

# *Introduction to Natural Family Planning*

*“I praise you, so wonderfully you made me; wonderful are your works! “*

*Psalm 139:14*

## Overview:

An introduction to the several different methods of Natural Family Planning available to couples, thanks to years of research and modern technology.

### Test Your Knowledge about NFP

### NFP Trivia Quiz

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| <p>1. How many days in a woman's menstrual cycle is she able to conceive?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>All cycle long</li><li>24-36 hours</li><li>3 days</li><li>One week</li></ol> <p>2. The woman's fertility cycle is primarily managed by which two hormones?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Estrogen and Progesterone</li><li>Estrogen and Testosterone</li><li>HCG and estrogen</li><li>Progesterone and Follicle Stimulating Hormone</li></ol> <p>3. Natural Family Planning is simply counting the days in a woman's cycle and abstaining from relations for the two weeks in the middle of her cycle. T or F</p> <p>4. Which of the following is not a method of NFP?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Billings</li><li>Creighton</li><li>Marquette</li><li>Rhythm</li></ol> <p>5. The average healthy couple, with a woman of childbearing age, has what percentage chance of pregnancy per cycle?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>25%</li><li>50%</li><li>90%</li><li>100%</li></ol> | <p>6. If a couple wishes to conceive, they need to have sex every day. T or F</p> <p>7. How long can sperm live after sexual relations?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1/2 day</li><li>1 day</li><li>5 days</li><li>All month long</li></ol> <p>8. Which of the following are symptoms of hormonal imbalance in women?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Anxiety/depression</li><li>Cravings for certain foods</li><li>Insomnia</li><li>Migraine headaches</li><li>All of the above</li></ol> <p>9. The pill and modern means of Natural Family Planning have the same effectiveness of 97-99%. T or F</p> <p>10. The divorce rate for couples who use NFP is ____%.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>0%</li><li>2%</li><li>10%</li><li>50%</li></ol> |
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### Basic Information About Natural Family Planning

#### 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 1930s. It was based on the theory that the time of ovulation could be determined by calculating 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 have a cycle of unusual length once in a while.

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.

Couples using NFP to avoid pregnancy abstain from intercourse during the fertile phase of the woman's cycle. Couples who wish to achieve a pregnancy can also take advantage of the fertile time of the cycle. Because it allows couples to adjust their behavior to the naturally occurring cycles of a woman's body, NFP is not a contraceptive--i.e., it does nothing to work against conception.

#### Who can use NFP?

Any married couple can use NFP! A woman need not

have "regular" cycles. NFP education helps couples to fully understand their combined fertility, thereby helping them to either achieve or avoid a pregnancy. The key to the successful use of NFP is cooperation and communication between husband and wife--a shared commitment.

NFP is unique among methods of family planning because it enables a couple to work with the body rather than against it. Fertility is viewed as a reality of life, not

In fact, as experience bears witness, not every conjugal act is followed by a new life. God has wisely disposed natural laws and rhythms of fecundity which, of themselves, cause a separation in the succession of births.

**Humanae Vitae, #11**

a problem to be solved.

#### 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.

1. A primary sign of fertility is the mucus released from the women's cervix. A woman learns to identify the normal, healthy cervical mucus which indicates the days that intercourse is most likely to result in a pregnancy.
2. 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 which signals the end of the fertile time.

3. The third sign is a change in the shape or texture of the cervix.

Additionally, there are secondary signs, such as minor abdominal pain or pressure at the time of ovulation that can also be observed.

### How does NFP work?

NFP instruction helps a couple identify the most opportune time to achieve as well as avoid a 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 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 to 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
- Effectiveness for achieving, spacing, or limiting pregnancy
- Can be used throughout the reproductive life cycle
- Marriage enrichment and mutual understanding
- Appreciation for the value of children
- Fosters respect for and acceptance of the total person
- Moral acceptability

### How effective are the 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. The effectiveness of NFP depends upon the spouses following the rules of the method according to their family planning intention (i.e., achieving or limiting pregnancy). Those who are strongly motivated to avoid pregnancy and follow the method-defined rules are very effective in meeting their goal.

### Where can I learn how to use NFP?

The best way to learn NFP is from a qualified instructor--that is, one who is certified from an NFP teacher training program. Although medical professionals are gradually learning more about NFP and becoming more supportive of patients who wish to use it, they are not often trained to teach NFP. Contact your local Catholic Office of Marriage and Family Life to find a certified NFP teacher.

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United States Conference of Catholic Bishops  
Washington, DC

<http://www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/information.shtml>

## NFP Methods:

*Here is a brief description of different methods of Natural Family Planning. We strongly encourage you to contact an accredited teacher of the method that interests you for help understanding how to apply the method to your individual fertility.*

### **Sypmto-Thermal Method:**

The SYMPTO-THERMAL METHOD (STM) is based on daily fertility awareness a couple charts the wife's common signs of fertility day by day and uses that information to determine her fertile and infertile times. It can be used both to achieve and to avoid or postpone pregnancy. When used to avoid pregnancy, the couple abstains from marital relations (intercourse) during the fertile time.

**More Info:**

**Couple to Couple League: [www.ccli.org](http://www.ccli.org)  
CCL of Northern Virginia: [nfpvirginia.com](http://nfpvirginia.com)**



**Local Instructors**

**Archdiocese of Washington NFP Office**  
301-853-4564  
[www.adw.org/family](http://www.adw.org/family)  
email: [nfp@adw.org](mailto:nfp@adw.org)

**Dustin and Erin Atkinson**  
Gainesville, VA 20155  
703-753-8537  
email: [atkinson@nfpvirginia.com](mailto:atkinson@nfpvirginia.com)

### **Billings Ovulation Method:**

The BILLINGS-OVULATION METHOD is based on the symptoms associated with cervical mucus that is sensed at the vulva by the woman as she is doing her normal daily activities. The woman learns to recognize the times of fertility and infertility by the presence or absence of this cervical mucus.

**More Info:**

**Billings Ovulation Method Association - USA**  
[www.woomb.org](http://www.woomb.org)

**Family of the Americas: [www.familyplanning.net](http://www.familyplanning.net)**

**Local Instructors**

**Cynthia Vivian**  
Woodbridge, Virginia  
703-492-0474  
[cynthia@piperglen.com](mailto:cynthia@piperglen.com)



**On-Line Charting!**  
[www.nfpcharting.com](http://www.nfpcharting.com)

## NaPro Technology™

NaPro Technology™, also known as the CREIGHTON MODEL, is a unique system of advanced procreative education. It allows for the first time the opportunity to network family planning with reproductive and gynecologic health maintenance. And, it provides this in harmony with nature and in a way that is morally and professionally acceptable. On a day by day basis, a woman becomes very knowledgeable about the fertility events of each and every menstrual cycle.

### More Info:

**[www.fertilitycare.org](http://www.fertilitycare.org)** (includes searchable directory to find local providers.)

**[www.popepaulvi.com](http://www.popepaulvi.com)**

### Local Instructors include:

#### Caritas FertilityCare

*serves the Greater DC Area*

Multiple providers

Phone: 202-810-4161

website: [dcfertilitycare.com](http://dcfertilitycare.com)

#### Potomac FertilityCare Services

**Sylvia Dorham**

Herndon, VA

Phone: 703-957-4940

e-mail: [sdorham@gmail.com](mailto:sdorham@gmail.com)

#### Gaithersburg FertilityCare Center

*serves the Greater DC Area*

**Therese Rodriguez, RN**

Phone: 301-512-7451

email: [metroDCfertilitycareRN@gmail.com](mailto:metroDCfertilitycareRN@gmail.com)

website: [gaithersburgfertilitycare.org](http://gaithersburgfertilitycare.org)

#### FertilityCare - The National Capitol Region

Woodbridge, VA 22195

Phone: 202-320-8834

e-mail: [quovadis.lifecoach@gmail.com](mailto:quovadis.lifecoach@gmail.com)

#### Anchor FertilityCare Center

*serves greater Anne Arundel County and*

*offers consultations via Skype*

**Olga Ballengee**

Phone: 443-945-9473

Email: [olga@anchorfertilitycare.com](mailto:olga@anchorfertilitycare.com)

Website: [www.anchorfertilitycare.com](http://www.anchorfertilitycare.com)

#### Geisinger Holy Spirit OB/GYN

Harrisonburg, PA 17110

Phone: 717-901-9898

#### Natural Fertility Care

**Dr. Mary Ann Sorra**

Baltimore, MD 21229

Phone: 410-644-1908

## Other Technologies

Recent developments include computer software used in charting both ovulation and symptom-thermal methods.

### **The MARQUETTE METHOD**

The **MARQUETTE METHOD** is a new method of NFP which utilizes direct measurement of two urinary reproductive hormones, estradiol glucuronide and LH, to mark the onset of the fertile period and the time of peak fertility. The ClearPlan (ClearBlue) fertility monitor is one model of this device. If the monitor is used in conjunction with observations of cervical mucus (and temperature if desired), charting, and good instruction, it can provide valuable assistance in planning or preventing pregnancy, as well as provide helpful information in maintaining your reproductive health.

**More Info:**    **[www.nfp.marquette.edu](http://www.nfp.marquette.edu)**

## ELECTRONIC FERTILITY COMPUTERS

Other electronic devices are available that tell a woman the days on which she is fertile. These products are now available in Europe and Canada; and FDC approval process is underway for release in the US market.

**More Info:**

**Persona:** [www.persona.info](http://www.persona.info)

**Lady Comp:** [www.ladycomp-babycomp.com](http://www.ladycomp-babycomp.com)



## BASAL BODY THERMOMETERS



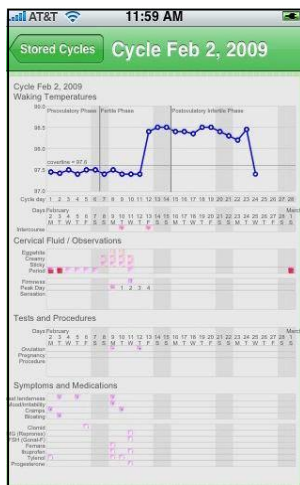
**MINI-SOPHIA BASAL BODY THERMOMETER.** It beeps to wake the woman up in the morning, and records her temperature and prompts her for information about her cervical mucus. Based on this data collected, it calculates the beginning and end of the fertile time in a woman's cycle.

**And, yes, THERE ARE APPS FOR THAT!**

## NFP TRACKING APPS

You can even find an assortment of apps for your mobile phone! Here are a few to check out:

### FemCal: Period and Ovulation Calculator



### NFP Charting (for Billings)



## Keep Learning!

Keeping in mind that it is very important to receive instruction from a trained NFP Instructor, below is a list of books assist you.

### Books:

The Billings Method by Evelyn Billings MD (Ballantine Books, 1980)

Facing Infertility: A Catholic Approach by Jean Dimech-Juchniewicz (Pauline Books and Media, 2012)

Fertility, Cycles and Nutrition, 4th Edition by Marilyn Shannon (Couple-to-Couple League, 2009)

Human Ecology: A Physician's Advice for Human Life by Robert L Jackson, MD (St. Bede's Publ, 1990)

The Infertility Companion for Catholics: Spiritual and Practical Support for Couples, Angélique Ruhi-López and Carmen Santamaría (Ave María Press, 2012)

In Their Own Words: Women Healed by Thomas W. Hilgers, MD (Pope Paul VI Institute, 2004)

Love and Fertility by Mercedes Wilson (Family of the Americas, 4th Edition, 2006)

The Missing Cornerstone by S. Joseph Thom (Circle Press, 2003)

The Sinner's Guide to Natural Family Planning by Simcha Fischer (Our Sunday Visitor, 2014)