg ready to implant. Progesterone also causes changes in the cervical mucus. It activates the cervix to produce the thick, impenetrable mucus that forms the plug in the cervix. It also activates the reabsorption of fluid from the mucus so that the slippery sensation disappears. So it is the rising level of progesterone that causes the abrupt change in sensation that helps you identify the Peak.



You will only be able to confirm your Peak day the following day, when you no longer feel the slippery sensation. Ovulation occurs on the peak day in the majority of cycles, but may be delayed until day 1 or day 2 past the peak. The egg will live for up to 24 hours. During these 3 days past the peak the plug of mucus reforms in the cervix. After the end of the 3 days your fertile time for that cycle is over.

### The Peak of Fertility

### Days 1, 2, and 3 Past the Peak



## 3: Take Control by Charting Your Unique Pattern

By keeping a daily record of the sensation and appearance of mucus at the vulva you can learn to recognise your times of infertility and fertility, and the time of ovulation. Every woman is an individual with her own individual pattern. This means that you can learn to recognise signs and symptoms that don't fit with your individual pattern.

Most women quickly grasp their unique pattern, and a trained Billings Ovulation Method™ tutor can ensure that you are correctly interpreting your chart. A World Health Organisation trial in five countries show that over 90 percent of women can identify the fertile phase and the Peak day of fertility in their first month of observation and charting.

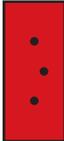
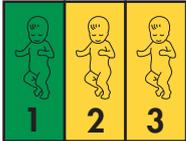
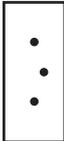
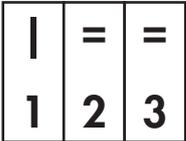
### How to Keep the Chart

At the end of each day you record your observations of the sensation produced by the mucus outside the vagina. If you see any mucus you write down your observations of its appearance. Just a couple of words on your chart and then use appropriate coloured stamps or write the symbol that represents what has happened.

For further information on keeping a Billings Ovulation Method™ chart [click here](#)

Even better, learn how to chart and interpret your individual patterns of fertility and infertility with an experienced Billings Ovulation Method™ tutor.

Phone 1800 335 860 to book your consultation today.

							
bleeding	spotting	dry infertile	possibly fertile	discharge, infertile i) BIP of unchanging discharge before peak ii) from the 4th day past the Peak	Peak	123 days after Peak possibly fertile - dry or mucus which is not wet or slippery	Intercourse
							



## 4: Knowing what is normal for you... and what isn't

There are many practical benefits to learning the Billings Ovulation Method™. Not only can it help you to avoid or achieve a pregnancy, it can also help you to monitor and safeguard your reproductive health. Changes in the mucus are a reflection of what is going on in the body's hormonal system. The chart you keep will be an accurate record of these hormonal events. Once you learn to recognise what is normal for you, you can more easily identify what isn't. If you notice irregularities in your pattern, such as abnormal bleeding or a bizarre pattern of discharge, you will know to get them investigated. So, what is normal and what isn't?

### **Vaginal infections**

Learning to recognise the different types of normal, healthy cervical mucus will help you recognise abnormal vaginal discharge that could indicate an infection.

### **Normal bleeding**

With your Billings Ovulation Method™ tutor you will learn to recognise the 4 normal types of bleeding. Armed with this knowledge, you will be able to more easily identify

bleeding that isn't following your normal pattern, and seek medical care. The four normal types of bleeding are:

*Menstruation* which is the shedding of the lining of the uterus (endometrium) caused by a fall in the level of the hormones oestrogen and progesterone when there has been no conception.

*Oestrogen Withdrawal Bleeding* when there has been some growth of the lining of the uterus due to raised oestrogen, but no ovulation. When the level of oestrogen drops again the endometrium is shed.

*Breakthrough bleeding* may occur in some cycles as oestrogen levels rise. The bleeding will usually be accompanied by other symptoms of fertility such as a feeling of wetness and the appearance of mucus. This can occur in any cycle, but is most likely when there has been a delay in ovulation.

*Implantation bleeding* may occur about a week after conception, as the fertilised ovum is implanting into the lining of the uterus.

## Abnormal Bleeding

Some conditions that can cause abnormal bleeding are uterine fibroids, cervical or endometrial polyps, and cancer in the lining of the uterus or in the cervix.

A 33 year old woman's chart showed a bizarre mucus pattern, which enabled early detection of adenocarcinoma of the cervix. A pan-hysterectomy was performed. No evidence of metastatic cancer was detected. Her doctors commented that she would not have survived until her next scheduled Pap Smear if she had not identified the abnormality in her chart.

## Endometriosis

By being aware of when you ovulate, you may become aware of mid-cycle pain which can occur around the time of ovulation. You may then be able to distinguish this normal pain from pelvic pain that occurs at other times of your cycle which could be an indication of a condition like endometriosis.

## Cancers of the Reproductive Tract

Sometimes abnormal bleeding alerts a woman to more serious problems like cancers of the reproductive tract. And sometimes it is a bizarre mucus pattern that can raise the alert. In any case, knowledge of your body and what is a healthy pattern for you can help you catch any problems early... and that could just save your life.



## Forearmed is Forewarned!

As you can now see, a knowledge of your cycle and your patterns of cervical mucus and bleeding can help you recognise what is normal and what isn't. The Billings Ovulation Method™ can help you to protect your reproductive health by recognising any disturbances in your normal patterns. That way any abnormalities can be diagnosed and treated at an early stage.

To learn more about this vital health information, visit:

[www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org](http://www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org)

or phone 1800 335 860 to book your appointment with a Billings Ovulation Method™ tutor.

## 5: BONUS

Download your free Personal Record Chart now!

## 6: So Now You Know...

...how essential cervical mucus is for fertility and infertility, and in safeguarding your reproductive health. Changing hormone levels throughout your menstrual cycle affect the amount and texture of the mucus. Each kind of mucus has a special role to play. Once you are familiar with these changes you will be able to identify your own pattern of infertility and fertility. You will also be able to recognise irregularities that might need further investigation. This knowledge is empowering! So help us get the message out there! Tell your friends... because this is knowledge that every woman ought to have.

## 7: References

Billings, E., & Westmore, A. (2011). *The Billings Method: Using the body's natural signal of fertility to achieve or avoid pregnancy*. Melbourne, Australia: Anne O'Donovan Publishing.

Brown, J.B. (2011). Types of ovarian activity in women and their significance: the continuum (a reinterpretation of early findings). *Human Reproduction Update*, 17(2), 141-158. <http://humupd.oxfordjournals.org/content/17/2/141.full.pdf+html>

Corkill, M. & Marshall, M. (2008, December 19). Natural fertility regulation – the Billings Ovulation Method. *Australian Doctor, How to Treat*. <http://www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org/2012-07-16-02-14-24/articles-download-2.html?view=docman>

“This is knowledge of her body that every woman ought to have.”

Dr Evelyn Billings AM, DCSG, MBBS (MELB), DCH (LOND)



Billings LIFE  
Leaders In Fertility Education

2A/303 Burwood Highway  
East Burwood 3151 Australia

Phone: 03 9802 2022

Fax: 03 9887 8572

Email: [enquiries@thebillingsovulationmethod.org](mailto:enquiries@thebillingsovulationmethod.org)

Web: [www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org](http://www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org)

Billings LIFE is a fully registered health promotion charity and all donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

The Ovulation Method Research and Reference Centre of Australia Ltd  
ABN 57 067 377 959 (inc in Vic)

Billings LIFE is supported by funding from the Australian Government  
Department of Health and Ageing