

Lactation Amenorrhea Method (LAM)

What is the lactation amenorrhea method (LAM)?

- LAM is a method of birth control. Lactation means your body is making breastmilk and amenorrhea means you aren't having a monthly period.
- LAM is a way for breastfeeding to *temporarily* help prevent pregnancy. It must be used correctly to work.
- Exclusive breastfeeding (this means not feeding your baby anything other than your breastmilk) helps prevent an egg from being released from the ovary each month. You can't get pregnant if your body doesn't release an egg.

How well does LAM work?

- 8 to 9 out of 10 women will get pregnant in one year if having intercourse without birth control.
- If used correctly (this means you follow the exact directions all the time) LAM provides protection from pregnancy, which is **98 percent** effective for the first 6 months after giving birth.
- LAM doesn't protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV.
- Use a condom **every time** you have sex (vaginal, oral, anal) to lower your risk of STIs and HIV.

How do I start to use LAM?

LAM **only works** if your:

- period has **not** returned (this means no spotting or bleeding for 2 months after you have had a baby) **and**
- baby doesn't go more than 4 hours between breastfeedings during the day or 6 hours at night **and**
- baby is under 6 months old **and**
- baby is fully-breastfed from birth (no other liquids/solids except vitamins, vaccines, or medicine)

If you don't have all 4 items listed above, you need to start another method of birth control.

LAM does **not** work if:

- you **have** had a period (any bleeding or spotting in the 2 months after you have had a baby)
- your baby goes longer than 4 hours during the day between breastfeedings or 6 hours at night between breastfeedings
- your baby is more than 6 months old
- your baby is no longer fully breastfed and you are giving pumped breastmilk, expressed breastmilk, or supplements like water, juice, baby formula, or baby food

What are the benefits of LAM?

- LAM works for up to 6 months after birth, if you are exclusively breastfeeding.
- It is effective right away.
- There are no added hormones that can affect your breastmilk.
- It is free and no birth control supplies are needed.
- It is easy and doesn't interrupt sex.

What are the disadvantages of LAM?

- Sometimes a woman may find it hard to breastfeed her baby at specific times.
- LAM is not an option for women who don't breastfeed.
- It can only be used for up to 6 months after you have your baby.

Did You Know

- You have the right to make the decision to have sex or not.
- Plan ahead and decide to protect yourself to lower your risk of pregnancy, STIs, and HIV.
- It is important to talk with your partner about how you can protect each other.
- You can get pregnant if you don't use LAM correctly.
- Think about getting **emergency contraception** to help prevent pregnancy if you think you have not followed LAM correctly.

Websites

www.myhealth.alberta.ca

www.sexualityandu.ca

www.teachingsexualhealth.ca

www.albertahealthservices.ca and search for Sexual and Reproductive Health

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link Alberta at 403-943-LINK (5465) in the Calgary area, 780-408-5465 in the Edmonton area, or 1-866-408-LINK (5465) toll-free.

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