

# NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING (NFP) and FERTILITY AWARENESS METHODS (FAM)

(Based on Managing Contraception Pocket Guide, 2019-2020")

Effectiveness: 91-99% with perfect use; 75% with typical use

Mechanism: Avoiding sex at the time surrounding ovulation. Ovulation is detected by use of physical signs, symptoms and cycle data (factual information). (Couples desiring a pregnancy may also use these same techniques.) With NFP, couples abstain during at-risk days. With FAM, couples may use another method, such as barriers or withdrawal, during the at-risk time.

Techniques used to determine these high-risk fertile days include:

1. *The Calendar Method: To calculate the fertile days:*

- Record days of menses (period) for 6-12 cycles
- Based on estimates that sperm may survive 2-3 days, and ovulation occurs 14 days before menses, and the egg is viable about one day (motile (moving) sperm have been found as long as 7 days after intercourse)
- The earliest day of a fertile period is thus calculated to be that day number in the cycle corresponding to the shortest cycle length minus 18
- The latest day of the fertile period is calculated to be the day in the cycle corresponding to the longest cycle length minus 11

2. *Standard Days Method Utilizing Color-Coded Beads; CycleBeads™:*

For women with MOST cycles 26-32 days long, avoid UNPROTECTED intercourse on days 8-10 (white beads on CycleBead™ necklace). No need for 3-6 months of extensive cycle calculations [www.cyclebeads.com](http://www.cyclebeads.com)

3. *Cervical Mucus Ovulation Detection Method:*

- The woman checks the quantity and character of mucus in her vagina with fingers or tissue paper each day for several months to learn her cycle:
  - Post-menstrual (period) mucus is scant or undetectable
  - Pre-ovulation mucus is cloudy, yellow or white, sticky
  - Ovulation mucus is clear, wet, stretches, and is sticky (but slippery)
  - Post-ovulation fertile mucus is thick, cloudy and sticky
  - Post-ovulation, post-fertile mucus is scant or undetectable
- Abstinence or a barrier method is used during the fertile period
- Intercourse without restriction beginning 4th day after the last day of wet, clear, slippery mucus (post ovulation)

4. *Two Day Method:*

- Uses cervical secretions, but is much simpler
- Each day woman asks herself 1.) “Did I notice secretions today?” and 2.) “Did I notice secretions yesterday?”
- If no secretions two consecutive days, OK to have intercourse
- Users typically have to avoid unprotected intercourse for 13 days per cycle (range 10-14)

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## 5. *Basal Body Temperature Method (BBT)*

- Assumes early morning temperature measured before getting up will increase noticeably with ovulation. The fertile period is defined as the day of the first temperature drop, or first elevation through 3 consecutive days of elevated temperatures. (A temperature drop does not always occur.)
- Abstinence begins first day of menstrual bleeding and lasts through 3 consecutive days of sustained temperature rise. Using this method means a couple must avoid unprotected vaginal intercourse about 17 out of each 28 day cycle.

## 6. *Post-Ovulation Method*

Unprotected intercourse is permitted when signs of ovulation have subsided (BBT, cervical mucus).

## 7. *Symptothermal Method*

- Combines at least two of the above methods, usually cervical mucus changes with BBT
- May also include ovulatory pain and changes in sex drive and other physical signs to determine ovulation. During pre-ovulatory and ovulatory phases, the cervix softens, opens and is moister. During post-ovulatory period, the cervix drops and becomes firm and closes.

## 8. *The Marquette Method (MM) of FAM*

An online site that aids users who choose either electronic hormonal fertility monitor (EMFM), cervical mucus monitoring (CMM) or both

### Advantages/Benefits:

- Helps couples achieve pregnancy when practiced in reverse
- Helps a woman learn more about her menstrual cycle
- Men and women can work together in using this method
- May be only method acceptable to couples for cultural or religious reasons

### Disadvantages/Risks:

- High failure rate; method very unforgiving of improper use
- Requires rigorous discipline, good communication and full commitment of both partners
- May be required to take body temperature daily
- Does not prevent risks of sexually transmitted diseases or HIV
- Not as effective when the woman is sick or when she is on some medicines
- Even women with “regular” periods can vary as much as  $\pm 7$  days in any given cycle
- Cervical mucus techniques may be complicated by vaginal infections
- May not be helpful during time of stress, depression or major life changes
- Requires abstinence at time of ovulation, which is also the time of high sex drive
- Requires abstinence, barrier method, or another contraceptive that does not change pattern of ovulation during 6-12 month learning/data-gathering period (unless use CycleBead method)
- Less reliable if woman has a fever, vaginal infection, or is in the practice of douching

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### Instructions:

- Review this sheet carefully and report any questions or concerns to your health care provider
- Formal training is necessary for optimal success, and couples may (and, ideally, should) be trained together
- Requires discipline, communication, listening skills, full commitment of both partners. Mistakes using this method are particularly likely to lead to unintended pregnancies as intercourse is then occurring at the time in the cycle when a woman is most likely to become pregnant
- *Resources include The Couple to Couple League International, Inc. 4290 Delhi Avenue, Cincinnati, OH 45238-5829, (513) 471-2000, [www.ccli.org](http://www.ccli.org) and/or National Center for Women's Health, Pope Paul VI Institute, 6901 Mercy Road, Omaha, NE 68106-2621, (402) 390-6600, [www.popepaulvi.com](http://www.popepaulvi.com), or Family of the Americas Foundation, Inc., 5929 Talbot Rd., Lothian, MD 20711, (800) 443-3395, [www.familyplanning.net](http://www.familyplanning.net)*
- Use back-up method during initial months when learning cycle
- If decide on FAM, use contraception during fertile days
- If decide on NFP, abstain from sexual intercourse during fertile days
- Encourage other forms of sexual satisfaction
- **Inconsistent use and risk taking:** Educate about emergency contraception when women start using method