

# Fertility Awareness-Based (FAB) Methods for Birth Control

## What are FAB methods?

FAB methods for birth control help prevent pregnancy by predicting when you are most likely to get pregnant (fertile time) so you can use another type of birth control (e.g., condoms) or not have vaginal sex during that time. There are many different FAB methods.

## How well do FAB methods work?

How well FAB methods work is hard to estimate because it depends on each person's cycle, the FAB method they use, and what type of birth control is used during their fertile time.

- With typical use (not following exact directions) it's about 76% effective.
- Combining FAB methods and using them consistently and correctly increases how well they work at preventing pregnancy.
- FAB methods don't protect you from sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or HIV.

FAB methods may **not** work and aren't recommended if you:

- have periods that aren't regular
- have recently had a baby
- have conditions that affect body temperature (e.g., fever, trouble sleeping and shift work)
- have just started having periods
- are breastfeeding
- are getting close to menopause
- have recently stopped a hormonal method of birth control
- have a lot of vaginal infections, which can make it hard to track your cervical mucus
- aren't comfortable with a higher risk of unplanned pregnancy

FAB methods require consistent tracking and careful planning. Talk with your health care provider to decide if FAB methods are right for you.

## How do I use FAB?

To use FAB methods, you need to have a good understanding of your menstrual cycle. Someone who has predictable periods has about 5-9 fertile days each month – these are the days when pregnancy can happen.

- To find out your fertile time, you need to know when you will release an egg (ovulate). Ovulation usually happens around 14 days before the start of your next period.
- Once you can predict when you're ovulating, you can predict your fertile time. Your fertile time includes from 5 days before and 1 day after ovulation. This is because sperm can live in your body for up to 5 days.
- In order for FAB methods to work, you must either use another type of birth control (e.g., condoms) or not have vaginal sex or during your fertile time.

## What types of FAB methods are there?

There are different types of FAB methods that you can use to track your cycle and help you know when you're ovulating.

<b>Calendar Method</b>	Tracking the length and timing of your menstrual cycle to help predict when ovulation will happen. This is not a very reliable FAB method on its own.
<b>Basal Body Temperature (BBT) Method</b>	Measuring your body temperature every morning before getting out of bed. There is a slight increase in temperature during ovulation.
<b>Cervical Mucous Method</b>	Monitoring changes in your vaginal discharge throughout your cycle. Discharge becomes clear, slippery, and stretchy mucous during ovulation.
<b>Symptothermal Method</b>	Combining the calendar method, BBT method, and cervical mucous method to improve accuracy.

Fertility monitors (e.g., ovulation predictor kits, electronic hormonal fertility monitors) can be used to improve FAB methods. There are also apps available to help you track your cycle, temperature, and cervical changes.

Get **emergency contraception** as soon as possible to help prevent pregnancy if you had vaginal sex without birth control (e.g., condoms) during your fertile time, or think you haven't followed FAB methods correctly.

## **What are the benefits of FAB methods?**

- They don't require hormonal medications or medical devices.
- They can help build body awareness.
- They provide a birth control option for people who have personal, religious, cultural, or health reasons for not using other types of birth control.
- They can help with fertility planning for people who are planning a pregnancy.

## **What are the disadvantages of FAB methods?**

- You have to keep track **every day** so you know exactly where you're at in your cycle.
- You need to have good communication with your partner(s). You'll need to talk about not having vaginal sex or using another method of birth control (e.g., condom) during fertile times.
- You can't use this method right away – you need to track your cycle for a few months to be able to predict your fertile time.

## **Where can I get more information?**

If you want to use FAB methods, you'll need to understand your unique cycle and fertility signs. Talk with your health care provider and ensure that you have the information you need to do it correctly. You can also find further information from qualified fertility awareness educators.

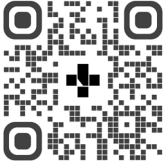
## **Did you know**

- You have the right to decide to have sex or not. Talk with your partner(s) about consent.
- There's an 85% chance of becoming pregnant within one year if no birth control is used for vaginal sex.
- Use a condom/barrier every time you have sex (oral, vaginal, anal). Condoms help prevent pregnancy, STIs, and HIV.
- You can lower your risk of HIV by taking an HIV prevention pill every day. Many Albertans can get it for free. Visit [www.prepalberta.ca](http://www.prepalberta.ca) to find out more.
- Transgender and gender diverse people who have a uterus can use hormonal birth control. It can help prevent pregnancy and make periods lighter and less painful.

## Websites

- [ahs.ca/srh](https://ahs.ca/srh)
- [ReadyorNotAlberta.ca](https://ReadyorNotAlberta.ca)
- [TeachingSexualHealth.ca](https://TeachingSexualHealth.ca)
- [myhealth.alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca)
- [sexandu.ca](https://sexandu.ca)

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information, call Health Link at **811**.



Scan for more information