

Fertility Awareness Methods Used For Contraceptive Purposes



**Wild Roots
Traditional Chinese Medicine and
Acupuncture Clinic
with Andrea Hansen**



What are the Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM)?

FAM observes and tracks primary fertility signs in order to identify your fertile and infertile times. These methods are used to help achieve or avoid pregnancies as well as to have greater understanding of our bodies and menstrual cycles.

We are going to use the Sympto-thermal method which tracks the three primary fertility signs. It includes the teachings of a number of other methods which may track one or two of the following signs.

	Typical user failure rate	Method failure rate
FAM	10 / 100	2 / 100
The Pill	5	0.5
IUD (varies with type)	2	1.5
Withdrawal	19	4
Diaphragm	20	6
Male condom	14	3

The three main fertility signs

1. Cervical fluid (CF)

- Provides nourishment for the sperm to live up to 5 days
- Filters out abnormal sperm
- Carries sperm through the uterus and fallopian tubes to allow for conception

- Checking 2 times per day to establish quality of CF by wiping with fingers or tissue and observing quality and changes
- Fertile cervical fluid is wet, slippery and clear often with an egg white quality

- Generally there will be 3-4 dry days post menstruation

- Cervical fluids will then begin to increase becoming tacky and then slipperier, wetter and clear until the peak day which is when ovulation is imminent
- Post ovulation it can take four days for the fluids to dry so you are not considered safe until the evening of the fourth day post peak CF
- Factors that can affect cervical fluid are intercourse, BCP, clomiphene citrate (clomid), vaginal infections, anti histamines, cough syrups, swimming in a chlorinated pool

2. Basal body temperature

- The temperature taken upon first waking in the morning
- Taken daily at almost the same time each day after 3 hours at least of not moving, talking, eating or drinking
- Basal body thermometer is different from a fever thermometer in that it only measures up to 38 degrees and measures temperatures by one tenth of a degree picking up on minute changes occurring in the body
- Fevers and illness, alcohol, heating blankets, travel, restless sleep, sleeping close to a child or adult, or waking earlier or later than usual can all affect the temperatures and should be noted
- During the follicular / estrogenic phase temperatures will be between 96.5 – 97.5 or 36.0 – 36.3
- During the luteal or progestational phase temps will be between 97.6-98.6 or 36.4-36.7
- Ovulation will cause a ½ to 1 degree F or ¼ to ½ degree C rise in temp

3. cervical positioning

- cervix will soften and rise under the influence of estrogen
- when you are not fertile the cervix will lower, harden and the os will tighten
- changes in the cervix is used to collaborate other fertility signs
- these changes are especially helpful when breastfeeding, coming off of the pill or are peri menopausal

Other Fertility Signs

- mid cycle spotting
- breast or nipple changes
- mittelschmerz, pain
- increased sexual feelings or changes in vaginal sensations

Key Points in using these methods for Contraception

- Goal is to determine when your fertile or infertile days are and then when your safe and unsafe days are
- Must abstain or use a barrier method during unsafe days
- Before ovulation you are safe on the evening of a dry day.
- You are safe the first 5 days of the menstrual cycle if you had an obvious temperature shift and ovulation signs in the previous cycle
- The first sign of mucus in the pre ovulatory phase will be a moist or sticky discharge with white or yellow color – it will separate easily, and at this time you are no longer safe

- This CF will slowly increase over the next couple of days becoming increasingly slippery and wet
- Peak Day: egg white quality cervical fluid, stretchy, slippery, wet, lubricative, clear, shiny
- You will then ovulate and one day later your temperature will rise

- The cover line, which determines if the temperatures are in fact showing two distinct phases, is drawn at one tenth of a degree higher than the highest of the 6 low temps right before the temperature rise.

- You are safe on the evening of your fourth consecutive day after the Peak Day
- You are safe on the evening of the 3rd consecutive day after the thermal shift above the cover line

Things to know

- These are ways of discovering your most fertile times. This can be used to prevent a pregnancy or help to achieve one
- Egg can live 12-24 hours after ovulation (48 is 2 are ovulated)

- Sperm can live 5 days in the vagina after ejaculation
- The most fertile days for a woman are 3 days before and after ovulation (1/3 of your cycle). Must find clarity around ovulation before go any further? This means 5 days before and 3-4 days after ovulation are considered unsafe. Ovulation usually occurs between day 11 to 16 depending on your cycle length
- Pregnancies are avoided by not having sex during the unsafe days or using a barrier method during these times
- The more you know about your cycle, the better. The more regular you are, the easier.
- The average cycle is between 25 and 35 days
- Day 1 of your cycle is the first day of bleeding (starting before noon)
- Menstruation occurs 12-14 days after ovulation. This means that a delayed cycle is actually due to a delay in ovulation. The arrival of your period can be predicted by the time of ovulation
- 18 days of high temperatures means pregnancy

Tracking Cycles looking for Patterns

- Track cycle lengths for 8-12 months
- Subtract 18days from the shortest cycle recorded – first fertile day (average)
- Subtract 11 days from the longest cycle recorded –last fertile day (average)
- This provides a range of days which you should consider unsafe

