



Basics of Natural Family Planning

- **Fertility Awareness** is the knowledge and observation of fertility indicators that may be observed during the course of a woman's menstrual cycle.
- **Natural Family Planning (NFP)** consists of "fertility awareness," the ability to interpret the signs of fertility, and sexual union during the known fertile time to conceive a child, and complete abstinence during the known fertile time to avoid pregnancy.
- **The woman's fertile time is in conjunction with ovulation**
The woman ovulates on just one day each cycle. Usually only one egg is released, but if multiple ovulations occur, **all the eggs** for a given cycle are released during **one 24-hour period** because hormones work quickly and within 24 hours no further ovulation is possible. Once released, **an egg dies within 24 hours** if not fertilized by a sperm.
- Other than seeing ovulation occur on ultrasound, **there is no known way to pinpoint the exact moment of ovulation, but there is a way to know that a possible ovulation may be approaching.** This is the woman's observation of the cervical mucus at the vaginal entrance. This cervical mucus may be observed visually and through awareness of changes in vaginal sensations. Changes in the cervix itself may also be observed.
- **Couple fertility** depends on ovulation, cervical mucus, and genital contact.
- **Sperm need favorable cervical mucus** in order to survive in the woman's body.
Without an egg, conception cannot occur; without satisfactory mucus, sperm cannot get to the egg; without genital contact no sperm is present to fertilize an available egg.
Sperm viability (ability to fertilize) is dependent on the quality of the cervical mucus. When good fertility mucus is present, sperm can live from 2 to 5 days.
- **Pregnancy** can result from **mere contact of sexual organs** on fertile days - without penetration or ejaculation, and even though contraceptive devices be employed.

Successful Natural Family Planning depends on:

- Thorough instruction with regular follow-up by qualified NFP Providers (reading a book is not sufficient).
- Understanding the significance of the various signs of fertility and infertility (primarily the temperature and cervical mucus signs).

- Accurate observations (paying attention to the signs and daily charting - relying on “memory” does not work).
- Knowing and following the rules, especially complete abstinence from all genital contact during the method-defined fertile time.
- Mutual motivation the safety, reliability, and moral value of Natural Family Planning - must be understood and truly chosen by both husband and wife).
- Loving cooperation (NFP is much more than a method of birth control - it is a “way of life”).

How effective is NFP?

Modern methods of NFP have been shown to be highly effective with method effectiveness figures ranging from 97-99.9 percent. Use effectiveness, reflecting the actual experience in day-to-day life, shows 90-99 percent effectiveness with the Sympto-Thermal Method of NFP. In this method, the waking temperature is crosschecked by any or all of the following: cervical mucus, vaginal sensations, cervical changes, calculations.

