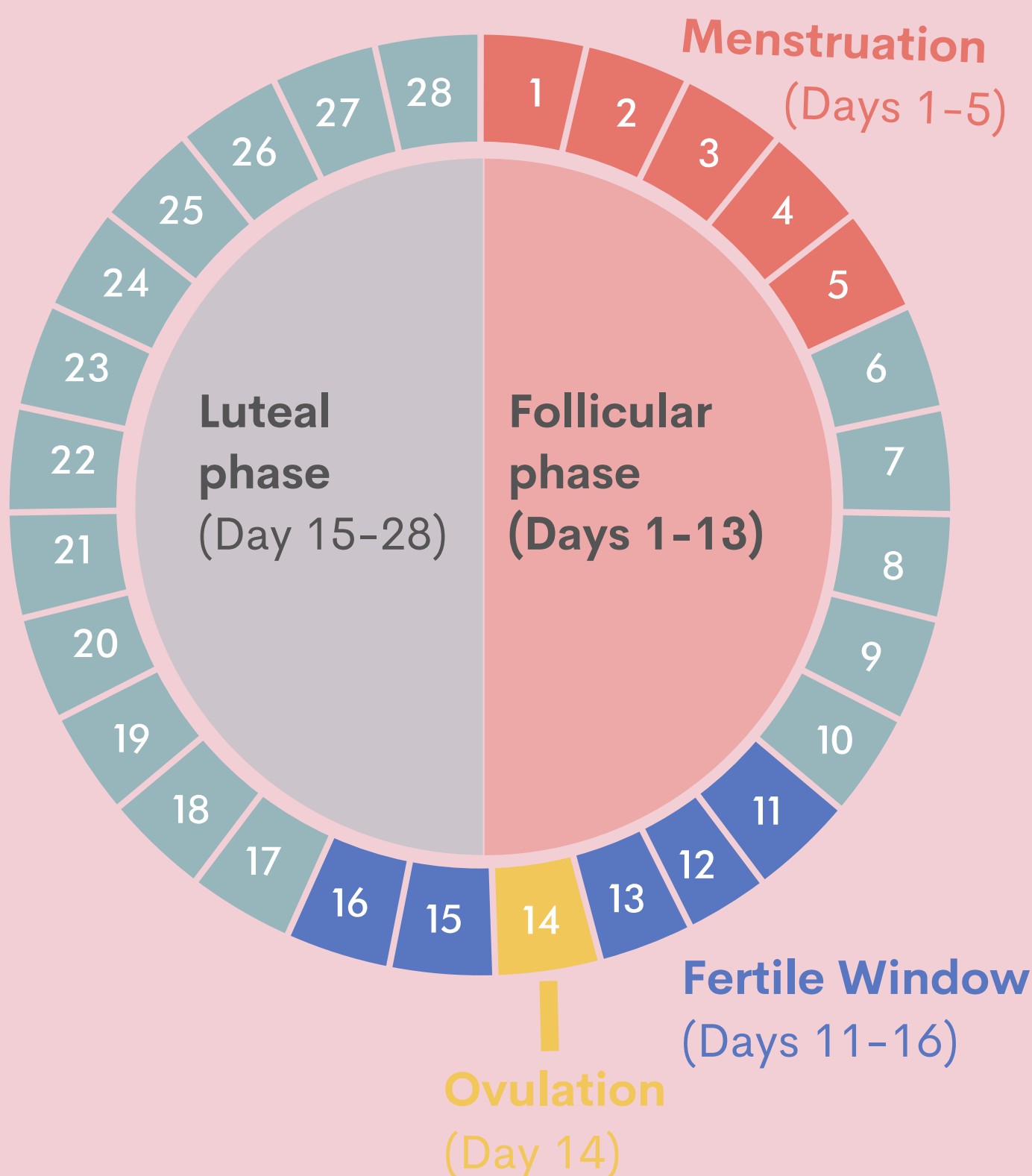




STAGES OF THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

based on a 28 - day cycle



Menstruation

Menstruation usually lasts three to seven days when the menstrual cycle starts. Progesterone and estrogen are at their lowest levels during this cycle, causing the uterus to shed its lining.

Follicular phase

This stage of the menstrual cycle lasts for about 14 days. When menstrual bleeding begins, estrogen steadily rises, which helps to mature an ovarian follicle. Proliferative hormones like estrogen help build up uterine linings to provide a safe, nutritious environment for conception. As estrogen peaks shortly before ovulation, follicles are stimulated to release eggs.

Ovulation

This stage only lasts one day. The release of an egg from an ovarian follicle indicates that ovulation has occurred, making conception possible.

Luteal phase

This phase typically lasts 14 days. As soon as an egg is released by a follicle, the corpus luteum produces a high level of progesterone. In this phase, progesterone rises and peaks around day 21. When conception occurs, progesterone remains high throughout pregnancy. When conception does not occur, progesterone levels drop and the next period starts.