



## **FEMM - Fertility Education and Medical Management**

### **What is FEMM?**

FEMM stands for Fertility Education and Medical Management. FEMM provides education for women about their bodies and hormonal health, a free app to track their health and fertility, and medical support when required. FEMM collaborates with the Reproductive Health Research Institute (RHRI) in the development of medical research, protocols, and medical training for health care professionals.

FEMM's Medical Management program enables the clinical application of important research advances in reproductive endocrinology. FEMM's Education program teaches women to monitor their own health and fertility using biological signs, empowering them to make informed decisions about the choice and delivery of their medical care and services.

### **How does FEMM work?**

A woman's reproductive health is closely tied to the state of her general health and to the delicate interplay of several hormones within her body. Healthy hormone levels are essential to reproductive and overall health, and the sufficient production of these hormones can be tracked in each cycle.<sup>i</sup> FEMM focuses on charting and recognizing the patterns of 4 major hormones: estrogen, progesterone, follicular stimulating hormone, and luteinizing hormone. Each hormone must reach certain levels at certain points of the ovulatory cycle to trigger ovulation and other cycle events.<sup>ii</sup>

FEMM teaches women how to monitor the hormonal activity of the cycle and identify ovulation to manage both health and fertility. A woman can chart her observations on a paper chart or using the free FEMM app. As the various hormones rise and fall, they stimulate different observable responses in a woman's body. For instance, the main reproductive hormones, estrogen and progesterone, produce opposite effects in the cervix: estrogen stimulates increasingly fluid cervical mucus, while progesterone stimulates dense mucus, which is observed as dryness. Changes in observations indicate changes in hormonal activity throughout the cycle. BBT (basal body temperature) can also be monitored to help correlate observations with hormonal activity.

FEMM *Family Planning* can be used to help couples avoid or achieve pregnancy. Women can identify ovulation and their fertile time using the biomarkers of estrogenic cervical fluid and the LH surge just prior to ovulation. A woman can only become pregnant in the few days surrounding ovulation. Identifying the fertile days of each cycle allows the couple to make an informed decision; they can either use the optimal time to achieve pregnancy or avoid the fertile days to avoid pregnancy.<sup>iii</sup> This knowledge can be applied to variable cycle types and reproductive stages. Additionally, FEMM can help make family planning easier by correcting health problems, often resulting in a more normal cycle.

### **How effective is FEMM in helping couples avoid pregnancy?**

FEMM is newer than other fertility awareness based methods, so long-term, peer-reviewed studies of effectiveness are currently in progress.

### **What are some benefits of FEMM?**

FEMM enables women to make informed decisions about their health care. Monitoring hormonal biomarkers and cycle patterns empowers women to recognize cycle irregularities and symptoms that indicate underlying conditions and to seek appropriate treatment.



FEMM-trained medical professionals are equipped to work with the data FEMM users provide to treat issues like irregular bleeding, pain, polycystic ovarian syndrome, endometriosis, infertility, thyroid dysfunction, migraines, depression, weight gain, and acne.<sup>iv</sup> In partnership with RHRI, FEMM has a comprehensive physical and lab workup designed to diagnose and treat the root causes of health conditions. Early identification of abnormalities helps in the diagnosis and treatment of gynecologic, endocrine, metabolic and infectious disorders.<sup>v</sup>

### **Can women who have irregular cycles or are breastfeeding use FEMM?**

FEMM helps breastfeeding mothers to understand their changing physiology and manage confusing post-partum cycles. With FEMM, women can gain the knowledge and confidence to manage all the stages of their reproductive life.

FEMM is particularly helpful for women with irregular cycles, whether due to their stage of reproductive life (ie: breast-feeding, premenopausal) or because of health issues. More than 2 consecutive irregular cycles is a sign of a hormonal disturbance, which can be identified and treated using FEMM medical management.<sup>vi</sup> Monitoring a variety of biomarkers--cervical fluid, menstrual quality, LH surge and even BBT-- can help in identifying health and fertility issues. FEMM-trained medical professionals provide the support to restore good health and normal cycle function.

### **Where can I find more information on FEMM?**

FEMM website: <https://femmhealth.org/>

Email: [femm@femmhealth.org](mailto:femm@femmhealth.org)

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FEMMHealth>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/femmhealth>

YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCD3tfDo8Oz9ZMrfD93EmdWA>

### **Sources**

<sup>i</sup> Vigil P, Ceric F, Cortés ME, Klaus H. Usefulness of monitoring fertility from menarche. *J. Pediatr. Adolesc. Gynecol.* 19(3): 173-179, 2006.

<sup>ii</sup> Blackwell LF1, Vigil P, Cooke DG, d'Arcangues C, Brown JB. Monitoring of ovarian activity by daily measurement of urinary excretion rates of oestrone glucuronide and pregnanediol glucuronide using the Ovarian Monitor, Part III: variability of normal menstrual cycle profiles. *Hum Reprod.* 2013 Dec;28(12):3306-15.

<sup>iii</sup> Ecochard R1, Duterque O2, Leiva R3, Bouchard T4, Vigil P5. Self-identification of the clinical fertile window and the ovulation period. *Fertil Steril.* 2015 May;103(5):1319-25.e3.

<sup>iv</sup> Vigil P1, Contreras P, Alvarado JL, Godoy A, Salgado AM, Cortés ME. Evidence of subpopulations with different levels of insulin resistance in women with polycystic ovary syndrome. *Hum Reprod.* Vol.22, No.11 pp. 2974–2980, 2007

<sup>v</sup> Vigil P, Ceric F, Cortés ME, Klaus H. Usefulness of monitoring fertility from menarche. *J. Pediatr. Adolesc. Gynecol.* 19(3): 173-179, 2006

<sup>vi</sup> Vigil, P. RHRI Medical Protocols, 2015. Reproductive Health Research Institute, Santiago, Chile