

# Natural Family Planning: The Complete Approach

**Ecological Breastfeeding  
Covenant Sexuality  
Multiple Options**

John and Sheila Kippley

First Edition  
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**For those using this book in a classroom course:**

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Between meetings 1 and 2:

Read Chapters 1 through 4.

Chart and bring your chart to the second class for review.

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Natural Family Planning: The Complete Approach  
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Kippley, John F and Kippley, Sheila K  
Natural Family Planning: The Complete Approach  
1. Natural family planning                      2. Birth control  
3. Breastfeeding                                      4. Sexual morality

This book is intended to enable ordinary couples to learn how to practice natural family planning in accord with Catholic moral principles. While this book will make reference to health and nutrition because they affect fertility, it is not intended to be professional health, medical, or nutritional advice. Systematic observation of the signs of fertility and infertility may increase a person's awareness of irregularities in the female fertility-menstrual cycle. Individuals with a personal health situation should always seek the help of competent professionals.

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In accord with the *Code of Canon Law*, I hereby grant my permission to publish *Natural Family Planning: The Complete Approach*.

Reverend Joseph R. Binzer  
Vicar General  
Archdiocese of Cincinnati  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
January 20, 2009

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## Introduction

### Where Faith and Science Meet

This small book contains practical instruction on how to use scientifically gained knowledge about nature for two related purposes: 1) to achieve or to avoid pregnancy (systematic NFP) and 2) how to space babies with breastfeeding (ecological breastfeeding). Almost every reader realizes that there are unnatural ways to achieve and avoid pregnancy, ways that involve the use of technology and scientifically gained knowledge to thwart or get around nature. On the contrary, the Catholic Church stands out in teaching that it is seriously immoral to use unnatural methods either to achieve or to avoid pregnancy. Is this a conflict between faith and science?

Not at all. Faith and science are two different ways of knowing. Both use reason. In fact, you use reason to decide whether to believe. At the most basic level, if an obviously intoxicated total stranger asks you for money and promises to pay you back at this same spot tomorrow, you have to ask yourself if you have good reason to believe him. We call that “motives of credibility.” If you believe him, you would be exercising “credulity” or “blind faith.” He offers you no reasonable grounds for believing him. Some people exercise blind faith, and they lose their money.

The claim of Jews and Christians is that God has not only created the universe but has entered into human history. Is this believable? In the Old Testament we read the story of the Jews. In the Exodus, we see God working signs and wonders and miraculously delivering the Jews from the slavery of Egypt. Later, we find the prophets continually referring to the Exodus from Egypt as a concrete sign for believing that the one true God has revealed Himself to them and that therefore He deserves to be believed and followed. This is not a religion of ideas or pie in the sky. This is a religion of action. There is nothing like this in all the rest of human history.

When the Jewish Jesus walked this earth, He called attention both to his fulfillment of past prophecies and to the signs and wonders He worked. He pointed to his resurrection as the supreme reason for believing in Him and therefore in what He taught. Further, knowing that future generations would be skeptical, He chose simple men as his apostles, men of action rather than men of ideas and certainly not religious fanatics. He chose men who went back to fishing even after witnessing the empty tomb but who later gave up their lives in witnessing to the truth of what they had seen and heard. The combination of the beauty of his teaching, the fulfillment of the prophecies, the resurrection, and the witness of the apostles combine to provide a powerful reason

for believing that Jesus is all that He said He was. The Catholic religion does not ask for blind faith.

There can be no true contradiction between faith and reason because God is the author of all being and all truth. That is a statement of reason. If there is one Almighty God, then it is certainly a matter of reason to conclude that He is the creator of all other beings. If He chooses to reveal Himself and certain things about us, He is not going to contradict what He has enabled us to discover in ways other than direct revelation.

Books have been written on these subjects. Our only point is that the Catholic faith is not a matter of wishful thinking or agreeing with certain philosophical ideas. It is based on God's revelation in history, upon the words and deeds of the Old Covenant and the words and deeds of Jesus and his apostles in the New Covenant. It is for real.

Faith and science meet today in what has become an arena of conflict about love, sex, and marriage. Some people think that because some scientists used their God-given brains to develop the Pill and other methods of birth control, it must be permissible to use them. Can you think of a clever crime in which the criminal did not use his or her God-given brains to plan and execute it? And what about the modern development of weapons of mass destruction? Certainly it took considerable use of God-given brains to develop them. The question is: Is it morally good to use them? Or under what conditions might it be permissible to use them, if ever? Those are questions that are simply beyond the scope of science although individual scientists may have personal opinions. Similarly, the fact that it took brain power to develop the Pill and other unnatural forms of birth control provides absolutely no reason to believe that it is morally right to use them.

### **How do faith and science meet in Natural Family Planning?**

God Himself made woman in such a way that frequent suckling by her baby at her breasts postpones the return of fertility for more than a year in most cases. This is not an old wives tale. Scientific research has demonstrated that the frequency of suckling is the key to the normal postponement of fertility. Mothers who practice the ecological breastfeeding explained in this book will experience, on average, 14 to 15 months of breastfeeding amenorrhea (the absence of periods). They will also give the best nutrition to their babies, and with each baby they will save over a thousand dollars by not using formula and baby foods. Finally, they will gain health benefits for themselves as well as for their babies. Every man and woman deserve to know this part of God's creation.

God Himself made woman in such a way that pre-ovulation estrogen causes a healthy discharge of mucus from the cervix and also causes several physical changes in the cervix. Both the mucus and the physical changes of the cervix can be detected and evaluated by informed women. Every man and woman deserve to know these aspects of God's creation.

God Himself made woman in such a way that post-ovulation progesterone causes her waking temperature to rise enough that it can be readily noticed with accurate temperature taking and recording. A sufficiently elevated temperature pattern of at least

three days provides a positive indication that she is past ovulation. Every man and woman deserve to know this aspect of God's creation.

When couples monitor these signs of fertility and infertility, they are using the scientific method—the systematic observation, recording and evaluation of recurring events, and they can use this information both to achieve and to postpone pregnancy. In the ways described in this book, both eco-breastfeeding and systematic NFP provide a happy meeting of faith and science.

### **The time has come**

Both secular humanists and men of Christian faith in 1929-1930 predicted that the acceptance of contraception would bring social evils. Divorce rates are 500% higher now than they were before the birth-control culture wars began just before World War I. Out-of-wedlock pregnancies and births have soared despite universal access to contraception and abortion. Single motherhood has become the single greatest cause of new poverty households. Sexually transmitted diseases have reached epidemic proportions. In short, the contraceptive sexual revolution has denigrated human sexuality, and the social sciences have documented the personal and social disasters.

The time has come to return to the biblically based faith that sexual intercourse is intended by God to be exclusively a marriage act, and that within marriage it ought to be a renewal of the self-giving love and commitment of the couple's original marriage covenant. For many, this realization of the meaning of the marriage act has been a life-changing experience.

### **Natural Family Planning is the answer.**

Natural family planning—whether eco-breastfeeding or systematic NFP—is the answer, spiritually and physically. Safe, healthy, effective, and morally right, it is the best form of conception regulation when it is properly taught and used. Unlike unnatural forms of birth control, NFP has no bad side effects. Best of all, practicing NFP for the right reasons can bring spiritual growth and peace.

—*John and Sheila Kippley*

Cincinnati Ohio

Make me to know thy ways, O Lord;  
Teach me thy paths.  
Lead me in thy truth, and teach me,  
For thou art the God of my salvation;  
For thee I wait all the day long.

*Psalm 25, 4-5*

*Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me . . . and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.*  
—Matthew 11:28-30

## Chapter 1

# Natural Family Planning: What and Why

## 1. NFP: What is it?

### What is Natural Family Planning?

Natural Family Planning (NFP) is a way of following God's plan both for achieving and for avoiding or postponing pregnancy. NFP uses the physical means that God has built into human nature.

### Is there more than one form of natural family planning?

Yes. There are two basic and distinctly different forms of NFP:

- Ecological Breastfeeding. Not many people know this, but the right kind of breastfeeding postpones the return of fertility.
- Systematic NFP. This is based on the systematic observation of the naturally occurring signs of fertility and infertility in a woman's menstrual-fertility cycle.

### Why do we say NFP involves Science, Art, and a Way of Life?

● **Science** is the basis for both forms of NFP. *Ecological breastfeeding* has been with us since the beginning of time, but the research is relatively recent. *Systematic NFP* is relatively new in history, starting in 1923 with the discovery of ovulation. By 1930, the pioneer researchers developed the first form of systematic NFP, calendar rhythm. Further discoveries led to the use of the current indicators of fertility and infertility.

- The **Art** of NFP refers to the application of the science to your situation.
- **Way of life** refers to the proper use of NFP. When married couples use NFP for the right reasons and with the proper attitudes, they can experience real growth in their relationship with each other and with their Creator.

### What is Ecological Breastfeeding?

Ecological breastfeeding (EBF) is that form of nursing in which 1) the mother fulfills her baby's needs for frequent suckling and her full-time presence and 2) in which the child's frequent suckling postpones the return of the mother's fertility. Ecological breastfeeding is described by the Seven Standards.

## **What are the Seven Standards?**

The Seven Standards of ecological breastfeeding are maternal behaviors that help to ensure the frequency of suckling. This is the only pattern of breastfeeding associated with extended natural child spacing. The Seven Standards of ecological breastfeeding are described in Chapter 6. Ecological breastfeeding is also called eco-breastfeeding.

## **How effective is eco-breastfeeding for spacing babies?**

Studies have shown that mothers who follow the Seven Standards of ecological breastfeeding will experience, on the average, 14 to 15 months after childbirth without menstruation. Some mothers experience an earlier return of fertility, and others experience a later return of fertility. On the average, however, ecological breastfeeding spaces babies approximately two years apart.

## **Why is breastfeeding so important?**

Breastfeeding is important because it provides many health benefits to baby and mother alike. Worldwide, if all babies were exclusively breastfed (only mother's milk) for the first six months of life, the lives of 1,500,000 babies would be saved each year.

## **What is systematic NFP?**

Systematic NFP is the method that uses a woman's natural signs to identify the fertile and infertile times of the menstrual cycle. All systems that identify the fertile time of the cycle can help couples both achieve and avoid pregnancy. Contemporary forms of systematic NFP enable you to know the most-fertile days in the overall fertile time for achieving pregnancy. All true NFP systems use chaste abstinence during the fertile time as the method for avoiding pregnancy. The use of systematic NFP involves both the knowledge of fertility and putting that knowledge into practice.

## **Are there different methods of systematic NFP?**

Yes. Systematic NFP consists of various "methods" or systems that seek to determine the fertile and infertile times of the cycle. You will be learning how to use a cross-checking system called the Sympto-Thermal Method (STM). It uses all the common signs of fertility in a cross-checking way. Another common system focuses primarily on the mucus sign and is frequently called the "Ovulation Method." Some couples use a temperature-only form of NFP, and some use the cervix sign in combination with either the temperature sign or the mucus sign.

## **How effective is systematic NFP for *avoiding* pregnancy?**

We have no doubt that married couples who are properly instructed and motivated can practice the cross-checking Sympto-Thermal Method at the 99% level of effectiveness for avoiding pregnancy. Various studies have shown that the "perfect use" of the method yields that result. That means that the couples in the studies followed the rules. A German study on the sympto-thermal method published in February 2007 showed an effectiveness of 99.6%. On the other hand, fertile spouses who do not

*The necessary conditions [for understanding and living the moral value and norm of the divine law] include knowledge of the bodily aspect and the body's rhythm of fertility. . . Knowledge of fertility must then lead to education in self control.*

—Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio (The Apostolic Exhortation on the Family)* n.35.

## Chapter 2

# The Fertility Cycle and Charting

## 1: Basic Physiology

### **Do husband and wife play an equal part in having babies?**

No. Both are essential, but the wife's part is more complex and longer lasting. The husband supplies the seed (**sperm**) and she supplies the egg (**ovum**) plus the habitat for the first nine months of life. Breastfeeding is also an important part of the family-life cycle, and the wife has a singular role in this form of baby care. The family-life cycle involves the marriage act, conception and pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding.

### **What is the husband's part?**

A man's testicles, which are contained in a sac called the scrotum, produce sperm on a regular basis. The prostate gland produces a fluid that combines with the sperm and the combination is called semen. When the spouses engage in the marriage act, he ejaculates his semen into his wife's vagina.

He thus gives her millions of sperm, and one of these may join with his wife's ovum to create a new human life. Under a microscope, each sperm looks like a tadpole with a head-like body and a tail. The tail swishes around and propels the sperm upward and through the wife's reproductive channels to meet the ovum. If the egg is present, the woman is fertile, and one of the sperm may penetrate it. When the sperm and the egg unite, a new human life begins. This is called both conception and fertilization.

If an egg is not available, conception cannot occur and the sperm will simply disintegrate within a short time, depending upon the conditions in the reproductive tract. If no cervical mucus (to be explained next) is being secreted, sperm live from a half-hour to a few hours, depending on the acidity of the vagina. In the presence of cervical mucus, sperm usually live up to 72 hours at most, but some live longer in optimum conditions. While sperm life of six days or more cannot absolutely be ruled out, pregnancies caused by such sperm are extremely rare. Once a young man reaches biological maturity, he is capable of fathering a child at any time. By contrast, a woman is fertile only several days each cycle.

*Every effort must be made to render such knowledge [about fertility] accessible to all married people and also to young adults before marriage through clear, timely, and serious instruction and education given by married couples, doctors, and experts.*

—Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 33.7

## Chapter 3

# Interpreting the Signs of Fertility

## 1. The Sympto-Thermal Method (STM)

### What is the Sympto-Thermal Method?

The Sympto-Thermal Method is a form of systematic NFP that uses at least two signs of a woman's fertility in a cross-checking way to determine the fertile and infertile times of the menstrual-fertility cycle.

“Sympto” refers to the mucus, cervix and mittelschmerz signs or symptoms. “Thermal” refers to the temperature sign. This method is also called the “cross-check method.” In this manual we will use the “Sympto-Thermal” label since that is more common within the NFP movement.

### What are the signs of fertility?

As indicated in Chapter 2, the signs are these:

- changes in a woman's waking temperature,
- changes in her cervical mucus, and
- physical changes in her cervix.

Some women notice a pain near the ovaries about mid-cycle called mittelschmerz by its German name and associated with being near ovulation.

### What is the advantage of using more than one sign?

Each sign has certain strong points and weak points. Using them in a cross-checking way takes advantage of the strong points and minimizes the weak points. This provides many couples with greater confidence.

### Why do couples use systematic NFP?

Married couples use systematic NFP to determine their fertile and infertile times. If they desire pregnancy, they engage in the marriage act during the fertile time. If they do not desire pregnancy, they abstain from the marriage act during the fertile time.

*In the Christian view, chastity signifies spiritual energy capable of defending love from the perils of selfishness and aggressiveness and able to advance it towards its full realization.*

—John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio*, n. 33.7

## Chapter 4

### Rules You Can Use

#### **What are the principles behind the rules?**

The rules for determining the fertile and infertile times of the cycle are based on the following scientific facts which have been mentioned already.

*Before* ovulation, three observations can be made.

- The level of waking temperatures is lower than it will be after ovulation.
- Cervical mucus normally appears several days before ovulation, typically 5 to 7 days. It reaches a peak of slipperiness, stretchiness or wetness very close to ovulation.
- Changes in the cervix also occur before and close to ovulation. The cervix rises, opens, and becomes softer.

*After* ovulation, five things happen.

- The endometrium, the inner lining of the uterus, is maintained.
- Additional ovulations in that cycle are suppressed. After ovulation, a second ovulation may occur, but this will occur within 24 hours of the first ovulation (due to the ovulation-suppressing action of progesterone).
- The basal body temperature rises.
- The cervical mucus becomes less fluid and dries up.
- The cervix lowers, closes and becomes firm.

*At the time of ovulation*, the ovum is capable of being fertilized then and for about 24 hours after ovulation. NFP rules must also allow for the lifespan of the ovum from a possible second ovulation.

*Prior to* ovulation, sperm are capable of fertilizing the ovum for about three days (72 hours) after sexual relations under normal conditions of fertility. Under optimum conditions, sperm can live up to five days and sometimes, but rarely, even longer.

*God is faithful and will not permit you to be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also give you a way out so that you may be able to bear it.* — 1 Corinthians 10:13

## Chapter 5

### ***Special Situations***

#### **What is a special situation?**

A special situation can occur when:

- you have something unusual occurring during a cycle, such as breakthrough bleeding or irregular shedding;
- you are not cycling, such as during extended breastfeeding;
- you are having very long cycles, such as during premenopause;
- you observe no thermal shift between menstruations;
- you are in transition, such as coming off the Pill or the hormonal shot.

#### **A common element**

What most, but not all, special situations have in common is a delayed ovulation. The days or weeks before you are close to ovulation fall into four categories.

1. Complete mucus-dryness.
2. A continuous less-fertile type of mucus.
3. Patches of mucus—of any type—separated by dry days.
4. Patches of more-fertile mucus separated by days of less-fertile mucus.

#### **What is a mucus patch?**

We repeat our definition as stated in the mucus-related section of Chapter 3, “Interpreting the Signs of Fertility,” page 48.

A mucus patch is the group of days on which you notice cervical mucus. It begins with the first day of mucus and ends on Peak Day. We do not count the days of less-fertile mucus after Peak Day. Thus, if you have four days of mucus prior to Peak Day, you have a 5-Day mucus patch including Peak Day.

#### **What is an “ovulation mucus patch”?**

This is the mucus patch associated with ovulation. In some cycles there may be more than one mucus patch, but only one of them is associated with ovulation. This is the one that is followed by an upward thermal shift.

*Attention should be given to the positive benefits of breastfeeding for nourishment and disease prevention in infants as well as for maternal bonding and birth spacing.*

—John Paul II, Address to International Conference on Population and Development, March 18, 1994.

## Chapter 6

# Ecological Breastfeeding

## 1. Benefits of Breastfeeding

### Why is breastfeeding best for babies?

Breastfeeding provides many health benefits for a baby, and, most importantly, a baby thrives emotionally with the repeated close contact with his mother that breastfeeding provides. Of course breastfed babies get sick occasionally, but statistically there is no debate: breastfed babies are healthier. The American Academy of Pediatrics ([aap.org](http://aap.org)), The American Academy of Family Physicians ([aafp.org](http://aafp.org)), and the United States Breastfeeding Committee ([usbreastfeeding.org](http://usbreastfeeding.org)) report specific health benefits for breastfed children. The list below and continued on page two is compiled from the websites of these three organizations. Breastfeeding reduces the incidence of the following diseases for babies and children.

- allergies
- asthma
- bacterial meningitis
- botulism
- Crohn's disease
- diarrhea
- ear infections
- eczema
- gastroenteritis
- leukemia
- autoimmune thyroid disease
- inflammatory bowel disease
- lymphoma
- multiple sclerosis
- necrotizing enterocolitis
- obesity
- respiratory tract infections
- sudden infant death syndrome
- ulcerative colitis
- type 1 and type 2 diabetes
- urinary tract infections

Compared to those who are not breastfed, breastfed children

- stay in the hospital fewer days as premature infants,
- have a more mature infant intestinal tract,
- have a better immune system and a better response to vaccinations,
- have fewer sick days,
- score higher on visual acuity tests, and
- score higher on cognitive and IQ tests at school age.

### **Are the benefits of breastfeeding dose-related?**

Yes. According to the American Academy of Family Physicians,

1. “The strongest evidence indicates that these positive [health] effects of breastfeeding are most significant with six months of exclusive breastfeeding,” and
2. “the effects are dose-related, with improved outcomes being associated with longer breastfeeding.” (AAFP Position Paper on “Breastfeeding.”)

### **What are the risks for the mother who does not breastfeed?**

The mother who does not breastfeed may have an increased risk for the following diseases:

- breast cancer
- endometrial cancer
- ovarian cancer
- thyroid cancer
- anemia
- lupus
- rheumatoid arthritis
- osteoporosis (increased chance of a hip fracture)

### **Should a mother feel guilty if she is unable to breastfeed?**

No. Any mother who made every reasonable effort to breastfeed and was unsuccessful should never feel guilty. She gave it her best try.

We hope that mothers who want to breastfeed will receive the support and correct information needed so that there will be minimal problems in getting started. One of the benefits of doing ecological breastfeeding (EBF) is that the milk supply is usually ample due to the frequent and unrestricted suckling.

### **What are the advantages for the mother if she breastfeeds?**

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) lists eight benefits for the breastfeeding mother:

1. decreased postpartum bleeding
2. more rapid uterine involution attributable to increased concentrations of oxytocin, (that is, it helps the uterus to shrink to its normal size)
3. decreased menstrual blood loss
4. increased child spacing attributable to lactational amenorrhea (the absence of menstrual periods due to breastfeeding)
5. earlier return to pre-pregnancy weight

*Ask and it shall be given to you; seek and you shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you.*

—Matthew 7:7

## Chapter 7

### Witness

#### **Mrs. A: a former atheist**

I was fortunate enough to have had terrible side effects on hormonal contraception, so I jumped at the chance to learn and use NFP, even as an atheist. In fact, it was reading the Church's teachings about the evil of contraception in *The Art of Natural Family Planning* by the Kippleys that led my husband and me into the Catholic Church and not into a Protestant denomination. We believed in objective truth, even as an atheist and an agnostic, and the fact that the Catholic Church from its beginning had consistently declared contraception evil was strong evidence to us that it had divine authority and was protected by the Holy Spirit.

Like many couples, NFP became difficult to use during the postpartum period after our second child was born. Pain caused me to stop nursing at five weeks, and it would take months for my body to regulate and my cycle to return. Because I was self-taught, we faced prolonged periods of abstinence. We were terrified to get pregnant again so soon with a newborn and 18-month-old.

After about three months of abstinence, I asked my very compassionate Ob/Gyn if there was anything I could do to jumpstart my cycle because it was against my faith to use contraception. I had tried natural and homeopathic remedies to no avail. In the end we consulted our priest and agreed that I would try one cycle of the Pill. Not knowing any better then, I hoped it would at least start me cycling again so we would have a better idea of what was going on with my fertility.

I filled the prescription. That evening I sat and looked at the circular compact containing the birth control pills. It seemed to represent exactly how far I'd come as a secular atheist turned practicing Catholic. I found myself completely disgusted by those pills and cried as I swallowed the first one. Even though I knew we planned to abstain and not contracept, they still made me feel sullied. The pills brought up all the years I had thoughtlessly swallowed them to make it easier to use and be used by men. All the times I had offended God by objectifying another person or degrading myself. Even I was surprised by how much emotional resistance I had to taking that pill, and I wasn't sure I could get through a whole month if I felt so badly the first night.

*Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ. Let wives be subject to their husbands as to the Lord . . . Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the Church and delivered himself up for her.*  
—Ephesians 5: 21-22; 25

## Chapter 8

# Getting Started

### How do we get started?

Whether you are engaged or married, be chaste according to your state in life. You will never regret imposing sexual self-control on yourself, but if you refuse to do so, you may well have long lasting regrets. The ultimate purpose of human relationships is to help the other person on the path to heaven, and this is particularly true of couples who are dating, who are engaged, and who are married. If you have been living less than a full Christian life, make your resolution now to be a help and not a hindrance to anyone, especially the person you love.

If you are married, the process of getting started is the same whether you are seeking to achieve or avoid pregnancy. We suggest that you abstain until you know you are in Phase 3, the time of post-ovulation infertility. We explain the reasons on the next page. If you are engaged, resolve to abstain until you are married.

### What is the first step?

1. Download several NFPI charts from the Home Page of [www.nfpandmore.org](http://www.nfpandmore.org) and you can start charting. (Using 3-hole paper makes it convenient for saving in a binder.)

2. To the woman: figure out where you are in your cycle, that is, how many days it has been since the start of your last period. If it's been 10 days, start your temperature recordings on Day 10 on the NFPI daily observation chart. Start making your mucus observations today after each urination, at least externally. If you are ready to start the cervix observations, then record them too. If you do that, you might as well try the internal mucus observation.

If you are engaged, take your temperatures and observe the external mucus sign daily to complete your chart. You can learn the internal exams after your marriage.

3. To the married man: prepare the thermometer in the evening to give to your wife in the morning. When she's done, take it back and record the reading on the temperature graph.

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