

Fertility Apps: Choose Your Conception Ally Carefully

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We are your co-hosts of the Beyond Infertility Summit.

Carrie Jones, ND, FABNE, MPH

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Aumatma Simmons, ND, FABNE, MS

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Aumatma Simmons, ND, FABNE, MS

Every day, you can expect a mini lecture from us covering foundational content, helping you gain context and insight before deep diving into the day's interviews.

Carrie Jones, ND, FABNE, MPH

We hope that this will serve as a helpful context to get a deeper understanding through the day's interviews.

Aumatma Simmons, ND, FABNE, MS

Welcome back to the Beyond Infertility Summit. I'm your host, Dr. Aumatma. Today we're diving into fertility apps. Why is this important? Because the majority of you are using some sort of app that you think is helping support your fertility. However, there are a lot of misconceptions in this space, so I'm just going to break it down and guide you through what the options are out there. Trust me, this is not going to cover every single app. The idea here is to cover the big categories. Then, if you want to get into specifics, we will do that in a deeper dive masterclass.

Number one, all of the apps that are basically like self-trackers—that's what I call them. It's like an Oval, Glow, Glo, Apple, like my cycle on Apple. All of those are essentially just tracking your inputs. If you input that, you have started your cycle today, and then on average, it will say, that your average cycle is 28 days, so your ovulation is 14 days. It's based on an estimate. They are not very accurate in terms of predicting your ovulation window. They're great for understanding and keeping an eye on your cycles and your hormones but if you are trying to conceive, these are not adequate predictors. If you are combining this information with some of your information around, like when I feel this way and it's pretty consistent cycle after cycle, then you're good. But if you've been trying to conceive for a little while and it's not working, you may need a more high-tech solution, or, I should say, a higher-tech solution.

The next one I'm going to go to is something like Premom. We can put natural cycles in this category as well. Premom is an under-the-tongue thermometer. It transfers that data to an app that then predicts your ovulation window. It's based on basal body temperature tracking, which I'm a huge fan of, and I have a whole PDF that you can download that talks about all of the benefits that come out of basal body temperature tracking. However, the downside of something that's a manual thing like Premom is going to be that you have to remember to put that thermometer in your mouth within 30 to 60 seconds of waking up, which most people forget. Most people like to go on their phones and realize 30 minutes later, they missed their window. You have to do it the instant you wake up that's when it's the most accurate. It's less accurate than some of the devices that you wear—the wearable devices that are going to give you more accurate data because they're catching your temperature just before you wake up. But close enough is good enough. It's a low-cost investment. It's a relatively good solution if you're just starting; if you're not sure you want to spend \$200 on something. No problem, this is a good starting point. Then we have, as I mentioned, a natural cycle. Natural cycles do have a temperature version, meaning you get a manual thermometer and it will upload the data. But if you have an Oura ring, it connects to your Oura ring. I'm not wearing Oura ring today. It connects to you or a ring. Theoretically, the Oura ring is collecting temperature data all the time. It's also collecting heart rate and a couple of other variables like recovery and things like that. The Oura ring in and of itself is great. I'm not sure that the basal body temperatures are very accurate. We've done some internal work, just like, is this accurate? Can we rely on this? We have people who wear Oura ring. What I'm going to go to next, as far as wearable basal body temperature trackers and the Oura ring temperatures were different. But if it was just the temperatures, meaning that the temperatures are lower by, like, about a degree. If they were consistently lower and still showed ovulation at the same time as the temperature trackers, like the BBT trackers, then I would say, It's okay, but they don't. They were a little bit further off in terms of predictions, and I think that they're still using a fair bit of just the information that people input on top of the temperature data. I'm not convinced the technology is there yet. Also, basal body temperature tracking is scientific. There are no studies that have proven that you can get good data from extremities; basal body temperature in and of itself needs to be at the core of your body. It needs to be like armpits, mouth, behind your neck, somewhere close to the heart, because that's where

you're going to get the most accurate temperatures, and that's where you're going to see those minor fluctuations that support not only ovulation prediction but a whole bunch of other things. Again, that's in our PDF, where you're going to be able to access that PDF, so you'll get all of the information that we can get and gather from temperature devices. My favorite of those is the Tempdrop. They are wearable that you wear on your arm. It is comfortable and you can wear it to bed. It's easy. I love that one. In terms of other options, as far as ovulation prediction goes, we have three other main categories of technologies. We have something called LH strips, which you guys are probably familiar with. They're popular in the fertility world. The advantage is that they're super inexpensive. That disadvantage is that they are unfortunately just LH, which is one hormone, and that hormone only spikes, but it doesn't always mean that ovulation has happened. If you rely solely on LH strips, you're missing out on all of those odd cycles where you didn't ovulate, or women like people with PCOS who have fluctuating levels of LH multiple times in a cycle, and it's not indicative of ovulation happening. LH strips are not my favorite. They're a good device if you only want some basic information. But I am a bigger fan of some of the strips that measure more than just LH. There are strips like Mira, Oova, Inito, and Proov. They're all kind of in the same game, and they're tracking FSH, estrogen, LH, and progesterone. All four of the hormones that are needed and important for fertility are being tracked in one of these apps. The advantage, at least for, I would say, people that have been trying to conceive for over one year, even over two years, you're looking at is: is there a hormonal dysregulation under the surface of what's happening with people's fertility? More often than not, most of the people that we work with have some sort of hormonal dysregulation that we're trying to address. We want to harmonize the body. We want to optimize fertility. then we give our clients these devices so that we can monitor improvement. We can tell that their hormones are more in balance, and they don't have to keep going back for blood tests. It's certainly cheaper than doing a blood test every month. The advantage of something like that versus a blood test is that a blood test is still one day away. Most LH, estradiol, and FSH are going to be tested on cycle day three. We talked about it yesterday; it's super important to know, but we don't have to keep repeating testing. If we know what the baseline was, then we are okay with tracking the improvement of hormones through something like Mira. Mira is one of our partners, so we love it. That's the device that we're using in our practice, and it interfaces well with our back end. We get a lot of data, and we're able to look at that data in real-time and say that you're about to ovulate in two days. Or actually, ovulation didn't happen this month. Or there are times when we've been like, You're FSH just so high, please hold off trying this month because that FSH is going to lower the quality of the egg that's released, and we don't take chances on that. We can regulate and support the conception journey by optimizing it in real-time rather than waiting for retrospective data to say, that you ovulated on cycle day 15. Ovulation day is helpful; it's important, but at the end of the day, that's not enough information for us to understand. Is this person's hormone level staying at the optimal level as they're going through their train journey? We don't want to leave people hanging, or we don't want to have people just kind of not know that their hormones have shifted, that their hormones are out of whack, or that the stress that they experience at work is now showing up as hormone dysregulation, which happens frequently. Hyper-honing in on that

makes the conception journey faster, and essentially, you can bring your baby home sooner. Those are the devices that we use. The last one I will mention is Kegg, which is essentially an egg-shaped thing that you insert vaginally, and it has you doing key goals while it's monitoring cervical fluid changes in your cervix. The cervical fluid is a great indicator of where you are in your fertility. It's great to predict ovulation. However, it's not great as far as understanding what's happening with the hormones. Again, depending on what kind of data you want, you want to choose a device that's going to support your goals. If you're working with a provider, then having that goal match what the provider needs as far as data to support you on this journey is crucial.

I'll say that, from our experience, we've tested a bunch of things. This is the summary, and our two go-to's are a basal body temperature checker because we get so much information from that. then the second one is going to be Mira, and we like to add those two pieces of information together. Yes, it's a little bit redundant, but we're getting the basal body temperature. We're able to see shifts, and we're able to see some of the underlying things, honestly, like thyroid and gut health and things like that. We layer on top of it being able to have tangible hormone results that say, There's an improvement, there's a spike, there's an imbalance, and we can figure out what to do about it. Those are all the things that you need to know about fertility trackers. Again, make sure to download my PDF on this so that you can have it in written form. We have a couple of discount codes with our partners Tempdrop and Mira. Feel free to access those if they sound like something you want to use. Take care. I'll see you tomorrow.