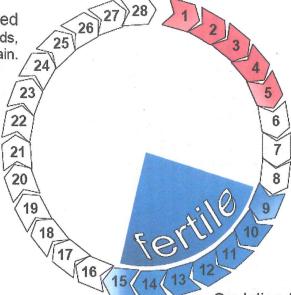
The Menstrual Cycle

Bleeding begins Lining of uterus begins to shed

If the egg is not fertilized hormonal levels fall, the uterine lining sheds, and menstrual bleeding begins again.

If the egg is fertilized production of hormones continues and the uterine lining becomes even thicker. The fertilized egg may become implanted in the uterine. The uterine lining does not shed, and the pregnant woman's menstrual period does not begin.



Ovulation (egg leaves ovary)

An unfertilized egg lives only up to 24 hours after ovulation. But sperm can live as long as 5 days in the female reproductive tract. If sperm are present as the egg travels from the ovary through the fallopian tube, fertilization can occur.