



FACTS

Fertility Appreciation Collaborative to Teach the Systems

Billings Ovulation Method

What is the Billings Ovulation Method?

The Billings Ovulation Method (BOM) is a natural or fertility awareness based method (FABM) of family planning, based on a woman's observations of her cervical mucus or fluid. Research shows that this is a reliable signal because the fluid looks and feels very different when a woman is fertile than when she is not.¹ If she learns to identify cervical fluid that is fertile, she will know when she can become pregnant. Couples are then free to use that information and modify their behavior to achieve or avoid pregnancy depending on their family planning goals.

How does the Billings Ovulation Method work?

A woman may know if she is fertile by observing and paying attention to the sensation of her cervical fluid each day. When a woman is fertile her cervical fluid will feel (and look) very different than when she is not fertile. If a woman learns to identify cervical fluid that is fertile, she will know when she can become pregnant.

Cervical fluid is produced in the woman's cervix, which is located internally at the opening to her uterus or womb. After a woman's period or menses ends, she will typically feel dry in the vaginal area and will not observe any cervical fluid for a few days. Then, as her hormones change, she will begin to notice her cervical fluid. At first, it may feel sticky or moist. Then it will become more clear, stretchy and slippery, like raw egg white. The last day her cervical fluid is slippery, stretchy or clear is her peak day. Ovulation (the release of an egg) occurs either that day or within 2 days.

When a couple has sexual intercourse, sperm can survive in the woman's reproductive tract and conception can occur for up to 6 days if the fertile cervical fluid is present.² When ovulation occurs the sperm can then join with the egg resulting in pregnancy. If a couple does not want to become pregnant, they would not have sexual relations during this fertile period. After ovulation, a woman will see the fluid become thick and dry up, indicating the end of her fertile period. Eventually, she will get her period and her cycle will start over again.

Couples using the Billings Ovulation Method track these natural and clear signs of fertility each day. They use this information and four rules during the woman's cycle to know if they can achieve or avoid pregnancy on a given day. Couples who wish to achieve pregnancy should have sexual relations on the days of maximum fertility - the day prior to peak, peak day and the next day. Couples who do not wish to have a baby must avoid not only intercourse, but all genital contact during the fertile time.

How effective is the Billings Ovulation Method in helping a couple avoid pregnancy?

If a couple uses the method perfectly, the BOM is 98.9% effective for avoiding pregnancy (89.5% effective with typical use).³ It works about as well as hormonal contraceptives, such as the Pill, and better than barrier contraceptives, such as condoms.⁴

To use the Billings Ovulation Method correctly, couples should attend classes or receive instruction from a trained Billings educator and then be sure to follow the rules. If this sounds like a lot of work, remember once a couple learns how to observe their fertility signs, they can use this information throughout their reproductive years.

Can the Billings Ovulation Method help couples achieve pregnancy?

Yes!

The BOM allows a couple to recognize when they are fertile—those days around the woman’s Peak, or most fertile, day. If they want to become pregnant, they can plan to have sexual intercourse on the fertile days.

One study found that 78% of couples who used the BOM were able achieve pregnancy after an average of just 4.7 months. Almost half of the women that participated in the study had already been trying to get pregnant for a year or more when they started using BOM.⁵

What are some benefits of the Billings Ovulation Method?

The Billings Ovulation Method is easy-to-learn and an effective method to avoid or achieve pregnancy. There are no devices or drugs to use, so it is safe, healthy (“organic”), and inexpensive. The BOM is “reversible”—a couple can change their family planning goals whenever they wish. Research shows that couples who switch to a natural method of family planning improve their relationships, and feel more respected by their partner and more in control of their fertility.⁶ The BOM can be used throughout the couple’s reproductive years.

Can women who have irregular cycles, are breastfeeding, or just stopped using hormonal contraceptives use Billings Ovulation Method?

Yes!

The BOM is designed for women (and couples), at different stages of their reproductive life. Most women can learn the Billings Ovulation Method, as it only requires them to observe their cervical fluid to determine when they can likely get pregnant. In fact, the World Health Organization found that ninety percent of women in five different countries can find their day of highest fertility in the first month they use the method.⁷

A woman who uses the BOM will be able to understand her unique menstrual cycle. Even if her cycle is different every time, she will be able to understand what is happening in her body. If a challenge occurs, a woman can contact a BOM teacher for further instruction.

Where can I find more information on Billings Ovulation methods?

To find an instructor: BOMA – USA, <http://www.boma-usa.org>
651-699-8139

Sources

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