

# Fertility Awareness While Breastfeeding

Note: I highly recommend Sheila Kippley's [Seven Standards of Ecological Breastfeeding](#) for those who have not yet begun breastfeeding or who still have young babies. Using these practices will delay a return to fertility and generally make your cycles normalize faster when they return, saving you a lot of stress and countless days of abstinence!

## **When to begin charting**

**If you are ecologically breastfeeding** begin charting when you have a return of cervical fluid or bleeding, but keep a chart of changes that can affect fertility, such as: A sick or teething baby, baby sleeping through the night, lower frequency of nursing or alterations in nursing patterns, introduction of food or other supplements, time spent away from baby, and increases or changes in your sexual energy.

**If you are exclusively breast feeding** begin charting when you have your first bleeding episode after the 56<sup>th</sup> day postpartum, when your baby is six months old, when you increase the use of solids or supplements in babies diet, or when you notice a return of cervical fluid. If you notice cervical fluid (or bleeding) you should ALWAYS begin charting, regardless of babies age or other forms of nourishment.

If you are partially breastfeeding begin charting 2 weeks postpartum.

*It is important, even if you are not charting on paper, to be watchful for cervical fluid or bleeding/spotting. I recommend beginning to take your temperature when you first see cervical fluid (besides your BIP) or spotting/bleeding.*

## **When am I considered fertile?**

You may have a **Basic Infertile Pattern (BIP)** if you have the same sticky fluid for two weeks without change. To establish your BIP you must observe your cervical fluid for two weeks without interference from semen, spermicides, or lube. If you do establish a BIP of sticky you can consider yourself infertile on sticky days (as long as they are not within a count of three after a wet patch!) by using the **Unchanging Day Rule**. If your BIP is any wet-type of cervical fluid you must consider yourself fertile. I know, lame.

If you see a change in your BIP or have sticky fluid when you are normally dry you must use **The Patch Rule** which states that you must consider yourself fertile during any mucus patch until the 4<sup>th</sup> consecutive non-wet day. You must consider your peak day ANY wet fluid or bleeding, and not just the slippery or lubricative type. You may resume normal post-peak rules when you can confirm ovulation with a temperature shift.

## **A practical word about breastfeeding**

Breastfeeding can be a frustrating time to practice the STM because often as our bodies gear up for fertility they produce many fertile signs but are not quite ready for full fertility (with healthy ovulatory patterns and long luteal phases). Seeing so little of a chance at a pregnancy and so many potentially fertile days makes most people unhappy with the method or get so frustrated they don't use the rules and have an "oops". Don't kill yourself sticking to a standard. Try alternate sexual practices and/or other methods of birth control in conjunction with the STM.