

WHAT IS NFP?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) – also known as *fertility awareness methods* – is a term applied to various methods that help women and men determine the fertile and infertile times of a woman's monthly cycle. These methods can be used to achieve or avoid conception because the couple learns to interpret natural (biological) signs that surround ovulation, thus identifying days that intercourse is most likely to result in conception. The basic concept of NFP is that couples have intercourse during fertile times to *achieve* conception and abstain from intercourse and genital contact during fertile times if they are *avoiding* conception.

HOW IS NFP DIFFERENT FROM CONTRACEPTION?

Though the desired outcome (avoiding conception for a serious reason) may be the same, the mentality and physical practices are very different. When used with the proper mentality, NFP can foster trust, patience, openness to life, and a mindset of total self-gift. Contraception separates the bond of love from the possibility of life. It can be linked to fear or resentment of fertility and lack of self-control regarding sexual desires. If you are interested in understanding the *moral* difference between sterilizing the marital act ourselves and *waiting* for intercourse until a naturally infertile time, you can consider the moral distinction between ending a person's life (we take the powers of God into our own hands) and waiting for God to bring about natural death (God remains God).

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING NFP?

- 97 – 99.9% effective in avoiding or postponing conception (assuming it is practiced correctly and consistently)
- Effectively helps infertile couples *achieve* conception
- Respects the dignity of women's bodies & of human life
- Free of harmful chemicals, devices, & side effects
- Husband and wife learn & plan together
- Increases communication, intimacy, & appreciation of the other; cultivates romance, prayer & willingness to sacrifice
- Diagnostic tool for addressing underlying causes of fertility-related health problems (*see an NFP-only Dr.*)
- Most methods can be used at any time during a woman's reproductive life (even with irregular cycles) and instructors usually provide long-term follow up
- Inexpensive (some insurances cover classes)
- Invites greater virtue, sexual self-mastery and maturity
- Fosters the ability to teach chastity to children

HOW DOES NFP WORK?

A woman's body provides several basic ways to identify the fertile and infertile times of her cycle. Recognizing the pattern of those physical signs – and thus targeting the day of ovulation – forms the basis for all methods of NFP.

One of the **key signs of fertility** that can be checked by a doctor (and to some extent with an electronic fertility monitor) is the **level of various hormones** in the woman's body, including LH and estrogen.

The **most readily observable sign of fertility** is the **mucus** released from a woman's cervix, typically near the time of ovulation. A woman's bleeding and mucus patterns correspond closely to what is going on hormonally in her body.

Another sign is her **basal body temperature**. Due to hormonal activity, a woman's waking temperature changes during the fertility (monthly) cycle. Lower temperatures indicate that ovulation has not yet occurred. Higher temperatures indicate a rise in progesterone which signals that ovulation has occurred and the infertile time is approaching.

Secondary signs include a change in the **shape or firmness of the cervix**. Women can also observe minor abdominal pain or pressure at the time of ovulation.

BASIC METHODS OF NFP

- **Cervical Mucus (Ovulation) Methods** involve observing and recording the patterns and daily changes of cervical mucus.
- **Sympto-Thermal Methods** consist of combining daily waking temperature, changes in cervical mucus, cycle length and other minor signs of fertility.
- **Hormonal Fertility Monitoring** uses ovulation test kits and electronic fertility monitors to measure female reproductive hormones in the urine.

- **Basal Body Temperature** employs recording of the woman's daily waking temperature and observing the changing patterns. *Since temperature change indicates exiting the fertile phase & can be affected by factors such as illness, it should be paired with other signs.*
- **Calendar Based Methods** rely on counting cycle length to determine the beginning and end of fertility. *The old "rhythm method" and the modern **Standard Days Method** are calendar based & unreliable when applied to irregular cycles. If a woman's monthly cycle ever varies away from 26 to 32 days long (which it commonly does), this method will not be effective. Couples must **abstain** from day 8-19. (Note: the website for SDM does not uphold Church teachings.)*

SUMMARY OF NFP SYSTEMS

NFP is most effective when couples take an
Actual class with personal attention

Modern science and technology have provided the means to accurately monitor signs of fertility & infertility;
Additionally, other treatments have been developed for ALL conditions commonly treated with chemical contraceptives.

Ask an NFP-only Dr. (found at www.OneMoreSoul.com) for more information!

Each method below has certified instructors with varying levels of training; do not be afraid to ask questions to find the method that is best for you!

CERVICAL MUCUS (AKA OVULATION) METHODS

Involves observing and recording the patterns and daily changes of cervical mucus.

CREIGHTON MODEL: FERTILITYCARE™ SYSTEM & NaPro TECHNOLOGY I, OL

The FertilityCare System uses the most detailed charting system for external mucus observations (made both before and after urination), therefore it is a particularly helpful system for those who are finding it difficult to achieve conception (more successful than IVF) and for those who have cervical mucus that is difficult to “read” (always wet, post-partum, breastfeeding, etc.). NaPro Drs. are trained to read the charts of other NFP methods in order to evaluate cycle and hormonal problems such as abnormal bleeding, PCOS, PMS, repeat miscarriages, etc. *Medical referrals can be made to NaPro trained Drs. or directly to The Pope Paul VI Institute in Omaha, NE.*

More information: www.fertilitycare.org www.creightonmodel.com www.naprotechnology.com

BILLINGS OVULATION METHOD™ I, OL, ♀

Drs. John & Evelyn Billings helped create the baseline of ongoing research (60+ years) for modern forms of NFP through 850,000 hormonal studies. In this method, observations of the cervical mucus are noted daily – primarily through what the woman feels at the vulva during normal daily activities and secondarily through the appearance of the mucus; simple rules are then applied. *Medical referrals (similar to what are listed under Creighton) are made to physicians or the Billings Center for Fertility and Reproductive Medicine in Oklahoma City, OK.*

More information: www.billings.life www.boma-usa.org www.fertilitypinpoint.com

FAMILY OF THE AMERICAS I, ♠, ♀

This method helps women to make simple observations of cervical mucus and be aware of vulvar sensations throughout normal daily activities. The charting and rules were developed so it would be easier to learn regardless of education level (stamps include pictures of mucus). Along with the Billings Method, it has been translated into 20 languages.

More information: www.familyplanning.net

SYMPTO-THERMAL METHODS

Involves observing and recording both fertility “symptoms” and temperature.

COUPLE TO COUPLE LEAGUE (CCL) I, OL, ♀, ♠ (but do have some Drs. trained in the method)

In this method, sensations and characteristics of vulvar (external) cervical mucus are monitored, the woman’s basal temperature readings are taken, and changes in the cervix are optionally noted. Taught by couples who practice the method themselves, this system also teaches in depth about the importance of breastfeeding and the theological underpinnings of marriage and family.

More information: www.ccli.org www.cycleprogo.com

SYMPTO PRO™ FERTILITY EDUCATION OL, ♀, ♠ (not international, but available in Spanish)

Offered by Northwest Family Services, instructors teach women to observe the main signs of fertility: very detailed observations of cervical mucus are made, the woman’s basal temperature readings are taken, and changes in the cervix are optionally noted.

More information: www.symptopro.org

MARQUETTE MODEL (ALSO CLASSIFIED as HORMONAL FERTILITY MONITORING) I, OL, ♀

Taught only by medical professionals (physicians & professional nurses), this model emphasizes the use of an at-home electronic device to monitor the female reproductive hormones. The *ClearBlue Easy Fertility Monitor* measures hormone levels in urine to estimate the beginning and end of fertility in a woman’s monthly cycle. This method also includes observing cervical mucus and vulvar sensations, as well as taking the woman’s basal body temperature; the couple may choose to chart any combination of the fertility signs observed. Marquette Model instructors are also trained in the **Standard Days Method** (calendar based, described on reverse side).

More information: www.nfp.marquette.edu/nfp_quick_inst_intro.php

I = Instructors available in other countries
OL = Online instruction or chart consultation available
♀ = online charting or app for Smartphones available
(search online for general ‘NFP charting app’ for your device)

♠ = These do not have Drs. trained in their own method; more difficult fertility issues are referred to physicians in other methods or to the NFP-only Dr. list at www.OneMoreSoul.com (Please be aware that very few Drs. at the AAPLOG are NFP-only & may prescribe abortifacient contraceptives.)