

Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM)

Natural family planning, calendar method, rhythm method



How does fertility awareness work?



- Pregnancy can only happen during certain days of your cycle around ovulation. FAM requires you to understand your body, the phases of a cycle, and how long sperm live (5 days). **FAM are ways to track changes in your body when nearing ovulation to determine your fertile window (5 days before to 1 day after ovulation). During your fertile window you need to abstain (not have penis-vagina sex) or use another method during sex.** Use a non-hormonal method with FAM because hormones will change your cycle and may prevent ovulation.
- **FAM does not prevent pregnancy during sex like other methods, rather it predicts when you are at risk of pregnancy and should use a contraceptive or abstain.**
- There are **different types of FAM**. Body signs tracked include **cycle length, cervical mucus, basal body temperature, and hormones in your urine**. There is 1 FDA approved FAM, the **Natural Cycles** app which tracks your cycle length and basal body temperature.
- FAM works for people of **all weight and all ages**. FAM has not been studied in people using gender affirming hormone therapy, who may not have regular cycles.

How do you use fertility awareness?

practice
daily

You must track body changes every day. You and your partner must decide to abstain or use another contraceptive when having sex during your fertile window.

- To use FAM, you must commit the time to learning the method and practicing it each day, sometimes at the same time of day. You may self-teach or attend a course to learn how to track. You can track your cycle in an app, website, or on paper charts. There are different FAMs that track different body changes (you'll need to learn more about any of these methods before trying it):
 - **Temperature FAM:** Use a very sensitive **basal thermometer** to take your temperature every morning. Your temperature patterns can tell you when you can have unprotected sex.
 - **Cervical Mucus FAM:** Check your cervical mucus daily to observe how the color and consistency changes. Interpret your mucus based on your cycle length and which cervical mucus FAM you practice.
 - **Calendar Method FAM:** Must have an average cycle that is 27+ days. Track your cycle for 6+ months then perform a calculation based on your cycle history to determine your fertile window.
 - **Symptothermal FAM:** Combination of using temperature, cervical mucus, and calendar methods.
 - **Standard Days FAM:** Must have a cycle that is always 26-32 days. **Cycle Beads** can help with tracking.
 - **Tracking other body signs:** You can also track cervix position, urine hormones, or breast tenderness.
- **Methods you can use if you have sex during your fertile window:** Pulling out, internal condoms, external condoms, spermicide, sponge, *Phexxi*, diaphragm, or cervical cap.
- **Cost:** FAM may be free or you may buy apps, books, or classes to learn FAM and supplies to practice it.



Privacy and control

- You do not need a provider to start or stop using fertility awareness methods. Your provider can counsel you on how to practice fertility awareness correctly to improve how well it works.
- Your partner likely needs to agree to using a method or abstaining during your fertile window.
- Someone else cannot see that you are using FAM, but they may find your equipment, app, or chart.

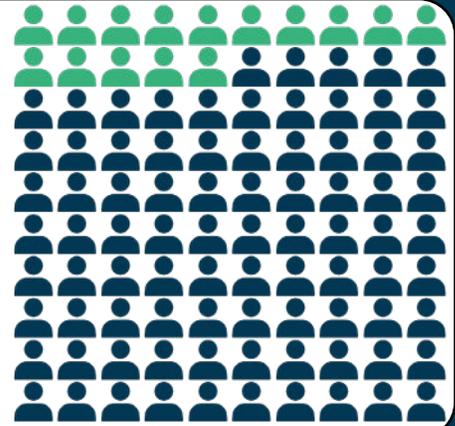
When starting fertility awareness methods, will they work immediately?



It is not recommended to use FAM as your only pregnancy prevention for at least 3 months of tracking. Wait until you are confident in practicing FAM. Until then, use an additional method.

How well does fertility awareness prevent pregnancy?

- On average, **15 out of 100 people using fertility awareness will get pregnant each year.** This means it is **85% effective** with typical use. Typical use considers how easy it is to practice fertility awareness. Some people will not be able to track their body changes correctly, their cycle will become irregular, or they will not use another method of contraception during their fertile window.
- **You can use another non-hormonal method of contraception with fertility awareness to provide more protection against pregnancy.**
- **Fertility awareness methods are not equally good at preventing pregnancy.** Data is limited. Below is the typical and perfect use for some methods of fertility awareness:



X out of 100 people will get pregnant each year using		
Method	Typical Use	Perfect Use
Billings Ovulation (mucus)	23	3
TwoDay (mucus)	14	4
Standard Days	12	5
Natural Cycles	8	1
Symptothermal	2	0.4

🕒 Use emergency contraception if

- You have **concerns/difficulty** with tracking FAM.
- Your period or cycle is **irregular**.
- You are **uncertain about fertility status** during an act of **unprotected, penis-vagina sex**.
- While fertile, you are concerned **you didn't use contraception correctly**.

Emergency contraception can change your next cycle, which may affect the accuracy of FAM.

👍 Side effects

Sexually transmitted infections: Does not prevent.

- Use external or internal condoms to lower your risk of all sexually transmitted infections.

Period: No effect.

Period cramps: No effect.

Weight: No effect.

Acne: No effect.

Fertility return: When you stop using FAM, you can get pregnant right away.

Other possible side effects: Practicing fertility awareness can improve understanding of your body.

👶 Postpartum use

You should **not use FAM in the first 3-6 months after giving birth** because your cycle is irregular. Do not start using FAM until your cycle has regulated. Your cycle may be different after birth than it was before.

⊕ Contact your provider if

Your cycle becomes irregular

? Questions to ask your provider

- What contraception should I use while fertile?
- How can I make FAM supplies cost less?

⚠️ FAM may not be right for people who

- Have irregular cycles or spotting
- Are nearing menopause
- Recently started menstruating
- Recently stopped a hormonal method
- Have cycles that do not meet the requirements for the method (cycle length)
- Do not have a regular schedule or time for practicing the method
- Have a partner who does not agree to using a method or abstaining while fertile
- Have a condition that affects your discharge (STI, vaginitis)
- Are in the first 6 months postpartum

Scan for a contraception guide and information sheets on each method.

