

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING NFP?

In NFP both spouse are taught to understand the nature of fertility and work with it, whether to plan a pregnancy or to avoid a pregnancy. Couples who use NFP soon learn that they have a shared responsibility for family planning. Husbands are encouraged to “tune into” their wives’ cycles and both spouses are encouraged to speak openly and frankly about their sexual desire and their ideas on family size.

Other benefits include:

- ◆ *Low cost*
- ◆ *No side effects*
- ◆ *Effectiveness for achieving, spacing, or limiting pregnancy*
- ◆ *Can be used throughout the reproductive life cycle*
- ◆ *Marriage enrichment and mutual understanding;*
- ◆ *Appreciation for the value of a child*
- ◆ *Fosters respect for and acceptance of the total person*
- ◆ *Morally acceptable*

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE THE METHODS OF NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING FOR AVOIDING PREGNANCY?

When couples are taught by competent teachers, understand the methods, and are motivated to follow them, NFP is up to 99% successful in spacing or limiting births.

The effectiveness of NFP depends upon the spouses’ following the rules of the method according to their family planning intention (i.e., achieving or limiting births). Those who are strongly motivated to avoid pregnancy and follow the method strictly are very effective in meeting their goal.

Effectiveness of Natural Family Planning in Avoiding Pregnancy

Number of pregnancies among 100 couples in one year.

Couples who are taught well, understand the method, are clear about family planning intention, and carefully follow all the rules for avoiding pregnancy all the time. 1-4

Couples who occasionally do not follow all the rules for avoiding pregnancy. 5-25*

** Generally, these rates of effectiveness are similar to those found among couples using barrier methods of contraception.*

WHERE CAN I LEARN HOW TO USE NFP?

The best way to learn NFP is from a qualified instructor – that is, one who is certified from an NFP teacher education program. Although medical professionals are gradually learning more about NFP and becoming more supportive of patients who wish to use it, they are not often trained to teach NFP.



NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

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WHAT IS NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is an umbrella term for certain methods used to achieve and avoid pregnancies. These methods are based on observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's menstrual cycle. Couples using NFP to avoid pregnancy abstain from intercourse and genital contact during the fertile phase of the woman's cycle. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedure are used to avoid pregnancy. NFP reflects the dignity of the human person within the context of marriage and family life, promotes openness to life, and recognizes the value of the child. By respecting the love-giving and life-giving natures of marriage, NFP can enrich the bond between husband and wife.

IS NFP RHYTHM? NFP IS NOT "RHYTHM."

The Rhythm (or Calendar) method was in use more than 50 years ago. It was based on the theory that the time of ovulation could be determined by calculating from previous menstrual cycles. This method often proved inaccurate because of the unique nature of each woman's ovulation cycle; some women have very irregular cycles and almost all women have a cycle of unusual length once in a while.

On the other hand, NFP methods are progressive. That is, they are based on progressive, day-to-day observations of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of the menstrual cycle. NFP methods take advantage of the changes associated with ovulation, treating each cycle as unique.

Couples using NFP to avoid pregnancy abstain from intercourse during the fertile phase of the woman's cycle. Couples who wish to achieve a pregnancy can also take advantage of the fertile time of the cycle. Because it allows couples to adjust their behavior to the naturally occurring cycles of a woman's body, NFP is not a contraceptive –i.e., it does nothing to work against conception

WHO CAN USE NFP?

Any married couple can use NFP! A woman need not have "regular" cycles. NFP education helps couples to fully understand their combined fertility, thereby helping them to either achieve or avoid a pregnancy. The key to the successful use of NFP is cooperation and communication between husband and wife – a shared commitment.

NFP is unique among the methods of family planning because it enables its users to work with the body rather than against it, Fertility is viewed as a reality to live, not a problem to be solved.

As a method of family planning, NFP:

- ◆ *calls for mutual responsibility by husband and wife*
- ◆ *requires the couple to communicate*
- ◆ *is based on scientific research*
- ◆ *treats each menstrual cycle as unique and teaches a couple to observe their signs of fertility on a day-to-day basis*
- ◆ *has no harmful side effects*
- ◆ *is effective for those wanting to achieve or avoid pregnancy*
- ◆ *can be used in special circumstances- such as, post-partum, during breastfeeding, and pre-menopause*
- ◆ *is virtually cost free*



WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF FERTILITY?

A woman's body provides three basic ways to identify the fertile and infertile times of her cycle.

A primary sign of fertility is the mucus released from the woman's cervix. A woman learns to identify the normal, healthy, cervical mucus which indicates the days that intercourse is most likely to result in a pregnancy.

The second sign is their basal body temperature. Due to hormonal activity, a woman's resting temperature changes during the menstrual cycle. Lower temperatures indicate that ovulation has not yet occurred. Higher temperatures indicate a rise in progesterone which signals the end of the fertile time. The third sign is a change in the shape or texture of the cervix.

Finally, secondary signs, such as minor abdominal pain or pressure at the time of ovulation can also be observed.

HOW DOES NFP WORK?

NFP instruction helps a couple identify the most opportune time to achieve as well as avoid a pregnancy. Understanding that intercourse or genital contact during the fertile time can result in pregnancy, couples using the natural methods must be clear regarding their family planning intention – that is, do they wish to achieve or avoid a pregnancy?

If a couple wishes to achieve pregnancy, they have intercourse during the fertile time. If a couples wishes to avoid pregnancy, they abstain from intercourse and any genital contact during the fertile time. No artificial methods are used during the fertile time. These would interfere with a women's observation of her fertility signs.

*Family, where life begins and
love never ends.*