

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 procedures 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 developed in the 1930's. 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 menstrual cycle; some women have very irregular cycles and almost all women occasionally have a cycle of unusual length.

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.

What are the benefits of using NFP?

In NFP, both spouses are taught to understand the nature of fertility and work with it, either to plan a pregnancy or 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 desires and their ideas on family size.

Other benefits include:

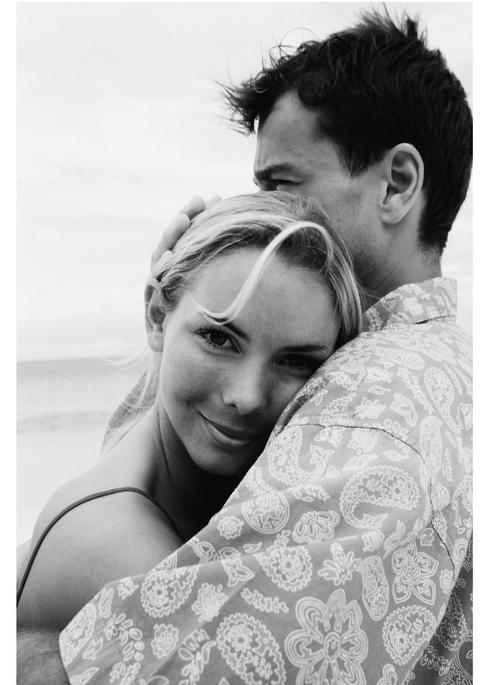
- low cost
- no harmful side effects
- effective for achieving, spacing, or limiting pregnancy
- can be used throughout a woman's reproductive life
- marriage enrichment and mutual understanding
- appreciation for the value of children
- fosters respect for and acceptance of the total person
- morally acceptable

How effective are natural family planning methods for avoiding pregnancy?

When couples understand the methods and are motivated to follow them, NFP is up to 99% successful in spacing or limiting births. Those who are highly motivated to avoid pregnancy and follow the method-defined rules are very effective in meeting their goal.

You can view stories of couples who use NFP and how NFP has impacted their marriages by visiting:
www.YouTube.com/CoupletoCoupleLeague.

Natural Family Planning



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How does NFP work?

NFP instruction helps a couple identify the most opportune time to achieve as well as avoid 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 couple 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 woman's observation of her fertility signs.

What are the signs of fertility?

A woman's body provides three basic ways to identify the fertile and infertile times of her cycle. Recognizing the pattern of those physical signs forms the basis for all methods of NFP.

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

Who can use NFP?

Any married couple can use NFP! A woman need not have "regular" cycles. 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.

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Natural Family Planning - N.W. Ohio Regional Contacts

These couples are trained and certified by the Couple to Couple League, Cincinnati, Ohio. They offer NFP classes and are willing to receive referrals for private instruction. If further information is needed, please contact any of the listed teaching couples. Register for classes at www.ccli.org. If you are not from this area, this site will allow you to search for teaching couples anywhere in the country. For couples who are not near a Couple to Couple League Teaching Couple and engaged couples who are not near each other, "virtual classes" are also available at www.ccli.org.

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