

Fertility Awareness and Traditional Contraceptive Methods



This decision aid is to help you and your healthcare provider talk about methods of contraception and choose what's right for you. Most people can safely use these methods. Your healthcare provider can tell you whether these methods are safe for you.

	WITHDRAWAL METHOD	SYMPTOTHERMAL METHOD	BILLINGS/OVULATION METHOD®	STANDARD DAYS METHOD®
How is it used?	During sex, the penis is removed from your vagina and away from your genitals before ejaculation ¹	You monitor your cervical secretions and your body temperature. You use a set of rules to know what days to avoid sex. ¹	You monitor your cervical secretions. You use a set of rules to know what days to avoid sex. ²	You monitor the days of your menstrual cycle. You avoid sex on days 8 through 19 of your cycle. ³
How often?	Every time you have sex ¹	Every day ¹	Every day. ²	Every day ³
How does it work?	Prevents sperm from entering vagina ⁴	Prevents sperm from entering vagina by avoiding sex during fertile days. ¹	Prevents sperm from entering vagina by avoiding sex during fertile days. ²	Prevents sperm from entering vagina by avoiding sex during fertile days. ³
When does it start working?	Immediately	You can start monitoring your cervical secretions and your body temperature anytime. It may take time before it is a 'safe day' to have sex. ¹	You can start monitoring your cervical secretions anytime. It may take time before it is a 'safe day' to have sex. ²	You can start monitoring the days of your menstrual cycle anytime. It may take time before it is a 'safe day' to have sex. ^{1,3}
How many people become pregnant in the first year?	Between 4% to 22% chance of getting pregnant ⁵	Between less than 1% to 24% chance of getting pregnant ⁵ ; symptothermal methods are more effective than calendar based methods.		
Are there side effects?	No ⁴	No ⁴		
Are there limitations?	Requires cooperation from male sexual partner; may fail due to sperms being present in pre-ejaculatory fluid ⁶	Require understanding of fertility cycles (advice from an expert educator is recommended); needs cooperation of both partners; require daily monitoring and recording of physical changes (symptoms-based methods); might require long periods of abstinence; may not be suitable for women with irregular menstrual cycles; may not be reliable during life events such as illness or stress. ¹		
Does it protect against sexually transmitted infections (STIs)?	No ⁷	No ⁷		

Note: The Lactational Amenorrhea Method is another contraceptive method that may be used by some people who are breastfeeding. Your healthcare provider can tell you about this method.

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Supporting Document

Decision aids:	The following decision aids are part of this collection: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Types of contraceptive methods2. Long-acting reversible contraceptive methods3. Shorter-acting reversible contraceptive methods4. Barrier contraceptive methods5. Fertility awareness and traditional contraceptive methods6. Permanent contraceptive methods7. Emergency contraceptive methods
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Next update:	This decision aid was adapted as part of Hankiz Dolan's PhD project and, at the time of publication, there are no plans to update them further.
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Authors:	Hankiz Dolan, Deborah Bateson, Lyndal Trevena, Mu Li, Chun Wah Michael Tam, Carissa Bonner The authors do not stand to gain or lose anything by the contraceptive choices people make after using this decision aid
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Acknowledgement:	This decision aid is adapted from the 'Right For Me' decision aid tool. Thompson R, Donnelly K, Foster T, Stern L, Trevena L, Elwyn G, et al. Right For Me decision aids [English language] [Internet]. Hanover, NH: Dartmouth College; 2016. Available from: https://www.rightforme.org/decision.html
Terms of use:	See https://askshareknow.com.au/terms-of-use/ All users: Reasonable efforts have been made to ensure that the content provided in these decision aids is up-to-date and accurate. However, none of the authors, their organisations, or the funders of these decision aids accepts any liability or responsibility for the accuracy, currency or completeness of the information contained in the decision aids.
Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• This decision aid includes a statement about the general safety of the contraceptive methods described. The <i>UK Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use</i>⁸ and published updates provide guidance on who can safely use each contraceptive method and may be used to facilitate the provision of individualized information on method safety.• This decision aid describes four fertility awareness methods. The information in this decision aid may be supplemented with counselling about other fertility awareness methods and their variants. The information in this decision aid may also be supplemented with counselling about the possibility of using a fertility awareness method in combination with another contraceptive method (e.g., using a barrier contraceptive method rather than abstaining from sex during the fertile period).• This decision aid does not describe the Lactational Amenorrhea Method due to its relevance to only a small subpopulation of patients.
Information sources:	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare. Fertility awareness methods. London: FSRH; 2015 [cited 2020 February]. Available from: https://www.fsrh.org/standards-and-guidance/documents/ceuguidancefertilityawarenessmethods/2. Billings E, Westmore A. The Billings method: controlling fertility without drugs or devices. 9th Edition ed. Melbourne: Anne O'Donovan Publishing.; 2011.3. Arevalo M, Sinai I, Jennings V. A fixed formula to define the fertile window of the menstrual cycle as the basis of a simple method of natural family planning. <i>Contraception</i>. 1999 Dec;60(6):357-60.4. Author Consensus.5. Trussell J. Contraceptive failure in the United States. <i>Contraception</i>. 2011 May;83(5):397-404. doi: 10.1016/j.contraception.2011.01.0216. Killick SR, Leary C, Trussell J, Guthrie KA. Sperm content of pre-ejaculatory fluid. <i>Human fertility (Cambridge, England)</i>. 2011 12/15;14(1):48-52.7. Workowski KA, Bolan GA. Sexually transmitted diseases treatment guidelines, 2015. <i>MMWR Recomm Rep</i>. 2015 Jun 5;64(Rr-03):1-137.8. Faculty of Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare. UK medical eligibility criteria for contraceptive use (UKMEC). 2016. Available from: https://www.fsrh.org/standards-and-guidance/documents/ukmec-2016/