



Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM)

What is the lactational amenorrhea method?

Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM) is a natural and healthy fertility awareness based method (FABM) of family planning. The LAM is a special FABM that can be used by post-partum, breastfeeding mothers.

How does LAM Work?

Breastfeeding delays the return of a mother's ovulation (when the woman's ovary releases an egg) and may make her infertile for six months or more.

LAM is an easy tool for post-partum women to use to avoid a pregnancy if they meet the following criteria:

1. Menstrual bleeding has not resumed; AND
2. The infant is exclusively or nearly exclusively breastfed frequently, day and night; AND
3. The infant is under six months of age

Women who meet all 3 criteria are not likely to become pregnant and do not need to use another method of birth control.

How effective is LAM in helping couples avoid pregnancy?

International research among many different populations has shown that the LAM is 99.5% effective with perfect use and 98% effective with typical use. This means that if a woman and her baby meet all three criteria, and she uses every opportunity to breastfeed her baby, the likelihood of an unintended pregnancy is about 2%.^{1,2}

LAM shows that a mother's body is very good at giving her the time she needs while she cares for and bonds with her new baby!

Can LAM help couples achieve pregnancy?

No; the LAM is not designed for this goal, but . . .

If a breastfeeding woman notices that one of the three conditions above is missing, then she would know that pregnancy could be more likely since ovulation may return.

Benefits of LAM

LAM provides a range of benefits including:

1. Controlled and provided by the woman
2. Provides infertility for 6 months
3. Can be used immediately after child birth
4. Can be used by women everywhere
5. No interference with sexual intercourse
6. Provides time to learn about another natural family planning method during the postpartum period

LAM also promotes optimal and exclusive breastfeeding behaviors, which provide benefits for mother and baby:

1. Enhance mother-baby bonding
2. Support growth and development
3. Stimulate uterine contraction to reduce post-partum blood loss
4. Prevent neonatal and infant illness (diarrhea, respiratory infections, etc.)
5. Prevent neonatal and infant mortality



The LAM works with the natural changes in a mother's body after childbirth. It is easy to learn and teaches couples to understand their fertility and work with their bodies.

Disadvantages of LAM

LAM is a temporary form of family planning. A 2-year birth interval, which is recommended for family spacing, is not possible solely using LAM. Exclusive breastfeeding can be time consuming. Finally, as with other natural methods, LAM does not provide protection against STDs.

Other Organizations/More Information

Georgetown University Institute for Reproductive Health: www.irh.org or (202) 687-1392.

Sources

1. Kennedy Kathy I. et al. "Policy Considerations for the Introduction and Promotion of the Lactational Amenorrhea Method: Advantages and Disadvantages of LAM." *Journal of Human Lactation* 14 (1998):191.
2. Labbok Miriam H. et al. "Multicenter Study of the Lactational Amenorrhea Method (LAM): I. Efficacy, Duration, and Implications for Clinical Application." *Contraception* 55 (1997): 327-336.