

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.

Things to Know

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.

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 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.

Withdrawal and avoiding vaginal sex can be used as backup methods during your fertile days.

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.

Method	How Well It Works*	What You Do	Fertile Days	Things to Know
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 if you do not have regular periods.

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Method	How Well It Works	What You Do	Fertile Days	Things to Know
Cervical Mucus Method	66-89%	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.	Your fertile days start when the mucus becomes watery and slippery.	Low cost No supplies to buy Smartphone app can help. 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 if you do not have regular periods.
Sympto-thermal Method	87-98%	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. You must buy a basal body temperature thermometer. Fertility awareness methods do not work if you do not have regular periods.
Calendar (Rhythm) Method	86-89%	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 Smartphone apps can help 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 if you do not have regular periods.
BBT plus (Smartphone apps)	90%	Track your cycle and take your temperature at least 5 mornings each week. Use an app to predict fertile days. Some people add urine hormone tests.	The app predicts your fertile days.	Smartphone app can help. You must buy a basal body temperature thermometer. Urine hormone tests cost a lot. You must take your temperature in the morning at least 5 days/ week. You can't have vaginal sex on your fertile days. Fertility awareness methods do not work if you do not have regular periods.
Urine hormone	74-98%	Track your cycle and do urine hormone tests.	Hormone tests predict your fertile days.	Can help conceive or prevent pregnancy. You must buy urine hormone tests. Fertility awareness methods do not work if you do not have regular periods.

*Typical Use