

YOUR COMPLETE GUIDE TO

Understanding Your Cycle

A nurse's guide to the four phases —
what's happening, how to eat, move,
and support your body every week.

■ Winter

Phase 1

■ Spring

Phase 2

■ Summer

Phase 3

■ Autumn

Phase 4

WELCOME

Why your cycle matters

Your menstrual cycle is far more than just your period. It's a monthly window into your overall health — a vital sign that reflects how your nervous system, nutrition, sleep, and stress levels are all working together.

Understanding the four phases of your cycle means you can work with your body rather than against it. You'll know why your energy dips before your period, why you feel most confident mid-cycle, and why the same food or workout routine feels different week to week.

Each phase of your cycle mirrors a season of the year — and just as nature moves through Winter, Spring, Summer and Autumn, so does your body every month. This guide uses that framework to help you remember where you are and what you need.

Written from a nursing background with a holistic lens — evidence-informed, practical and not overwhelming.

Your cycle as the seasons

❄ Winter · Menstrual

Days 1–5 — Rest, release, turn inward

■ Spring · Follicular

Days 6–13 — Renewal, rising energy, fresh starts

■ Summer · Ovulatory

Days 14–16 — Peak energy, confidence, connection

■ Autumn · Luteal

Days 17–28 — Slow down, turn inward, prepare

A note before you start

This guide is for education and general wellness support — not a substitute for medical advice. If you have a diagnosed condition (such as PCOS, endometriosis, or fibroids), please work alongside your GP or specialist.

❄️ Winter

Menstrual Phase

Just as winter calls nature to rest beneath the surface, your body turns inward. This is a time of release — not failure. The quiet of winter is necessary for what comes next.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- Oestrogen and progesterone are at their lowest
- The uterine lining sheds — your period begins
- Energy is naturally lower — this is intentional
- Your body is doing significant internal work
- Prostaglandins cause uterine contractions (cramping)

HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL

- Fatigue and genuine need for more rest
- Inward focus, reflective or quiet mood
- Possible cramping, bloating, or lower back ache
- Lower pain threshold than usual
- Desire for comfort, warmth, and stillness

WHAT TO EAT

- Iron-rich foods: red meat, lentils, dark leafy greens, tofu
- Anti-inflammatory: ginger, turmeric, oily fish (salmon, sardines)
- Magnesium: dark chocolate, pumpkin seeds, leafy greens
- Warm, cooked meals — easier on digestion than raw foods
- Stay well hydrated, especially if your flow is heavy

HOW TO MOVE

- Gentle walking or slow, restorative yoga
- Stretching and breathwork over cardio
- Full rest on heavy days — your body is working hard
- Avoid high-intensity training on days 1–2

NERVOUS SYSTEM

- This phase needs the most nervous system support
- Heat therapy (hot water bottle) soothes the vagus nerve
- Slow diaphragmatic breathing reduces cramp sensitivity
- Prioritise 8–9 hours sleep where possible
- Permission to say no — your reserves are genuinely low

■ Spring

Follicular Phase

Like the first green shoots after winter, energy begins to return. Spring is a time of new beginnings — ideas feel fresh, motivation stirs, and the world feels full of possibility again.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- FSH (follicle stimulating hormone) rises
- Several follicles begin to develop in the ovaries
- Oestrogen starts rising steadily — the dominant hormone
- The uterine lining begins to rebuild
- Energy, mood, and cognitive function all improve

HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL

- Increasing energy and motivation returning
- More sociable, outward-facing mood
- Mental clarity and creativity starting to peak
- Optimism and willingness to try new things
- Libido may begin to rise gently

WHAT TO EAT

- Fermented foods: yoghurt, kefir, sauerkraut — support oestrogen metabolism
- Lighter, fresher meals: salads, smoothies, raw veg
- Phytoestrogens: flaxseeds, edamame, sesame seeds
- Zinc-rich foods: pumpkin seeds, chickpeas, beef
- Cruciferous veg: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, kale

HOW TO MOVE

- Great time to try new workouts or increase intensity
- Running, cycling, HIIT, dance classes — energy supports it
- Strength training responds well in this phase
- Higher stamina means longer sessions are manageable

NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Oestrogen supports serotonin — mood is naturally buoyant
- Use this energy well but don't over-schedule
- Good phase for challenging conversations or big decisions
- Continue grounding morning routines — don't abandon them
- Stress resilience is higher here — use it wisely

■ Summer

Ovulatory Phase

Summer is in full bloom — everything is bright, warm, and outward-facing. This is your peak: energy, confidence, and connection are at their highest. The sun is at its zenith.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- LH (luteinising hormone) surges — triggers ovulation
- The dominant follicle releases an egg
- Oestrogen peaks just before ovulation
- Testosterone also rises — boosting drive and confidence
- The egg is viable for 12–24 hours

HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL

- Highest energy and physical confidence of your cycle
- Strong communication skills and verbal fluency
- Heightened libido and desire to connect
- Confidence to be seen — socially and professionally
- Skin often at its clearest

WHAT TO EAT

- Antioxidants to support egg quality: berries, citrus, pomegranate
- Fibre to support oestrogen clearance: flaxseeds, oats, vegetables
- Light, nutritious meals — appetite is often naturally lower
- Zinc and selenium: Brazil nuts, seafood, eggs
- Limit alcohol — liver is processing peak oestrogen levels

HOW TO MOVE

- Peak performance window — great for personal bests
- Heavy lifting, high-intensity cardio, competitive sport
- Group classes and team activities suit the social energy
- Be aware: joint laxity can increase slightly around ovulation

NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Most resilient nervous system phase of the cycle
- Ideal for public speaking, presentations, or difficult asks
- Channel the confident energy into what matters most
- Don't abandon grounding routines — energy can tip to anxiety
- Late nights and alcohol hit harder now than you might expect

■ Autumn

Luteal Phase

Autumn asks us to slow down, gather inward, and prepare. The harvest is done. Like leaves beginning to fall, the body starts to release what it no longer needs — and asks to be honoured.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

- The empty follicle becomes the corpus luteum
- Progesterone rises — the dominant hormone of this phase
- Oestrogen rises briefly then both hormones fall
- Body temperature rises slightly (0.2–0.5°C) after ovulation
- PMS symptoms often appear in the second half

HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL

- Gradual energy decrease, especially in the final week
- More emotionally sensitive — feelings closer to the surface
- Desire for comfort, routine, and familiar environments
- Possible bloating, breast tenderness, food cravings
- Heightened intuition and attention to detail

WHAT TO EAT

- Complex carbs: sweet potato, oats, brown rice — reduce cravings
- Magnesium: dark chocolate, nuts, seeds — supports mood
- B6-rich foods: salmon, chicken, bananas — supports progesterone
- Reduce caffeine and alcohol — both amplify PMS symptoms
- Eat regularly to keep blood sugar stable throughout the day

HOW TO MOVE

- Reduce intensity steadily as the phase progresses
- Pilates, barre, swimming, and walking work beautifully here
- Strength training still beneficial in the first half (days 17–21)
- Final few days: gentle yoga and stretching only

NERVOUS SYSTEM

- Progesterone sensitises the nervous system — stressors hit harder
- Sleep can be disrupted by progesterone — prioritise rest
- Daily regulation practice is most important in this phase
- Breathwork, journalling, and heat therapy are your allies
- Honour the need to slow down — it's biological, not weakness

QUICK REFERENCE

Your cycle at a glance

❄️ Winter · Phase 1

Menstrual · Days 1–5

Rest & restore. Iron, magnesium, warmth. Gentle movement only.
Honour the need to slow down.

■ Spring · Phase 2

Follicular · Days 6–13

Rising energy. Fermented foods, cruciferous veg, zinc. Build back up with training.

■ Summer · Phase 3

Ovulatory · Days 14–16

Peak power. Antioxidants, fibre, limit alcohol. Your highest performance window.

■ Autumn · Phase 4

Luteal · Days 17–28

Slow down. Complex carbs, magnesium, B6. Reduce intensity.
Prioritise nervous system care.

Want personalised support for your cycle?

Book a 1-to-1 consultation or join a group workshop.

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