



**YOUR
HEALTH.
YOUR
CHOICE.**

Fertility Awareness Methods

Talk to your partner about birth control before you have sex. You can use latex condoms to lower your chances of getting sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and prevent an unwanted pregnancy.

What are fertility awareness methods?

Fertility awareness methods (FAM) are different methods that help a woman know which days of the month she is more likely to get pregnant. A woman can figure out when she is most likely to get pregnant by observing and keeping track of her body's physical changes throughout the month. She can use this information to prevent a pregnancy or to try to get pregnant.

How do fertility awareness methods work?

If you use these methods, you can figure out when your chances of getting pregnant are highest. If you do not want to get pregnant during this time then do not have vaginal sex; if you do have vaginal sex use another method of birth control, like condoms.

How effective are fertility awareness methods?

Your chances of getting pregnant are lower when you use FAM correctly. Of 100 women who do not have vaginal sex during their fertile (unsafe) time, about 24 will become pregnant during the first year. Your chances of getting pregnant are lower when you use two or more FAM methods at the same time. Using a condom at the same time also reduces your chances of getting pregnant.

How do you use fertility awareness methods?

Your chances of getting pregnant are higher when you release an egg from your ovary during ovulation. You can plan to avoid vaginal sex when your chances of getting pregnant are higher, or by using a barrier method like a male condom or female condom, cervical cap, diaphragm, sponge, or Lea's Shield. The three most common fertility awareness methods are: calendar charting, cervical mucous charting, and basal body temperature charting. FAM is most reliable for women with regular menstrual cycles. As a woman begins to recognize the signs of ovulation and the pattern of her menstrual cycle, FAM becomes more effective.

To learn more about the three methods, you can call The House or refer to the resources listed on the back.

It is important to use condoms or a latex barrier with sexual partners to decrease the risk of getting a sexually transmitted infection.

What are the advantages and disadvantages of fertility awareness methods?

Advantages

- ★ They are not expensive.
- ★ There are no side effects.
- ★ Can be used to plan or prevent a pregnancy.
- ★ Can help a woman learn about her body.
- ★ May be used by those with religious concerns about contraception.
- ★ A woman can have complete control over this method.
- ★ A partner may be involved if desired.

Disadvantages

- ★ It takes time and effort to use these methods.
- ★ You may not be able to have vaginal sex at some times of the month.
- ★ If you don't have regular menstrual cycles, these methods may not work.
- ★ You are not protected from Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs).
- ★ If you are ill or feeling stressed your menstrual cycle may change. You may not be able to rely on these methods.
- ★ You need to feel comfortable with your own body to use some of these methods.
- ★ FAM requires considerable commitment, and self-control by you and your partner(s).

Where can you learn to use fertility awareness methods?

- ★ The House Community Health Centre - (416) 927-7171
- ★ Hassle Free Clinic - (416) 922-0566
- ★ Bay Centre for Birth Control – (416) 351-3700
- ★ St. Michael's Hospital - (416) 867-7480
- ★ <http://www.toronto.ca/health/sexualhealth/index.htm>

If you need further information or would like to book an appointment, call:

Planned Parenthood Toronto Health Services for youth ages 13 to 29. 416-927-7171. Health Services offers same-day, scheduled and drop-in appointments. For more information visit www.ppt.on.ca.

Women's Programming at the Bay Centre for Birth Control for women of all ages at 416-351-3700.

Youth can also access information about sexual health by calling the Teen Sex InfoLine at 416-961-3200 or chat live using MSN messenger at spiderbytes@hotmail.com from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. Monday to Wednesday and 12 noon to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. You can also email us a question anytime at askus@spiderbytes.ca or visit www.spiderbytes.ca.