

# Convalidation

Bringing YOUR Marriage  
*into* THE Church

## What is Natural Family Planning?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is the general title for the scientific, natural and moral methods of family planning that can help married couples either **achieve or postpone pregnancies**.

NFP methods are based on the observation of the naturally occurring signs and symptoms of the fertile and infertile phases of a woman's **menstrual cycle**. No drugs, devices, or surgical procedures are used to avoid pregnancy. Since the methods of NFP respect the **love-giving** (unitive) and **life-giving** (procreative) nature of the conjugal act, they support God's design for married love!

## The Fertility Cycle

The female fertility cycle can be divided into three phases.



**Phase I** begins on the first day of menstrual bleeding, and normally includes a few infertile days after menstruation.

**Phase II** begins as soon as a woman's daily observations detect the onset of signs of fertility. This fertile time lasts up to and a few days after the time of ovulation (when an egg is released from the ovary). In a normal, healthy woman, Phase II will typically last up to 12 days.

**Phase III** is the post-ovulation time and is a time of infertility. Phase III typically accounts for the last one-third of a healthy woman's cycle.

The three phases of the female cycle are the result of the interplay of four key hormones – estrogen, progesterone, follicle-stimulating hormone and luteinizing hormone. These hormones are also responsible for the fertility signs that a woman can learn to observe.

### **Who can use NFP?**

Any married couple can use NFP! A woman need not have "regular" cycles. NFP education helps couples to fully understand and interpret their combined fertility, so that they can discern when to postpone or try to attempt pregnancy. The key to the successful use of NFP is cooperation and communication between husband and wife--a shared commitment.

### **What are the methods of NFP?**

Each NFP method is focused on one or more signs of female fertility. They can be grouped into three categories

1. **Cervical Mucus Methods (CMM)**

The methods that observe cervical mucus are commonly called the "Ovulation Method" or "OM." In NFP education, a woman learns how to identify the normal, healthy, cervical mucus which indicates the days that sexual intercourse is most likely to result in pregnancy. A number of NFP providers teach a variety of approaches to the observation and charting of cervical mucus (e.g., Billings Ovulation Method Association—USA, Creighton Model FertilityCare™ Centers, Family of the Americas, etc.).

2. **Sympto-Thermal Methods (STM)**

The methods that observe several signs of fertility and cross-check two or more of the signs to pinpoint ovulation are commonly called the "Sympto-Thermal Method" or "STM." STM typically combines charting of the Basal Body Temperature (BBT) and cervical mucus with other optional indicators, such as changes in the cervix and secondary fertility signs. A number of NFP providers teach a variety of approaches to the observation and charting of these signs (e.g., Couple to Couple League, Northwest Family Services, various diocesan programs, etc.).

3. **Sympto-Hormonal Method (SHM)**

The method that observes several signs of fertility and adds the use of an ovulation predictor kit (OPK) or fertility monitor is called the "Sympto-Hormonal Method" or "SHM." Similar to the STM, this approach adds the self-detection of reproductive hormones in the urine with the assistance of an OPK or fertility monitor. Various diocesan NFP programs make use of the SHM as well as Marquette University's Institute for NFP (Marquette Model).

## **How does NFP work?**

NFP instruction helps married couples learn how to observe, interpret and chart the wife's signs of fertility. This enables husband and wife to identify the fertile and infertile phases of the wife's menstrual cycle.

When husband and wife wish to attempt pregnancy, they will understand that intercourse during the fertile phase of the wife's menstrual cycle will likely result in pregnancy. When wishing to postpone a pregnancy, husband and wife would abstain from sexual intercourse and any genital contact during the fertile time. No artificial methods are used during the fertile time. NFP is unique among methods of family planning because it enables its users to work with the body rather than against it. Fertility is viewed as a gift and a reality to live, not a problem to be solved. The methods of Natural Family Planning respect God's design for married love!

NFP represents a unique approach to responsible parenthood because it

- calls for shared responsibility by husband and wife
- is based on scientific research about the signs of fertility
- treats each menstrual cycle as unique
- teaches husband and wife to daily observe the signs of fertility
- has no harmful side effects
- maximizes the possibility of achieving pregnancy when intercourse takes place during the fertile phase of the wife's menstrual cycle
- is effective for postponing pregnancy when intercourse takes place during the infertile phase of the wife's menstrual cycle
- respects the unitive and procreative nature of conjugal love

## **What are the benefits of using NFP?**

In NFP both husband and wife are taught to understand and live God's design for married love—this will give them countless blessings! NFP methods promote a holistic approach to family planning which both respects procreation and has the potential to deepen the intimacy of husband and wife.

NFP methods support reproductive health. They are good for the body. The natural methods have none of the harmful side effects caused by contraception, especially chemical contraceptives (e.g., pill, injection, etc.). For the woman, NFP charting can even assist in the diagnosis of underlying medical problems. And, if a couple find they are having trouble conceiving, NFP information can help them pinpoint the most fertile time of the wife's cycle.

NFP methods can be marriage strengthening. NFP relies on couple communication and behavior change. NFP methods require husband and wife to cooperate with each other in the most intimate area of their lives. During times of periodic sexual abstinence, husband and wife live a renewed courtship as they discover non-sexual ways to express their love for each other. On a practical level, husbands are encouraged to "tune into" their wives' cycles, and both spouses are encouraged to speak openly and frankly about their sexual desires, hopes for number of children, and prayerful discernment of God's will for their marriage.

When living the NFP lifestyle, husband and wife learn that they have a shared responsibility for safeguarding God's gifts of human sexuality, marriage and family. They also grow in their understanding of God's will for their family size. NFP has the potential to make good marriages great!

### **NFP is good for marriage!**

- Supports reproductive health
- Has no harmful side effects
- Is environmentally friendly
- Is inexpensive
- Cooperates with a couple's combined fertility
- Is useful to either achieve or avoid pregnancy
- Can be used throughout the reproductive life cycle
- Requires shared responsibility and cooperation by husband and wife
- Fosters mutual communication between husband and wife
- Encourages respect for and acceptance of the total person
- Promotes marital chastity
- Values the child
- Honors God's design for married love!

### **How effective are NFP Methods for avoiding pregnancy?**

Since NFP methods are not contraception, their effectiveness works both ways—for achieving and postponing pregnancy.

This is important news to married couple because typically "effectiveness" is thought to be "only" related to avoiding pregnancy. In NFP education, both husband and wife learn about their combined fertility and are taught how to live in harmony with God's design. They are also encouraged to discern whether God is calling them to attempt to have a child or to postpone a

pregnancy. The methods of NFP are the only approach to true responsible parenthood because they respect God's design for married love!

### ***Attempting Pregnancy***

When couples wish to attempt pregnancy they can time sexual intercourse to the fertile window of the menstrual cycle, thereby optimizing the possibility of becoming pregnant.

### ***Avoiding Pregnancy***

When wishing to avoid pregnancy, studies show that couples who follow their NFP method's guidelines correctly, and all the time, achieve effectiveness rates of 97-99%.

Others, who are unclear about their family planning intention (i.e., spacing or limiting pregnancy) or are less motivated, will not consistently follow the method's guidelines and have a lower effectiveness rate of 80-90%.

## **NFP (NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING) DISTANCE LEARNING**

*Learn how to use a method of NFP in your marriage in your own home from one of the following schools:*

### **Billings Ovulation Method Association – USA (BOMA-USA)**

P.O. Box 2135  
St. Cloud, MN 56302  
Website: [www.boma-usa.org](http://www.boma-usa.org)  
(651) 699-8139  
(320) 654-6486 FAX  
Email: [boma-usa@msn.com](mailto:boma-usa@msn.com)

- BOMA provides client education in the Billings Ovulation Method™ (BOM™). BOM™ is a cervical mucus method created by the Drs. John and Evelyn Billings of Melbourne, Australia.
- BOMA-USA is the only authorized representative of the BOM™ in the United States.
- Distance learning for client education is provided through WOOMB-International at <http://www.thebillingsovulationmethod.org> or [www.fertilitypinpoint.com](http://www.fertilitypinpoint.com). Multi-languages are available.

### **Couple to Couple League (CCL)**

P.O. Box 111184  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45211-1184

or:

4290 Delhi Pike

Cincinnati, OH 45238

Website: <http://www.ccli.org>

1-800-745-8252

Email: [info@ccli.org](mailto:info@ccli.org)

- CCL provides client education in the Sympto-Thermal Method (STM). STM is a multi-indexed method. It teaches detection of cervical mucus, the Basal Body Temperature and cervical changes besides other secondary fertility symptoms.
- Client education (English and Spanish) is provided by professionally certified teaching couples in their local areas or via live on-line classes. A Self-Paced Online Class is also an option; this is a video-based version of the live class, with support available through phone and e-mail contact.

#### **Family of the Americas Foundation (FAM)**

P.O. Box 1170

Dunkirk, MD 20754

Website: <http://www.familyplanning.net>

(301) 627-3346 (301) 627-0847 FAX

Email: [familyplanning@yahoo.com](mailto:familyplanning@yahoo.com)

- FAM provides client education in the cervical mucus method. This approach to NFP is founded on the work of the Drs. Billings.
- FAM offers a client correspondence course via the US Postal system. An interactive CD program is an added feature of this curriculum. The Spanish language and multi-languages are available.

#### **Marquette University College of Nursing Institute for NFP (MINFP)**

P.O. Box 1881

Milwaukee, WI 53201-1881

(414) 288-3838

(414) 288-1939 FAX

Website: <http://www.marquette.edu/nursing/natural-family-planning/index.shtml>

Email: [richard.fehring@marquette.edu](mailto:richard.fehring@marquette.edu)

- MINFP provides client education in the Marquette Model, a Sympto-Hormonal method of NFP. This method is similar to STM with the added feature of teaching electronic hormonal monitoring.

- MINFP offers on-line client education (English and Spanish). To learn the method see <http://nfp.marquette.edu> .

#### **NFP International (NFPI)**

Website: <http://www.nfpandmore.org>

NFPI provides client education in Dr. K. Prem's Cross-Check Method (also called "STM") at: <http://www.nfpmandmore.org/nfphowto.shtml> The NFPI approach is grounded in a philosophy of marital generosity and chastity. The principles of Ecological Breastfeeding for natural child spacing are also taught.

- This economical and easy to follow program makes use of a question and answer format as seen in their text, *Natural Family Planning: The Complete Approach*.
- Access to an NFP master teacher is via e-mail.
- Completion certificate is sent to requesting priests and deacons.

#### **Northwest Family Services (NWFS) - SymptoPro Fertility Education**

6200 SE King Road  
Portland, OR 97222

Website: <http://www.nwfs.org/>

(503) 546-6377

(503) 546-9397 FAX

Email: [service@nwfs.org](mailto:service@nwfs.org)

- NWFS provides client education in the SymptoPro method ("STM"), a multi-indexed method of NFP that teaches the detection and interpretation of cervical mucus, basal-body temperature (BBT) and changes in the cervix. It also teaches how to interpret secondary signs of fertility.
- NWFS offers a client correspondence course via the US Postal system, a client Internet course and also a combination of correspondence and on-line education for clients who request both.
- Spanish language education is available.
- A chart app. is available at no extra cost for Internet clients. All others will pay a one-time fee at time of purchase.