

Charting your Fertility - Taking your Basal Body Temperature (BBT)

Taking your BBT can give us valuable information about what is going on with hormone levels and your fertility. I essentially use this to provide some diagnostic information, and to really ensure ovulation is happening. **It's** also a great tool you can use to become aware of what is going on in your body, to track your fertility and your progress. It does take a few months for a good pattern to emerge with some charts, and even more so with tracking and charting cervical mucus. Be patient and write everything down. It will make more sense in a month or two.

To be accurate, and therefore useful, BBT charting needs to be done correctly which requires following some basic guidelines.

Equipment:

1. You need to have a good, sensitive, working thermometer. The best sort are the simple and cheap ones, **don't** use forehead or ear thermometers, you need one of the old fashioned type that you can pop under your tongue. You need to check it measures your temperature to 2 decimal places as we are looking for shifts between 0.2 and 0.5 degrees in most cases. I stock these if you one, just let me know. You need to keep it beside your bed for easy access. You **don't** need a specific BBT thermometer, so long as it is accurate to those 2 decimal places.
2. Pop your results on a graph. I usually recommend using the fertility friend app on your phone. You can keep track of everything on there including any PMS signs, cervical mucus, sexual intercourse. Then everything is in the one spot and you will usually have it with you.

Process:

1. When you take your temp is very important. BBT is your **body's** resting, core temperature. It needs to be done immediately upon waking from your most significant block of solid sleep. For most of us who sleep well and keep regular hours, that is first thing in the morning. However, if you are a shift worker, your partner is up earlier than you, or you are a poor sleeper that may be a different time. For example, if you are woken at 5am to go to the toilet, take your temp at this time even if you go back to bed and snooze till 7am. If you go to bed at 10am and you wake at 2pm, even if you stay in bed resting till 4pm, you need to take your temperature at 2pm (shift work is really tricky for charting and fertility generally, so it may take longer to build a pattern). If you go to bed at 9.30 and wake at 3am, and have interrupted sleep from 3 till 5am, take your temperature at 3am. Taking it at a consistent time is helpful, but the most important factor is taking it on waking after your biggest block of solid sleep, not at 7am every morning regardless of other factors.
2. You must take your temperature before you do anything else. Do not get up and go to the toilet before taking your temp, and do not eat or drink anything.
3. Pop the thermometer under your tongue and breathe through your nose. Wait until the thermometer finishes beeping, usually after 60 seconds for oral temps.
4. You **don't** need to record your temp, as most thermometers will show your last recorded temp the next time you turn them on, so you can go back to sleep or relax.
5. If you have had less sleep than usual, been up with kids through the night, if you have been drinking alcohol or consuming more sugar/processed foods than usual, these will all influence your temperature and should be recorded on your chart.
6. Remember, cervical mucus is the biggest indicator of being fertile, not your temperature. So if you are trying to conceive use cervical mucus as your guide.
7. If you find this process stressful or time-consuming, please let me know. Making a baby is meant to be fun!