

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

Natural Family Planning 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.

Efficacy

Observational methods measuring mucus and temperature have a failure rate of 1-3% with perfect use and the Rhythm method a failure rate of 9% with perfect use. All drop to 25% failure when common use is measured.

Advantages

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

Disadvantages

It can take many months 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 are also available that measure hormonal changes in the urine and help predict the fertile period.

Computerised thermometers help to predict the length of menstrual cycles.

LAM

Lactational Amenorrhoeic method can be used effectively in the postnatal period provided clients fulfil three criteria: are amenorrhoeic, are fully breast-feeding and are less than 6 months postpartum. LAM has a failure rate of 2%

INFORMATION SOURCES

Family Planning Association

Leaflets available in all clinics

CMSHN Draft Protocol

FPA website: www.fpa.org.uk

References

With sincere thanks to the West of Scotland Sexual Health Managed Clinical Network for sharing their guidelines and protocols <http://www.centalsexualhealth.org/west-of-scotland-managed-clinical-network>