

sex talk.

answers to your questions about sex and relationships

wildfact

Most condoms do, in fact, grow on trees. Their latex is sap extracted from tapped rubber trees.

Q What is your assessment of the symptothermal family planning method? I heard that it is just as effective as hormonal methods.

A. Fertility awareness-based methods (or FAMs for short), are a form of birth control that rely on keeping track of menstrual cycles so women can avoid intercourse during the days which they are most fertile. The symptothermal method refers to the process of using several FAMs at the same time to help reduce the chances of pregnancy.

It's true – when used correctly, the symptothermal method can be a very effective form of birth control that rivals even the Pill. It's estimated that for every 100 couples who use it perfectly for one year, only 2 couples will wind up pregnant. It is safe, requires no medication and costs next to nothing. So why haven't you heard about it before?

While FAMs can be an attractive option, they do require practice, diligence, and days when sex is “off limits” – a bit more involved than having your partner wear a condom or taking a birth control pill. You'll need to master the following techniques to get a high rate of success:

Temperature Method - Since your body temperature changes throughout your

menstrual cycle, tracking it daily upon waking can provide clues as to whether you're ovulating. Most of the time, 96-98°F is typical but before ovulation temps are slightly higher at 97-99°F. Specialized basal thermometers that show fractions of a degree after a reading are required to detect subtle changes.

Cervical Mucus Method - Still reading? After your period, there are usually “dry days” without mucus where sex is usually safer. The key is noting the difference between mucus that accompanies a ripening egg (usually sticky and cloudy) and the kind that's produced when an egg is about to be released (slippery and clear). The latter is the most fertile time.

Calendar Method - Understanding the timing of your menstrual cycle can help you prevent pregnancy as well.

Although FAMs aren't for everyone, they are one of many birth control options that are available and effective. Go to plannedparenthood.org or health.arizona.edu for more info.



Have a question? Send it to sextalk@email.arizona.edu

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