



Does Natural Family Planning Really Work?

“What do you call a couple who uses Natural Family Planning (NFP)...Parents.”

“You practice NFP?...Are you trying to start your own TV show with all those kids?”

These are some jokes that are often told about couples who practice NFP. Everyone seems to assume that a natural form of family planning can't be used effectively to plan the size of your family, and instead you will end up with dozens of children. Contrary to popular belief, NFP works! Perfect use of NFP is 99.5% effective in avoiding pregnancy, and the typical use (when user error is taken into consideration) is 94.6%-97.9% effective (depending on the method).

Some benefits of using NFP:

- 1) **It is complete healthcare:** When a woman charts her cycle in the absence of hormonal birth control (which forces her cycle to “regulate” itself), she can see her body in its true state. This will allow any diseases or irregularities to be seen and treated. The pill can only act as a band-aid, masking symptoms of underlying problems. Removing that band-aid will allow that issue to be treated and a woman's body to be restored.
- 2) **It is all natural:** As a society, we seem to think that the only effective way to take charge of a woman's fertility is to treat it like it is a disease and medicate it until it is “under control.” Such artificial intervention may give couples a sense of security regarding their fertility, but along with it comes a heavy dose of carcinogens (in the pill and the Depo Provera shot), a possible perforation of the uterus (from an IUD that becomes dislodged), and lots of other side effects (weight gain, deep vein thrombosis, possible stroke). Why go through all that, when there is a safe, all natural way to assist you in planning the size of your family!
- 3) **You learn to understand your body:** While 10th grade health class might have taught you how to have “safe sex,” it more than likely did not teach you about your fertility - how ovulation occurs, how the flow of estrogen and progesterone prepares your body to ovulate and then prepares the uterus to receive new life if conception occurs, or even how long sperm or eggs can live for. This knowledge, combined with the daily observations you make to help you identify ovulation, helps you learn the ins and outs of your body in an intimate and eye-opening way. Understanding your body and your cycle this way is empowering!
- 4) **Today's NFP isn't the old calendar or rhythm method:** Over the last 40 years NFP has become scientifically precise, using observation-based methods to track the existing conditions of a woman's body in order to determine periods of fertility and infertility. The days of simply assuming you ovulate on day 14 of your cycle are gone, and a new era of precise fertility tracking is upon us!
- 5) **Using NFP supports a love that is free, faithful, total and fruitful:** We are called to give ourselves entirely to our spouse in marriage. When contraception is used it distorts the fullness of a married couple's total gift of themselves to each other. It is like saying, “I want to be one with you...except.” When the fruitful aspect of sex is artificially eliminated by the use of contraception, there's a withholding of the accompanying responsibility it bears, and the idea of unconditional love is distorted.



Who can use NFP:

Many women might think, "I can't use NFP, my cycle is too crazy!" The great news is, any woman can use NFP! Your cycle could be regular, irregular, long, or anovulatory, or you could be breastfeeding, premenopausal, or post-pill. Regardless of the "category" your cycle falls under, you can work with an instructor to confidently understand how to chart your cycle and learn how to identify days of fertility and infertility.

To find out more about Natural Family Planning or to learn how to start using a form of NFP, contact Erin Welsh at Holy Family FertilityCare: www.HolyFamilyFertilityEducation.com, HolyFamilyFertilityEducation@gmail.com, or 402-261-0841.

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