Natural Family Planning

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a type of birth control without using any form of contraception. Rather, it is not having sexual intercourse when the ovary produces an egg (*ovulation*) during the menstrual cycle. The NFP method is safe, cheap and can do at good job at preventing pregnancy. It is 75% effective when practiced right. It is also important that the man is willing and understands this method of birth control and the woman is completely aware of how her body functions during her menstrual cycle. Also know that NFP can also be used as a method of getting pregnant.

HOW THE NFP METHOD WORKS:

- A woman's menstrual period usually happens every 28 to 30 days (it can vary from 23 to 35 days).
- Ovulation happens 12 to 14 days before the start of the next menstrual period (the fertile period). The egg is fertile for 24 hours and the sperm can live for 3 days. If there is sexual intercourse at this time, pregnancy can occur.

THERE ARE MANY TYPES OF NFP METHODS USED:

1. *The Basal Body Temperature Method*. Most women have a slight increase of body temperature when they ovulate. The woman will need to take her temperature every morning before getting out of bed. She then records it on a chart. An increase in the temperature shows ovulation has happened. When a couple uses this method, they must not have sexual intercourse from the menstrual period up to three days after the increase in the temperature. Couples using this method of birth control should know that the body temperature may increase as a result of fever, restless sleep and working schedules.
2. *The Ovulation Cervical Mucus Method*. During the menstrual cycle, the cervical mucus changes from dry to sticky, to wet and slippery. The woman checks the mucus of the vagina every day to look for these changes. Just before ovulation, the mucus becomes wet and slippery. On the last day of wetness, ovulation happens. To avoid getting pregnant, sexual intercourse is safe for about 10 days after the menstrual period and on the dry mucus days. The couple should not have sexual intercourse when the mucus starts to show up and not until 4 days after the wet and slippery mucus goes away. Sexual intercourse from this time until the menstrual period starts is a safe time. Couples using this method should be aware that the mucus from the vagina can increase because of an infection of the cervix or vagina, lubricants, some medications and sexual excitement.
3. *The Symptothermal Method*. This method uses both the temperature and the ovulation methods. Abstaining from sexual intercourse is followed by combining the two methods.
4. *The Calendar Method*. A woman records her menstrual periods and length of the cycles for 6 months. This is helpful when the menstrual cycle varies in the length of the cycle. The length of a menstrual cycle is from day 1 of the present menstrual period to day 1 of the next menstrual period. Then, she finds her fertile days of the month and does not have sexual intercourse during that time. She may need help from her caregiver to find out her fertile days.

There are some signs of ovulation that may be helpful when trying to find the time of ovulation. This included vaginal spotting or belly (*abdominal*) cramps during the middle of your menstrual cycle. Not all women have these symptoms.

WOMEN WHO SHOULD NOT USE NFP:

- Women who have very irregular menstrual periods and may even skip a month.
- Women with medical problems who should not get pregnant.
- Women with abnormal bleeding.
- Women with infection of the vagina or cervix.
- Women on medicines that can affect the vaginal mucus or body temperature.

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