

**Fertility Awareness Methods  
(Rhythm Method, Natural Family Planning)**

**What is fertility awareness and how does it work?**

Fertility awareness methods are ways of trying to know when you will ovulate (release an egg) so that you do not have sex during that time if you do not want to get pregnant. Some methods include:

1. Keeping track of your menstrual cycle by taking your temperature with a special thermometer and charting it everyday.
2. Taking note of changes in your cervical mucus to help figure out when you will ovulate.

Some women take special classes to learn how to use these methods correctly. Partners also need to be involved.

**How effective is it?**

About eight out of ten women who use this method properly over a year find it is effective. This percent is lower than many other birth control methods. It can be difficult for young women to predict ovulation because they may have irregular periods.

**Advantages**

There are advantages to fertility awareness methods including:

- learning about your body to plan or prevent a pregnancy.
- low cost
- no side effects

**Disadvantages**

Fertility awareness also has some

disadvantages such as:

- requiring a lot of time and commitment to do properly
- no protection from sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV
- not having sex or using a condom during the time in your cycle when you are most fertile and therefore likely to become pregnant
- menstrual cycle changes if you are ill or feeling stressed You may not be able to rely on these methods.
- requiring commitment and self-control by both the woman and her partner.
- a higher failure rate than many other methods of birth control

**Additional Information**

Before using the fertility awareness method only, practice for 6 months and use a back-up method such as condoms. It is important to know your ovulation patterns and to know if this method will work for you. You and your partner should not have vaginal sex for several days before, during, and after you ovulate, because sperm can live up to seven days inside a woman's body, and an ovum (egg) lives for one to two days. Therefore, sperm might still be in the fallopian tubes several days after having vaginal intercourse.

**Further Resources**

Planned Parenthood [www.cfsh.ca](http://www.cfsh.ca)  
Natural Family Planning Association  
[www.naturalfamilyplanning.ca](http://www.naturalfamilyplanning.ca)

**For more information, call Peel Public Health 905-799-7700  
and ask for Sexual Health Information  
or visit  
[intheknowpeel.ca](http://intheknowpeel.ca) [peelsexualhealth.ca](http://peelsexualhealth.ca) [peelregion.ca/health](http://peelregion.ca/health)**

