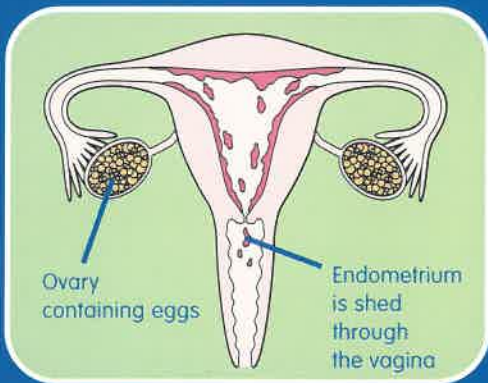


The menstrual cycle

Phase 1

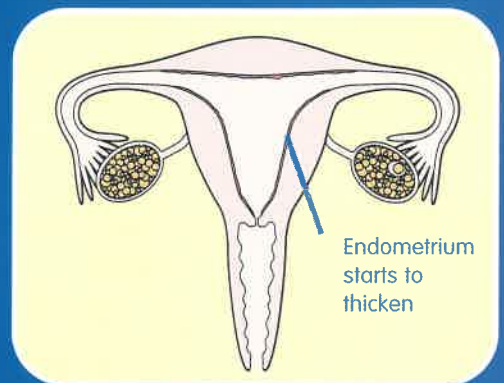


This is the time that you menstruate, or have your period.

Some of the lining of the uterus (the endometrium) passes slowly out of the body through the vagina.

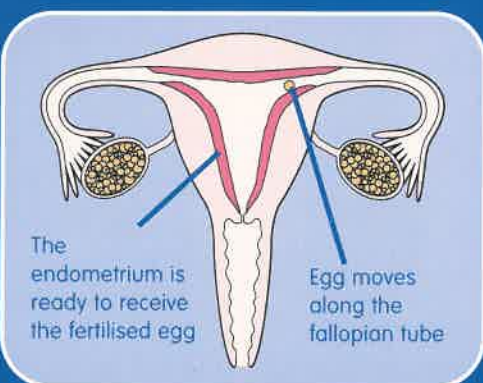
The first day you bleed is the first day of your cycle.

Phase 2



About the time your flow stops, your ovaries start to prepare an egg for release into one of the fallopian tubes (oviducts). The endometrium gradually builds up at this stage in order to receive the egg.

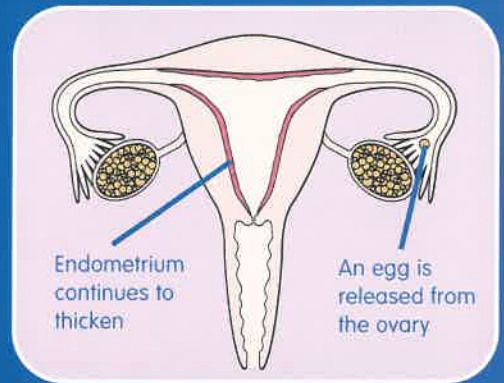
Phase 4



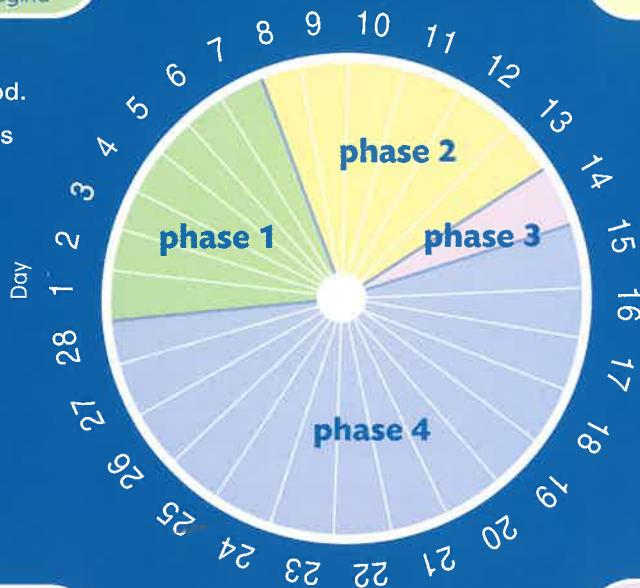
The endometrium is ready to receive the fertilised egg.

If the egg isn't fertilised, the soft lining of the uterus isn't needed, so some of it passes out of the body and the cycle starts again.

Phase 3



The egg is now ripe for fertilisation so it is released by the ovary and starts to travel to the uterus (womb). This stage is called ovulation. The endometrium thickens as the egg continues its way along the fallopian tube.



As the menstrual cycle varies from woman to woman, this is only an example.

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