

# University Health Services

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## **PERIODIC ABSTINENCE (RHYTHM METHOD) Natural Family Planning**

### **How It Works**

This method requires the woman to chart her menstrual cycle in order to learn when she is fertile. Unprotected sex is to be avoided during the time period when she determines is most fertile. Charting may be done through the calendar, mucus and BMT (basal metabolic temperature) methods.

This method is also often referred to as "fertility awareness," "periodic abstinence," and "natural family planning."

### **Effectiveness**

These methods are typically effective about 80% of the time. Couples may want to consider using two types of charting methods at once to maximize effectiveness.

### **Benefits**

- Offers an acceptable contraceptive alternative to couples with religious and/or moral concerns about birth control
- No known side effects

### **Drawbacks**

- May have high rate of failure unless both partners cooperate in using it carefully and consistently
- Requires instruction in observing and charting fertility signs
- Women with irregular menstrual cycles are likely to have difficulties using this method
- Does not provide protection against STDs
- Stress, vaginal infections, and fevers may make accurate observation difficult

### **Additional Information**

If you are interested in further advice/information on contraceptive services, please contact the University Health Services Clinical Services at (814) 863-0774 or contact a HealthWorks peer educator at (814) 863-2500.

### **Test Results and Advice Nurse**

Please call the nurse for test results and advice: 863-4463

### **Appointments**

Appointments can be made in person or by phone. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call and cancel. Otherwise you will be charged for the visit.

To schedule or cancel appointments, call: 863-0774

For more information about health care issues, visit the UHS Web site at [www.sa.psu.edu/uhs](http://www.sa.psu.edu/uhs)  
This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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