

Understanding your menstrual cycle: What's normal, what's not?

The Basics

Menarche

Occurrence of a girl's first menstrual period.

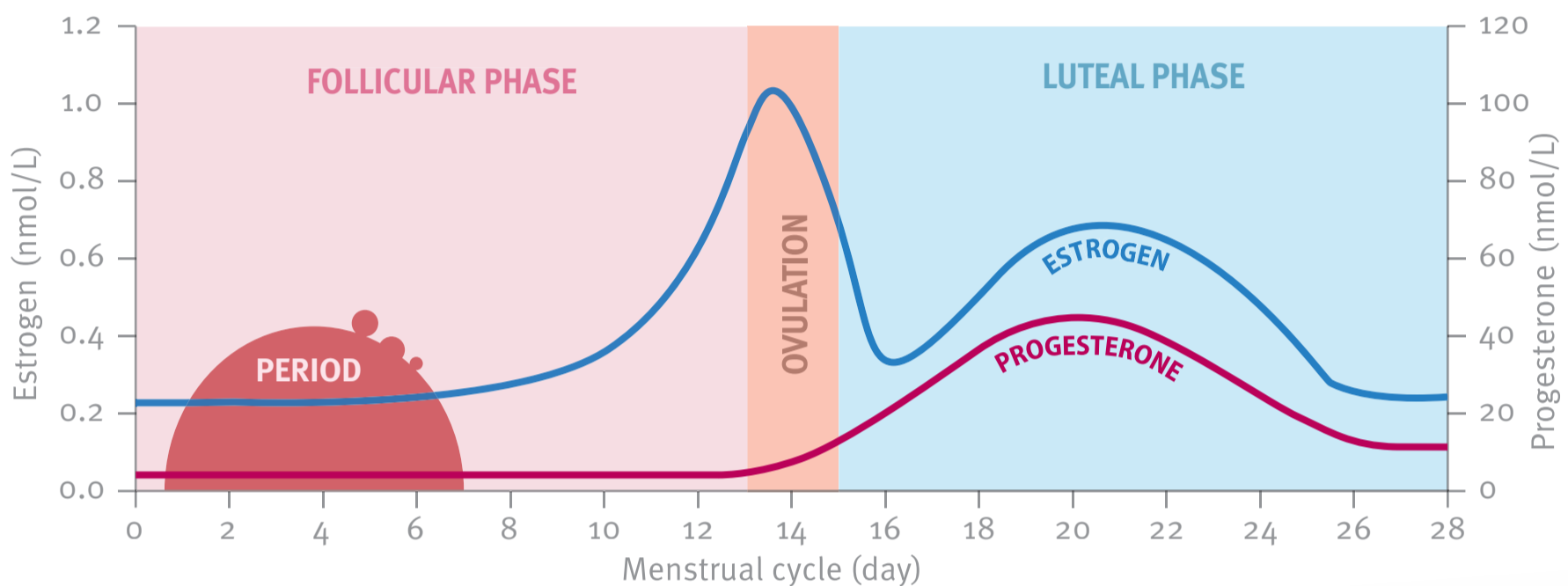
Menstrual cycle

A monthly cycle of changes in female-sex hormones that prepare the body for pregnancy.

Menstrual period

Release of the internal lining of the uterus through the vagina (menstruation & menses).

Figure (below): Fluctuations in female sex-hormone concentrations over one menstrual cycle



Is my menstrual cycle 'normal'?

Menstrual cycles vary, but are on average:



First period
11-14 years



Cycle length
25-35 days



Period duration
4-7 days



Menstrual flow/fluid
30-60 mL

Do I have a problem?

Have you noticed any of these symptoms?

CONDITION	ABNORMAL SYMPTOMS
Amenorrhea	No period by age 15 years or Absence of menstrual period for 3 months
Oligomenorrhea	Periods do not occur on a regular basis
Premenstrual syndrome (PMS)	Fluid retention, headache, fatigue, and irritability
Dysmenorrhea	Painful periods
Menorrhagia	Heavy menstrual flow i.e., >7 days or needing to change a super pad/tampon more frequently than every 2 h

Should I see a doctor?

Schedule an appointment with your GP if:



- ✓ You have any questions about your general health or menstrual cycle
- ✓ You think you are pregnant
- ✓ Your period is not normal or you are experiencing abnormal symptoms
- ✓ You get very anxious or depressed
- ✓ If your period affects your daily activities, training, and/or competitions

