

SECTION C

Natural Family Planning

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the way in which a woman can plan her pregnancies by observing the signs of fertility which she experiences during the menstrual cycle. By recording these signs, a couple is able to decide whether to abstain from intercourse during the woman's fertile time in order to avoid a pregnancy, or whether to make the best use of fertile signals when they hope to conceive. A couple who choose NFP instead of appliances or drugs are not taking a backward step; they are taking a step towards sound and healthy living.

During engagement is the best time to learn about NFP. The bride-to-be can complete a few months' charts before the wedding, and this will give the couple confidence in the method. CMAC Engaged Couples' Courses describe how the method works, as part of their pre-marriage training. If a couple decides to use it, a qualified instructor can then help them to understand how their bodies work, and to use their new knowledge to work out the fertile and infertile phases in their relationship. The couple will then gain a high degree of control over their reproductive potential.

The couple will learn to observe and chart several signs. One is a rise in the woman's daily waking-up temperature when her ovary releases an egg. (This is the basis of the "Temperature Method".) Another is the change in pattern of cervical mucus from opaque to thin, clear and slippery. (This is the basis of the "Billings" or "Ovulation" method.) These two signs can be recorded and with the addition of a cycle length calculation offer double checks for the beginning and end of the fertile phase. This is called the "Mucothermic" or "Symptothermal" method and is a most acceptable and reliable method of birth control. The extra safety of the mucothermic method causes it to be used widely in the British Isles, the USA, Australia and Japan. This is the method considered most reliable by Catholic NFP Agencies.

Couples sometimes ask about the problem of how to cope with periods of abstinence. Yet they may be coping well with the frustration of sticking to a diet, giving up smoking, or saving for a mortgage. If the result is really important, frustration can be coped with. A need to regulate the size of the family, a concern for healthy living or a dislike of contraceptive intercourse can motivate a couple to accept periods of abstinence. Periodic abstinence can even heighten their enjoyment of sex.

When a couple decides to learn about NFP, they should either contact one of the following national agencies, or a local diocesan centre or CMAC centre

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natural Family Planning Service CMAC 15 Landsdowne Road LONDON W11 3AJ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NAOMI 47 Heathurst Road SOUTH CROYDON Surrey CR2 0BB |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NFP Education Foundation 43 Lewin Road Streatham LONDON SW16 6JZ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National Association of NFP Teachers Queen Elizabeth Maternity Hospital Edgbaston BIRMINGHAM B15 2TG |

Local addresses and agencies can be added here.

Some books to help you

- 1 Family Planning by the Mucothermic Method - John Marshall ... 0.15p
- 2 How to Use Natural Family Planning - T Quinn - Veritas 1.50p
- 3 Natural Family Planning (CTS) - CMAC 0.30p

NOTES - These books or a complete list of NFP publications are available from CMAC, 15 Landsdowne Road, London, W11 3AJ. A new handbook from NFP teachers will shortly be published by David and Charles. Authors Clubb & Knight.

NFP Resource List

- 1 Planning for a Family - John Marshall 2.25
- 2 The Art of Natural Family Planning - J Kippley 4.50
- 3 The Double-Check Method of Family Planning - Paul Thyra 2.00
- 4 The Billings Method of Family Planning - Jan Quinlan 1.00
- 5 Natural Family Planning in Pictures - Menezes 2.00
- 6 Natural Family Planning - a Teacher's Handbook - John Marshall 50p