



Video Transcript: The Basics of Fertility Awareness Based Methods

Narrator: The Basics of Fertility Awareness Based Methods. This video was created by the Reproductive Health National Training Center, RHNTC. Fertility Awareness Based Methods, or FABMs, are family planning methods in which users track one or more fertility indicators to identify the days when vaginal intercourse would be more likely or less likely to result in pregnancy. FABMs can be used to help people conceive or to prevent pregnancy.

FABMs involve tracking fertility indicators to predict the fertile window. The fertile window is the period of days when vaginal intercourse is most likely to lead to pregnancy. So how do FABMs work? Because sperm can live in the genital tract for approximately five days, and because the oocyte or egg only survives 12 to 24 hours if it is not fertilized. Sex can only lead to pregnancy during a limited number of days during each cycle.

These days are called the fertile window. The fertile window lasts about six days in total, the five days before ovulation, which is when the egg is released, plus the day of ovulation itself. When using FABMs, the predicted fertile window is usually longer than six days because the exact timing of ovulation is variable. Each type of FABM is based on one or more fertility indicators.

Let's go through each fertility indicator. We'll start with the menstrual cycle. Use of the menstrual cycle as a fertility indicator is based on the fact that ovulation usually occurs around the middle of the cycle. Individuals with cycles between 26 and 32 days should consider days eight through 19, as their fertile window. Clients can use cycle beads or period tracker apps to monitor their menstrual cycles and fertile window days.

Next, we'll review cervical secretions. Changes in cervical secretions signal the beginning and end of the fertile window. Just before ovulation, the amount of mucus made by the cervix noticeably increases and becomes clear, stretchy and slippery. Just after ovulation, the amount of mucus decreases and becomes thicker and less noticeable. Clients with irregular menstrual cycles can use FABMs that involve monitoring cervical secretions.

Basal body temperature is another fertility indicator, which relies on the fact that basal body temperature rises by at least 0.4°F with ovulation, and stays elevated until one's period starts and the next menstrual cycle begins. Clients must use a basal thermometer to measure and record daily basal body temperature. Natural Cycles is an FABM that involves an FDA-approved app to track basal body temperature and menstrual cycle length, and to calculate the fertile window using a proprietary algorithm.

Newer wearable devices that measure average resting body temperature can also be used with Natural Cycles.

Finally, urinary hormones can be monitored to identify the fertile window. The two most commonly measured are estrogen and luteinizing hormone. A rise in estrogens in the urine indicates the beginning of the fertile window. Luteinizing hormone, or LH, rises 24 to 36 hours before ovulation. The Marquette Method is an example of an FABM that relies on monitoring urinary hormones to predict the fertile window.

To learn more about FABMs and counseling clients on FABMs, check out additional resources on the RHNTC and Clinical Training Center for Sexual and Reproductive Health websites. This has been a production of the Reproductive Health National Training Center, RHNTC.