LAB# : Stages of the Female Menstrual Cycle

#### A) Background Information on the Menstru al Cycle

When a human female is born, her ovaries already contain all the immature eggs that will later mature and produce functional eggs during her lifetime. Eggs usually begin to mature between the ages of 12 and 14, when a release of hormones triggers <u>puberty</u> and a young woman reaches sexual maturity. Most commonly, eggs mature every 28 days or so. They usually mature one at a time, in alternating ovaries. This rhythmic maturation of eggs and the other chemical and physical events that accompany the process are called the <u>menstrual cycle</u>.

As a reaction to increasing levels of the hormone <u>FSH (follicle stimulating hormone)</u> eggs start to mature in a woman's ovary. Each egg matures inside an egg sac, or <u>follicle</u>, near the surface of one of the ovaries. When the egg is fully mature, another hormone — <u>LH (lute inizing hormone)</u> — reaches peak level. As a reaction to these high hormone levels, the follicle bursts open and releases the egg. This process is called <u>ovulation</u>. Tiny microscopic hairs, called cilia, on the cells at the opening to the <u>Fallopian tube</u> or <u>oviduct</u>, sweep the egg into the tube which leads to the <u>uterus</u>.

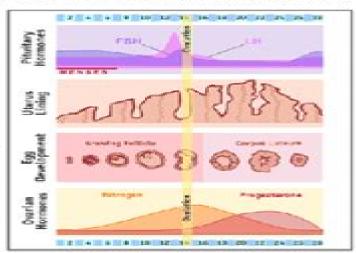
As a reaction to increasing levels of the hormone <u>estrogen</u>, the lining of the uterus has been prepared to receive a fertilized egg by building up its lining with nurturing tissues and blood vessels.

After the egg is released from the follicle in the ovary, the remaining follicle tissue becomes a hormone secreting gland, the <u>corpus luteum</u> ("yellow body"). The gland releases the hormone <u>progesterone</u>. High levels of progesterone help maintain the uterine in its built up, nurturing phase.

If the released egg remains unfertilized, it does not implant in the uterus lining. This triggers further hormonal changes. Both estrogen levels and progesterone levels drop. This causes the lining of the uterus to deteriorate. As a result both unfertilized egg and uterus lining are shed and pass out of the body. This periodic loss of tissues and fluids from the uterus is a normal

function known as <u>menstruation</u> (a period). Menstruation is considered the beginning of the monthly menstrual cycle.

All of these changes are governed DW. oppordinated. bormones carried. Shoot bloodstream from their releasing gland to their responding target cells. These hormones act through feedback mechanisms. The pituitary gland, at the base of the brain, secretes the two hormones that trigger the growth and development of the egg in the ovary - FSH (follicle stimulating hormone) and LH (luteinizing hormone). In response, the ovary then secretes the two sex hormones that control development of the egg and uterus lining estrogen and progesterone. When ovarian hormones reach low levels, this "feeds back" and stimulates the pituitary gland to once again secrete its hormones to stimulate development of another egg for another cycle.



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**Alison Margolskee** 

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# **Table of Contents Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key**

- 1. Understanding the eBook Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - The Rise of Digital Reading Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Advantages of eBooks Over Traditional Books
- 2. Identifying Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Exploring Different Genres
  - $\circ\,$  Considering Fiction vs. Non-Fiction
  - Determining Your Reading Goals
- 3. Choosing the Right eBook Platform
  - Popular eBook Platforms
  - Features to Look for in an Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - User-Friendly Interface
- 4. Exploring eBook Recommendations from Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Personalized Recommendations
  - Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key User Reviews and Ratings
  - Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key and Bestseller Lists

- 5. Accessing Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key Free and Paid eBooks
  - Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key Public Domain eBooks
  - Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key eBook Subscription Services
  - Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key Budget-Friendly Options
- 6. Navigating Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key eBook Formats
  - ∘ ePub, PDF, MOBI, and More
  - Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key Compatibility with Devices
  - Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key Enhanced eBook Features
- 7. Enhancing Your Reading Experience
  - Adjustable Fonts and Text Sizes of Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Highlighting and Note-Taking Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Interactive Elements Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
- 8. Staying Engaged with Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Joining Online Reading Communities
  - Participating in Virtual Book Clubs
  - Following Authors and Publishers Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
- 9. Balancing eBooks and Physical Books Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Benefits of a Digital Library
  - Creating a Diverse Reading Collection Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
- 10. Overcoming Reading Challenges
  - o Dealing with Digital Eye Strain
  - Minimizing Distractions
  - Managing Screen Time
- 11. Cultivating a Reading Routine Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Setting Reading Goals Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Carving Out Dedicated Reading Time
- 12. Sourcing Reliable Information of Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Fact-Checking eBook Content of Regents Biology Menstrual Cycle Answer Key
  - Distinguishing Credible Sources
- 13. Promoting Lifelong Learning

- Utilizing eBooks for Skill Development
- Exploring Educational eBooks
- 14. Embracing eBook Trends
  - Integration of Multimedia Elements
  - Interactive and Gamified eBooks

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