

FERTILITY AWARENESS METHODS

Fertility awareness methods are methods used to inform a woman of her fertile period (when she can become pregnant) and to determine when her menstrual cycle begins and ends.

A woman can use a Fertility awareness method of contraception alone or in combination with other fertility awareness methods to identify when the fertile time of her menstrual cycle begins and ends.

Fertility awareness methods of contraception involve both Calendar-based methods and Symptom-based methods.

Calendar-based Methods

With Calendar-based methods, pregnancy is prevented by monitoring the days of a woman's menstrual cycle to determine the beginning and end of her fertile period.

Examples of these methods include the Standard Days Method and Calendar Rhythm Method.

Standard Days Method

In this method, a woman monitors the days in her menstrual cycle, counting the first day of monthly bleeding as day 1. Unprotected sex is avoided through days 8-19 as these are considered fertile days. Safe period for intercourse are days one (1) through seven (7) and from day 20 to when the next monthly bleeding begins.

How Effective is it?

As commonly used, about five (5) pregnancies occur per 100 women using this method in the first year. This means that 95 of every 100 women will not become pregnant.

Calendar Rhythm Method

In this method the first day of monthly bleeding is counted as day one (1). A woman can determine the first day of her fertile time by subtracting 18 from the length of her shortest recorded menstrual cycle. Then 11 days is subtracted from the length of time of her longest recorded cycle. This determines her fertile period. Unprotected sex should not be practiced or a diaphragm or condom should be used. These calculations are updated every month using the six (6) most recent cycles.

How Effective is it?

As commonly used, about nine (9) pregnancies occur per 100 women using this method in the first year. This means that 91 of every 100 women will not become pregnant.

Symptom-based Methods

With Symptoms-based methods, pregnancy is prevented by observing signs of fertility. These methods include the Two (2) day Method, the Basal Body Temperature Method, the Ovulation Method, and the Symptothermal method.

An example of this method is the Ovulation Method. In the Ovulation method a woman checks her cervical secretions daily and avoids unprotected sex on days of heavy monthly bleeding. Between the end of monthly bleeding and the beginning of secretions, the couple can have unprotected sex but not two (2) days in a row. Unprotected sex is also avoided when secretions begin and until four (4) days after peak day- which is the last day that the secretions are clear, slippery, stretchy and wet.

How Effective is it?

As commonly used, about three (3) pregnancies occur per 100 women using this method in the first year. This means that 97 of every 100 women will not become pregnant..

Frequently Asked Questions

For other information on other methods and for frequently asked questions and answers about Fertility Awareness Methods please refer to:

(Pages 239-246)

<http://info.k4health.org/globalhandbook/handbook.pdf>