

SECTION 2.9 NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

I. Definition

- A. The Fertility Awareness Method is another name for periodic abstinence or Natural Family Planning, which is an accepted method of birth control. **See *Contraceptive Technology 19th Edition*, pages 343-360 for more information.**
- B. There are four basic types of the Fertility Awareness Method
1. Basal body temperature (BBT)
Method based on using BBT alone to limit unprotected intercourse to the postovulatory infertile time.
 2. Ovulation, mucous or Billings method
Method based on evaluating cervical mucus changes signifying ovulation. Unprotected intercourse would be limited to the postovulatory infertile times.
Examples and more information:
 - a. **Two Day Method™**
http://www.irh.org/?q=tdm_resources
 - b. **Billings Ovulation Method™**
<http://www.billingslife.org/>
 3. Calendar methods
Method based on predicting ovulation using the client's menstrual history. Examples and more information:
 - a. **Standards Day Method®**
<http://www.irh.org/?q=content/efficacy-and-scientific-basis-sdm>
 - b. **Cycle Beads®**
Uses color coded beads (Cycle Beads) to monitor the days of a women's menstrual cycle.
<http://www.cyclebeads.com/>
 4. The sympto-thermal method:
Combines BBT with one or 2 of the other Fertility Awareness Methods allowing a woman to be more accurate in predicting her safe days than if she used any one method alone.

II. Effectiveness

- A. **First year failure rates for fertility awareness methods ranges from 1% to 9% for perfect use and 13.7% to 25 % for typical use. (Zieman M, Hatcher RA et al. *A Pocket Guide to Managing Contraception*. Tiger, Georgia: Bridging the Gap Foundation, 2010)**
- B. Some studies have indicated that couples that have learned the method together achieve the higher level of effectiveness as they are both resolved to use it.

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III. Patient education

- A. Patients should be screened to determine likelihood of success for this method. Some factors to consider are whether the method will be used:
 - 1. By the couple.
 - 2. By a single individual with one other partner.
 - 3. By a single individual with more than one partner.
 - 4. Out of religious conviction or other reason.
- B. Couples desiring to use the method out of religious conviction should be referred to local teachers able to provide the religious component. In no case should clinic staff attempt to provide religion-based education.
- C. While all temporary methods of birth control require integration into the client's lifestyle and social and sexual practices, the Fertility Awareness Method requires additional attention.
 - 1. This is particularly true for the woman who is using the Fertility Awareness Method with partner(s) who have little or no education in, understanding of, or commitment to this method.
 - 2. This woman then must take full responsibility for ensuring the sometimes lengthy periods of abstinence and must understand her need to control social situations (shift work, alcohol use, and attention to schedules and details) in the use of the Fertility Awareness Method.

IV. Referrals

- A. Group or one-to-one instruction is strongly recommended to all clients interested in this method.
- B. Each clinic should develop its own referrals for the Fertility Awareness Method since this varies from community to community.

V. Documentation

Couple or single partner use of the Fertility Awareness Method should be documented in the client's chart together with the plan for use.