

NFP - What is Natural family planning?



What is Natural family planning? The medical definition for NFP is:

'A method of **birth control** that involves abstinence from sexual intercourse during the period of ovulation which is determined through observation and measurement of bodily signs (as cervical mucus and body temperature).

If Natural family planning or 'NFP' is the route that you and your partner are taking then it is important that you are fully aware of the factors that may have effect on your body and regular cycle, which can then interfere with your recordings.

Some of these factors can be:

- Stress
- Alcohol
- Illness
- Gynecological disorders
- Change in time zones and travel fatigue
- Holidays
- Medication

Some of the benefits of NFP that have been recorded are:

- It is a completely natural & holistic fertility care
- It is an inexpensive way to plan your family
- It is not harmful to the body
- It is regardless of cycle regularity/irregularity
- It is free from medicines and chemicals and therefore free of side effects
- This method can enhance the relationship between both you and your partner as you are sharing this responsibility
- It can be implemented at any stage of reproductive life
- It is a method for both CONCEPTION and CONTRACEPTION

Some disadvantages to opting for the NFP route are:

- For the first 6 months, daily recordings are necessary to really learn your body's cycles which couples can find time consuming
- Some life factors may interfere with your cycles like travel, illness or stress (See above list of common interferences)
- The NFP method is an ineffective method to protect against sexually transmitted illnesses
- The NFP method can only prove to be effective if both parties are committed to the process.

So just how effective is the NFP method?

According to EWTN.com:

'Numerous studies including one by the U.S. government, have shown that the Sympto-Thermal Method of **NFP** can be used at the 99% level of **effectiveness** for AVOIDING pregnancy. That's equal to the birth control pill and better than all the barrier methods'.

Although this method is widely thought of as complicated, NFP is extremely effective once properly understood. When the couple fully comprehends what is involved in the process then NFP can be one of the most effective methods of contraception available.

An example provided by Jennings V & Sinai I in their article Contraception 2001, is A woman using the Two Day Method asks herself, "Did I note cervical secretions today?" and "Did I note cervical secretions yesterday?" If the answer to either question is "yes," she is considered fertile. If the answer to both is "no," her probability of conceiving that day is low.

Jennings V, Sinai I. Further analysis of the theoretical effectiveness of the Two Day method of family planning. Contraception. 2001;64(3):149–153.

Once both you and your partner have a clear grasp of the responsibilities that are involved in NFP it should prove to be an effective advantageous method. There will need to be a common motivation and dedication to the planning process with the same fundamental goals that will be discussed in your premarital classes.

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