

Know your flow and live in sync with your cycle



50 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT

PERIODS

CLAIRE BAKER

#8

The seasons of your cycle

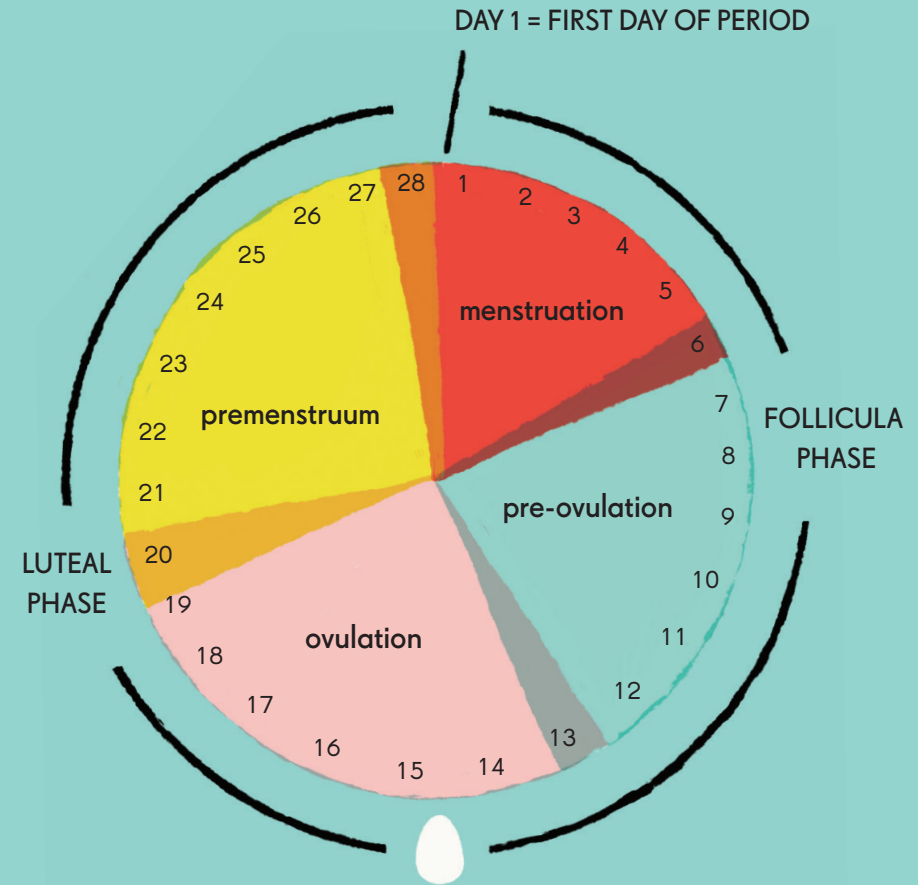
The stages of your menstrual cycle mirror the seasons of the year and, because they are so familiar to most of us, I like to use the four seasons to explain the four hormonal phases of the cycle.

The Winter of your cycle is your period. This is menstruation, when your body releases the last cycle's uterine lining. Levels of hormones are low. Just like on a cold, rainy winter day, you might feel like chilling indoors under a blanket in this phase, and that is A-OK.

After menstruation ends, you'll move into the Spring phase of your cycle. This is the pre-ovulatory phase. As oestrogen rises, you're blossoming and building up to ovulation here. Say farewell to the period cave because hormones are kicking off and you are back in the game!

A few days before you ovulate, you'll move into the Summer phase of your cycle. Ovulation is the release of an egg from one of your ovaries and it's a key moment in the menstrual cycle process. Both oestrogen and testosterone levels peak and you'll stay in this sassy Summer phase as you ovulate, and for a few days or so past ovulation.

You'll then move into the Autumn of your cycle – the premenstrual phase. Progesterone steals the show here, but not before having a 'hormonal dance off' with oestrogen a few days after you ovulate. Compared to the linear increase of hormones in Spring, Autumn is more dynamic. You're moving back towards menstruation. After progesterone levels decline and halt entirely, you'll cross back into Winter and begin to bleed again.



This chart shows what a 28-day cycle could look like, but every cycle is different. If your cycle is longer or shorter than 28 days, remember that you'll experience the timing of your seasons slightly differently.



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Winter's superpowers

Release and reset

Who doesn't love the feeling of a fresh start? Healing after heartbreak, the first day of a new job, moving to a new city where no one knows your name. It's the sweet feeling of starting over, and your period can feel just like this! Your hormones have wrapped up one cycle and are about to begin a brand new one, so the Winter phase provides a fantastic opportunity to begin again and rebalance your system.

As your body physically releases what it has built in your womb over the past month, take a moment to think about what you'd like to release along with it. Crappy self-talk? Your 4pm sugar habit? That babe on Tinder who hasn't replied for days? Let it all go with your blood. You might feel the effect of this 'release and reset' in the size and shape of your belly and breasts, in your energy levels and libido, or in your emotions, thoughts and attitude. Work with this superpower by being clear on what you're releasing and identifying what this new cycle is going to be about for you.

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Spring cycle-syncing tips

Experiment with an idea

This is the time to take action in the direction of your goals, play with possibilities, kickstart a new habit, flirt with your dreams (or that gorgeous barista), and most importantly, give yourself permission to not be perfect as you do so.

It's time to move it, move it

This is the season to get your heart rate going. Studies show the female body can build more muscle mass in this phase of the cycle – and you should have a decent amount of energy to burn too. Lift some weights, do some laps, smash that yoga class, kickbox, run, walk, or dance your way through your Spring phase!

Let the good times roll

Plan to see close friends and loved ones and enjoy the emergence from your period cave. Take a cleansing goddess bath with fresh or dried flower petals scattered on top. Treat yourself by scheduling self-care and beauty appointments for this phase. It feels good to feel good, oui? Plus, waxing (if that's what you're into) hurts far less before ovulation.

Switch on your spontaneity switch

Spring is a time to be as foolish as you possibly can be. As an overly responsible Virgo and eldest child, the spirit of cheeky playfulness is one I actively try to cultivate in my Spring. Dancing in the kitchen to Rick James' 'Super Freak', or attempting handstands and cartwheels at your local park definitely count.

Pace yourself

Try not to rush into this phase. It's okay to pace yourself, contain your energy and maintain a bit of a buffer between you and the rest of the world. You don't have to be the star of the show right away. Save that for Summer!

