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 **CYCLIC CHANGES IN VAGINA**

The vagina also changes in response to hormonal fluctuations of the menstrual cycle. Around mid-cycle, when oestrogen is highest, vaginal tissue becomes thicker and fuller.

The cervix, at the top of the vagina, moves and changes shape throughout the cycle. Before and after the fertile window, the cervix is low and can be felt in the vagina, with a firm texture, and the hole in the centre of the cervix is closed. During the fertile window, the hole in the cervix opens to facilitate the entrance of sperm into the uterus the cervix rises higher in the vagina, and is softer when touched .

**CYCLIC CHANGES IN THE BREAST**

**During menstruation**, many women also have **changes** in **breast** texture. Their **breasts**may feel very lumpy. This is because the glands in the **breast** are enlarging to get ready for a possible pregnancy. If pregnancy does not **happen**, the **breasts** go back to normal size.

Breasts are very responsive to hormones in the menstrual cycle or in HRT. Hormones called oestrogens increase before a period, causing milk ducts and glands to swell. This can trap fluid in the breasts and cause swelling and lumpiness.

2. MENSTRUAL CYCLE

Medically, menstruation (also termed period or bleeding) is the process in a woman of discharging (through the vagina) blood and other materials from the lining of the uterus at about one monthly interval from puberty until menopause (ceasing of regular menstrual cycles), except during pregnancy. This discharging process lasts about 3-5 days.

When does menstruation begin? When does it end?

The menstrual cycle is the hormonal driven cycle; Day 1 is the first day of your period (bleeding) while day 14 is the approximate day you ovulate and if an egg is not fertilized, hormone levels eventually drop and at about day 25; the egg begins to dissolve and the cycle begins again with the period at about day 30. Menstruation begins day 1 and normally ends days 3-5 of the menstrual cycle.

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Most periods vary somewhat, the flow may be light, moderate or heavy and can vary in length from about 2 to 7 days; with age, the cycle usually shortens and becomes more regular.