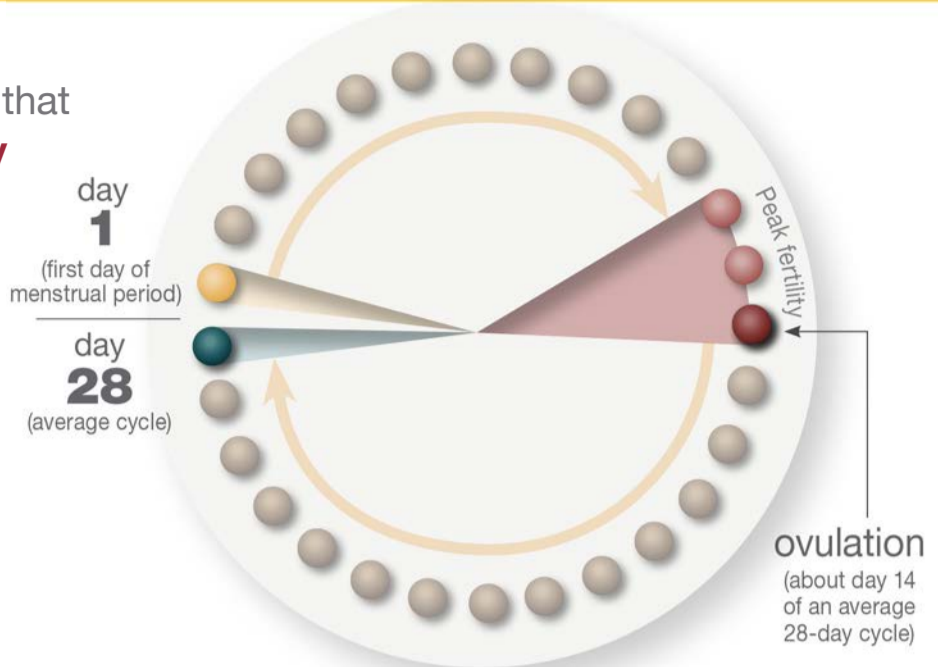


6 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT Ovulation

90% of women don't know that **2 days before through the day of ovulation** is the best time to try to get pregnant.

25% of women don't know a normal menstrual cycle can vary between **21 and 35 days**; 28 days is the average.



The Science Behind Your Monthly Cycle

Ovulation — the process of an egg leaving the ovary and traveling into the fallopian tube — occurs at about day 14 of an average 28-day cycle.

Here's how it works:

1 When the body's level of **estrogen** (a hormone) drops, the **hypothalamus** in the brain alerts its neighbor, the **pituitary gland**.

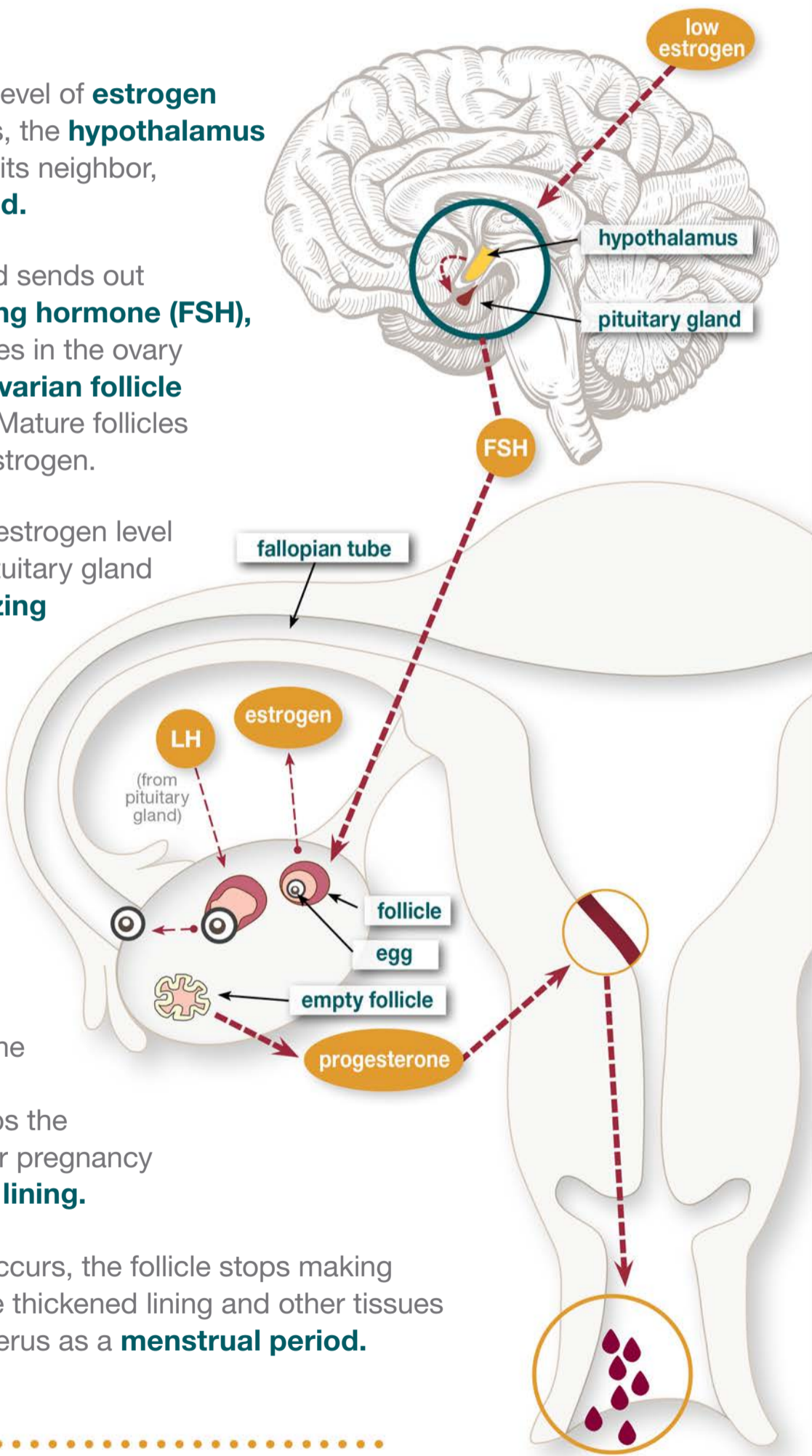
2 The pituitary gland sends out **follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH)**, which helps follicles in the ovary to mature. Each **ovarian follicle** contains an **egg**. Mature follicles and eggs make estrogen.

3 When the body's estrogen level is restored, the pituitary gland sends out **luteinizing hormone (LH)** to open the mature follicle.

4 A day or so later, the follicle then releases its egg into the **fallopian tube**.

5 The empty follicle makes the hormone **progesterone**. Progesterone helps the **uterus** prepare for pregnancy by **thickening its lining**.

6 If no pregnancy occurs, the follicle stops making progesterone. The thickened lining and other tissues pass out of the uterus as a **menstrual period**.



Like blood pressure and heart rate, **a woman's menstrual cycle is a sign of her overall health**. Menstrual irregularities — such as missing a period or having a heavier-than-usual period — could signal a health problem.

To learn more, visit <http://go.usa.gov/8a3H>.



Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development

