

# sextalk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

**factoid** “Menstruation” comes from the Latin and Greek words for month and moon. Both the moon and menstrual cycles take about 28 days to complete.

## Q. When is the least possible time to get pregnant?

A. At the risk of stating the obvious, the least likely “time” is when birth control pills, condoms or other contraceptive methods are used consistently and correctly, or when abstaining from sexual intercourse altogether. In the absence of these forms of birth control, the odds of getting pregnant tend to be the lowest as far away from ovulation (when the egg is released) as possible.

In an average 28 day cycle, which for some women may range anywhere between 21 to 35 days, Day 1 represents when menstrual bleeding begins. Halfway through the cycle, on Day 14, the egg is typically released, initiating ovulation. While the egg can only survive for about 24 hours, sperm can live inside a woman’s body as long as five days, making fertilization possible for those five days following intercourse.

Women are typically least fertile in the few days before, during, and after the arrival of their period (menstruation), though cycles can change and an egg can theoretically be released at any point during the menstrual cycle. Because of the potential for irregularity, fertility awareness – or “timing” sexual activity – is not considered a very effective form of birth control for most individuals. Better options include birth control pills (which are safe and up to 99.5% effective when used correctly), condoms (which require no prescription and have the added benefit of STD protection) or abstinence (which is free and eliminates the possibility of both pregnancy and STDs).

Campus Health offers a wide range of birth control options as well as Plan B (also known as emergency contraception or EC), which may be taken up to five days after sexual intercourse and is available without a prescription. For more information, go to [www.health.arizona.edu](http://www.health.arizona.edu) and search for “birth control” or call 621-9202 to schedule an appointment. Walk-ins are also welcome.



Have a question? Send it to [sextalk@email.arizona.edu](mailto:sextalk@email.arizona.edu)

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