



## 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<sup>i</sup>. Research shows that this is a reliable signal because the cervical secretion is essential for a woman's fertility<sup>ii</sup>. By learning to identify the mucus patterns that indicate infertility and fertility, she will know when pregnancy is possible. Couples are then free to use that information and modify their behavior to achieve or avoid pregnancy according to their family planning goals.

### How does the Billings Ovulation Method® work?

A woman will know if she may be fertile by observing and paying attention to the sensation at her vulva each day. When a woman is fertile, she experiences changes in sensation that will feel very different from the unchanging pattern of infertility. In addition to changes in sensation, she may also see some fluid secretions<sup>iii</sup>.

In response to rising hormone levels<sup>iv</sup>, 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 at the vulva and will not observe any cervical fluid secretions for a few days. Some women never feel dry but will notice that the sensation remains the same and any secretions will be minimal over this time. These unchanging patterns indicate pre-ovulatory infertility as mucus is necessary for sperm survival.

As a woman's estrogen levels rise, she will begin to notice a changing pattern of sensation and may observe fluid secretions<sup>v</sup>. At first, she may feel sticky or moist, then it will become wetter and slippery. Initially, the fluid may appear cloudy like mucus and then may become clearer and stretchy. The last day of the slippery sensation is the Peak day. Ovulation (the release of an egg) occurs either that day or within the following 2 days. By the end of the third day after Peak, the couple is again infertile until the next cycle begins with menstruation. Approximately two weeks after ovulation, she will get her menses and a new cycle will begin.

Couples using the Billings Ovulation Method® track these natural signs of fertility and infertility each day. The pattern during the pre-ovulatory infertile times will be unchanging and very different from that accompanying fertility. By learning to interpret these patterns and applying the four simple rules of the method, couples can avoid or achieve pregnancy as they choose. Couples who wish to achieve pregnancy should have sexual relations on the days when the fluid or mucus pattern indicates potential fertility. Couples who do not wish to have a baby must avoid not only intercourse, but all genital contact during the fertile time<sup>vi</sup>.

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

If a couple uses the method perfectly, the Billings Ovulation Method® is 98.9% effective for avoiding pregnancy (89.5% effective with typical use because the couple can change their pregnancy intention at will)<sup>vii</sup>. It works about as well as hormonal contraceptives, such as the Pill, and better than barrier contraceptives, such as condoms.

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 Billings Ovulation Method® allows a couple to recognize when they are fertile—with optimum couple fertility on the Peak day, the last day of the slippery sensation. 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 Billings Ovulation Method® were able to achieve pregnancy after an average of just 4.7 months. Almost half of the



women who participated in the study had already been trying to become pregnant for a year or more when they started using the Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®viii</sup>.

## What are some benefits of the Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup>?

The Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup> 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 Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup> is immediately “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. The Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup> can be used throughout the couple’s reproductive years<sup>ix</sup>.

## Can women who have irregular cycles, are breastfeeding, or just stopped using hormonal contraceptives use Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup>?

Yes! The Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup> is designed for women (and couples), at different stages of their reproductive life. Most women can learn the Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup>, as it only requires them to observe their sensation in the vulvar or vaginal area to determine when they are likely to achieve pregnancy. No touching of the mucus or internal examinations are required. In fact, the World Health Organization found that 90% of the women in five different countries identified their day of highest fertility in the first month they used the method. A woman who uses the Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup> will be able to understand her unique menstrual cycle and monitor her reproductive health. 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 Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup> teacher for further instruction.

## Where can I find more information on the Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup>?

For more information on the Billings Ovulation Method<sup>®</sup> or to find an instructor, please visit <http://www.boma-usa.org> or call 651-699-8139.

## Sources

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