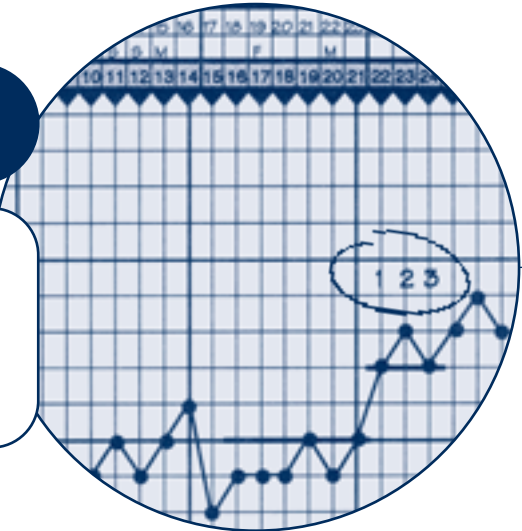




CONTRACEPTION

Natural methods of birth control



Natural methods of birth control do not rely on the use of hormones or devices. These methods include Natural Family Planning (NFP), Lactational Amenorrhoea Method (LAM) and withdrawal.

What is Natural Family Planning (NFP)?

NFP utilises awareness of the fertile phase in the menstrual cycle to indicate when sexual intercourse should be avoided to prevent a pregnancy.

Methods of predicting or calculating the fertile phase include:

- Calendar method
- Temperature method
- Billing's ovulation method
- Symptothermal method

How does NFP work?

A woman is fertile from a few days before ovulation until after ovulation has occurred. As sperm can survive in the uterus or Fallopian tubes for up to 5-7 days, women are most likely to become pregnant if they have sex in the week before ovulation.

NFP methods require a woman to calculate and record fertile days by:

- counting cycle length over a period of time or
- observing signs that indicate ovulation (egg release) is about to or has occurred

During the fertile days a couple need to abstain from sexual intercourse or use a barrier method. Depending on the individual, sex may need to be avoided for 7-14 days during each menstrual cycle.

How effective is NFP?

The effectiveness of these methods relies on motivation to prevent a pregnancy and length of time in using the method and the type of method used.

If used correctly every time, these methods are 75-99% effective. This means that if 100 women used these methods, between 1 and 25 could become pregnant in a year.

It is more successful for couples that have undertaken training with NFP educators.



NOTES

What are the advantages of NFP as a method of contraception?

- cost effective – once learnt there is no ongoing expense for medical consultations, devices or medications
- it does not interfere with the menstrual cycle
- women gain a high level of knowledge of the body, which can be used to know when they are most fertile; this can be used to prevent or achieve a pregnancy

What are the disadvantages of NFP as a method of contraception?

- it can be difficult to confidently predict ovulation
- requires daily awareness of changes and continued observations
- requires varying periods of abstinence if it is the only method used

What are the possible health benefits of NFP?

It avoids any possible side effects of hormonal methods or devices such as IUDs.

Is NFP suitable for all women?

This method is most suited to women who have a strong preference for natural methods because of health or religious reasons. Partner cooperation is also an important factor in the success of this method.

Some situations can make NFP more difficult to manage. For example:

- irregular periods
- breastfeeding
- after childbirth (and not breastfeeding)
- after stopping hormonal methods of contraception
- approaching menopause

How do I learn about NFP?

Those interested in developing a detailed understanding in the use of this method and requiring individual support are encouraged to contact local NFP educators. Further information and local contacts can be found at www.nfpprog.com or www.acnfp.com.au.



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What is Lactational Amenorrhoea Method (LAM)?

LAM is the use of breastfeeding as a contraceptive method by women who fulfil the following criteria:

- fully breastfeeding and not feeding the baby with any food or milk supplements
- less than 6 months since giving birth
- menstrual periods have not returned since the birth

How does LAM work?

Breastfeeding has an effect on the production of hormones that reduces the probability of ovulation (egg release) occurring, therefore reducing the chance of a pregnancy.

How effective is LAM?

If all three criteria (see above) are met this method is 98% effective.

What are the advantages of LAM as a method of contraception?

- no financial outlay
- it will not interfere with the establishment of breastfeeding
- delays introduction of alternative methods
- there are health benefits for both the woman and child from breastfeeding

What are the disadvantages of LAM as a method of contraception?

- requires an ongoing commitment to breastfeeding
- the contraceptive effect is limited beyond 6 months after birth therefore women should be aware of alternatives

Where can I get more information about LAM?

Contact a Family Planning Queensland (FPQ) clinic or your general practitioner (GP) for more information or advice.



NOTES

What is withdrawal?

Withdrawal is a method of contraception where the man takes his penis out (withdraws) from the woman's vagina before he ejaculates (comes). It is also known as coitus interruptus.

How effective is withdrawal?

Very little research has been done into the effectiveness of this method.

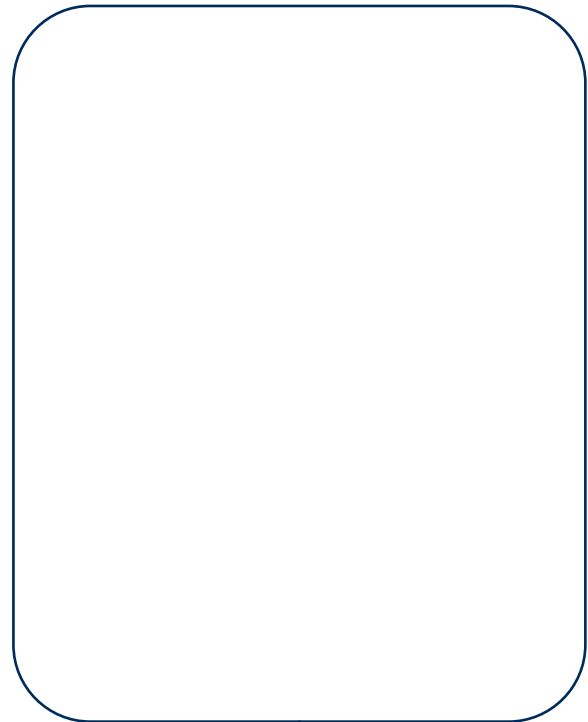
Many people find it difficult to use withdrawal effectively. As sperm can be present in pre-ejaculation fluid there is the risk of pregnancy even if a man withdraws before ejaculation. Other methods of contraception offer greater effectiveness. However, some couples have used it successfully for many years and find the method acceptable.

What are the advantages of withdrawal as a method of contraception?

- is freely available to anyone who wishes to use the method
- does not require any medical involvement

What are the disadvantages of withdrawal as a method of contraception?

- the risk of failure may be unacceptable to some couples



- it requires the willingness and skill of the male partner to withdraw before ejaculation

Where can I get more information about withdrawal?

Contact a FPQ clinic or your GP for more information or advice.

The graph on the front page has been reproduced with permission from the Australian Council of Natural Family Planning (ACNFP Inc.) from *Understanding natural family planning: the sympto-thermal method of natural family planning*, 2004. www.acnfp.com.au

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