



UNIVERSITÀ
CATTOLICA
del Sacro Cuore



PRODUCTION OF APPROPRIATE FOOD: sufficient, safe, sustainable

Family Planning

Having the number of children you want, when you want them, is called family planning. It is also sometimes called child spacing. There are many methods, both traditional and modern, that can be used for family planning. Family planning methods are sometimes called birth control or contraception.

Why might a woman and a man want to use family planning?

- to take time to finish their education or have an income before they have children
- to allow a couple of years between their children
- to have only as many children as they feel they can support
- to avoid a risky pregnancy, for example if the woman has a certain illness, or is under 17 and does not have a fully formed pelvis

Childbirth should not be dangerous, but in places where women are poor, are not well fed, and do not have access to good health care, many women die because of heavy bleeding and other childbirth complications. A woman may want to protect herself by limiting the number of her pregnancies.

All women have the right to decide whether to have children and how many children to have. However, most women face barriers to this choice. Midwives can help women have more choices:

- by learning about family planning and sharing the information.
- by working with others to give couples more choices of family planning methods.
- by working with the community to get men more involved in using family planning.



Breastfeeding

In the first 6 months after birth, most women who breastfeed do not release eggs from their ovaries, and so they cannot get pregnant when they have sex. Women usually do not get pregnant if they are breastfeeding as often as the baby wants, including at night, and:

1. **the baby is less than 6 months old, and**
2. **the woman has not had any monthly bleeding since giving birth, and**
3. **the woman is giving the baby only breast milk.**

The woman can easily get pregnant if she is giving the baby formula, water, or other drinks. She may get pregnant if the baby goes longer than 6 hours between breastfeeding times.

Choosing a natural family planning method

A woman can only get pregnant during her fertile time when an egg comes from her ovary into her tubes and womb — about once a month. To use fertility awareness, a woman must watch her body's signs to understand when she is fertile. During the fertile time she and her partner must not have sexual intercourse. Natural family planning costs nothing and has no side effects. But it can be difficult to use. Women do not always know when they are fertile, and if they have one irregular cycle, they can easily get pregnant.

There are two ways to use fertility awareness. we talk about the mucus method and the counting days method.

The mucus method

With the mucus method, a woman checks the mucus from her vagina every day to see if she is fertile. On her fertile days, the mucus is stretchy and slimy, like raw egg.

To check the mucus, a woman should wipe the vagina with a clean finger, paper, or cloth. Then she should look for mucus.

Clear, wet, slippery mucus comes during the fertile time.
Do not have sexual intercourse.



White, dry, sticky mucus (or no mucus) comes during other times of the month.
It is probably OK to have sexual intercourse 2 days after the first dry day.

After 2 or 3 months of practice, a woman can easily recognize these changes in her mucus.

The counting days method

With the counting days method, a woman does not have sexual intercourse during any time that she might be fertile. This method can only be used by women with regular cycles that last between 26 and 32 days. This means that the time from the first day of one monthly bleeding to the first day of her next monthly bleeding must be at least 26 days, and no more than 32 days.

It This method will usually work for a woman who has nearly the same number of days from one monthly bleeding to the next (regular cycles). But if a woman has one cycle of a different length, she can easily get pregnant. is common for a woman to have a cycle of a different length when she is sick or feeling a lot of stress. When a woman is sick or feeling stress, it is best for her to use a different family planning method until she is well and her cycle is normal.

Or a woman can make a chart with 32 sections — 1 for each day of her cycle. She can mark off each day on the chart to remember when she can become pregnant.

