



West of Scotland Protocol

Approved May 2023

FERTILITY AWARENESS METHODS

What's New: There are no major changes since this was last updated

Fertility Awareness is a method of contraception based on a knowledge and interpretation of the menstrual cycle and an abstinence of penetrative sex during the most fertile period. There are three main methods used to determine the fertile period:

- Ovulation method observes cervical mucus changes
- Symptothermal method records body temperature daily
- Rhythm method makes calendar calculations of previous cycles

Clients should be given appropriate information about the methods and useful contacts for instruction in their use.

FAM are more effective when women receive specialist training. Women interested in using FAM for contraception purposes should be signposted to an organisation, service or local recognised practitioner offering teaching. Information is available on the Fertility website www.fertilitycare.org.uk

Efficacy

Observational methods measuring mucus and temperature have a failure rate of less than 1% with perfect use and the rhythm method a failure rate of 9% with perfect use. Many drop to 25% failure when typical use is measured. However, efficacy is dependent on the woman's age, how often she has sex and her ability to adhere to the method. Efficacy is greater if more than one of the above methods are used together

Advantages

NFP gives fertility control to the couple and can have a positive effect on relationships. There are no physical side effects and it is universally acceptable to all faiths and cultures.

Disadvantages

It can take many months (3-6) to collect enough information to reliably use the method and normally requires daily observation, which might be affected by life events. The period of abstinence can be long in some individuals.

There is no protection from STIs.

Recommended Client Group

Clients with objections to artificial contraception, often for religious reasons.

Clients wishing to avoid hormones or any invasive procedures.

Equipment

Can be purchased at most major chemists.

Computerised devices which measure hormonal changes in the urine are also available and help predict the fertile period.

Computerised thermometers help to predict the length of menstrual cycles.

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Lactational amenorrhoeic method (**LAM**)

LAM can be used effectively in the postnatal period provided clients fulfil three criteria:

- are amenorrhoeic (no bleeding after 56 days postnatal),
- are fully breast-feeding and not giving the baby any other liquid or solid food (except infrequent water or vitamins) with no more than 4 hours between feeds during the day and 6 hrs overnight
- are less than 6 months postpartum.

LAM has a failure rate of 2%

The effect of expressing breast milk on the efficacy of LAM is not known but it may potentially be reduced

INFORMATION SOURCES

Faculty of Sexual and Reproductive Healthcare Clinical Effectiveness Unit FSRH Guidance (June 2015) Fertility Awareness methods
<https://www.fsrh.org/standards-and-guidance/documents/ceuguidancefertilityawarenessmethods/>
(accessed May 2023)

Leaflets

<https://www.sexwise.fpa.org.uk/contraception/fertility-awareness-methods>
(accessed July 2019)

[Your Guide to Natural Family Planning \(PDF\) | Sexwise](#) (accessed May 2023)

Fertility Care Scotland

This organisation will supply an information pack to interested individuals and arrange a tutor
Telephone: 0141 352 7930

See Website for centres and teachers: www.fertilitycare.org.uk (accessed May 2023)

www.FertilityUK.org (accessed May 2023)

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