

Fertility Awareness

What is Fertility Awareness?

Fertility Awareness allows you to prevent pregnancy without using any drugs or devices. Natural Family Planning (NFP) is another name for Fertility Awareness.

What makes Fertility Awareness unique?

Fertility awareness differs from other types of birth control. Birth control prevents sperm from meeting eggs. Most birth control must be used each time you have sex. Fertility awareness tells you when you are most likely to become pregnant. These are your fertile days. Fertility awareness requires you to avoid vaginal sex on your fertile days.

Pros

Fertility awareness does NOT require you to use pills or condoms or to have devices in your body. Fertility awareness is a safe method of birth control. Fertility awareness is acceptable to some religions that oppose birth control.

Cons

Fertility awareness does NOT protect against HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI). You cannot have vaginal sex on fertile days. Fertility awareness methods do not work well if you do not have regular periods. Infections and some medications can cause changes in vaginal mucus, making some fertility awareness methods harder to use. Unprotected anal, oral, and vaginal sex may raise your chances of getting HIV or other STIs.

Important Terms

Period – the days of your menstrual cycle when you have vaginal bleeding.

Menstrual Cycle – the length of time between the start of one period and the next. You ovulate (release an egg) in the middle of your menstrual cycle. You are most fertile on the days around ovulation. This is when you are most likely to become pregnant.

Vaginal Sex – Vaginal intercourse (the penis in the vagina) can lead to pregnancy. Kissing, touching, anal sex, and oral sex do not cause pregnancy.

Fertile Days – the days when you are most likely to get pregnant. To avoid pregnancy, you should not have vaginal sex on your fertile days. The number of days depends on the method used.

Fertility Awareness Method	How Well It Works*	What You Do	Fertile Days	Pros	Cons
Abstinence	100%	You don't have vaginal sex.		Only method that is 100% effective at preventing pregnancy No supplies to buy	You can't have vaginal sex until you're ready to get pregnant.
Basal Body Temperature (BBT) Method	80%	You take your temperature each morning before getting out of bed. Your temperature will rise by about 1/2 a degree when you ovulate.	From the day your temperature drops until 3 days after it rises	Low cost	You must buy a basal body temperature thermometer. You must take your temperature each day. You can't have vaginal sex on your fertile days. Fertility awareness methods do not work well if you do not have regular periods.

Fertility Awareness Method	How Well It Works*	What You Do	Fertile Days	Pros	Cons
Ovulation/ Cervical Mucus Method	75%	The mucus in your vagina changes during your fertile days. Most days, it's thick and sticky. It becomes watery and slippery when you ovulate.	It lasts 4 days. Your fertile days start when the mucus becomes watery and slippery. You are fertile for the 3 days afterward.	Low cost No supplies to buy This method allows you to have vaginal sex for all but 4 days.	You must check the mucus in your vagina each day. You can't have vaginal sex on your fertile days. Fertility awareness methods do not work well if you do not have regular periods.
Sympto- thermal Method	75%	Combination of BBT and Mucus methods	First signs of fertility to 3rd day after the increase in body temperature or 4th day after the change in mucus, whichever comes second.	Low cost	You must take your temperature and check mucus each day. You can't have vaginal sex on your fertile days. Fertility awareness methods do not work well if you do not have regular periods. You must buy a basal body temperature thermometer.
Calendar (Rhythm) Method	75%	You track your menstrual cycle to predict your Fertile Days.	First day = shortest cycle length minus 18 Last day= longest cycle length minus 11	Low cost No supplies to buy	It works best when you have tracked at least 6 menstrual cycles. You can't have vaginal sex on your fertile days. Fertility awareness methods do not work well if you do not have regular periods.
Two Day Method	86%	You check your mucus in your vagina each day. Then you ask yourself two questions: 1. "Is there mucus today?" (Yes or No?) 2. "Was there mucus yesterday?" (Yes or No?)	Any day during which the answer to both questions is YES.	Low cost Works for menstrual cycles of every length No supplies to buy	You must check the mucus in your vagina each day. You can't have vaginal sex on your fertile days. Fertility awareness methods do not work well if you do not have regular periods.
Standard Days Method	88%	You track your menstrual cycle using CycleBeads. CycleBeads are a color-coded string of 32 beads. White beads show when you are most likely to get pregnant.	Days 8-19 of your menstrual cycle	Low cost	You can only use this method if your menstrual cycles are 26-32 days long. You can't have vaginal sex on your fertile days, which with this method = 12 days each month. Fertility awareness methods do not work well if you do not have regular periods.

*Typical Use