

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SYMPTOTHERMAL METHOD

When well taught, understood and applied consistently and correctly (*perfect use*), the effectiveness of the Symptothermal Method is comparable to the contraceptive pills or the IUDs when it comes to avoiding pregnancies. It is actually more efficient than the condom, the diaphragm, and spermicides¹. With proper instruction, suitable follow-up and mutual support, a couple who follows the rules of the method has a probability of over 99% to avoid conception. Moreover, they can independently and effectively manage their fertility for the entirety of their lives.

SCIENTIFIC STATISTICS

In scientific documents, the effectiveness of all family planning methods is expressed as **unplanned pregnancy rates**.

Below are results from some specific clinical studies on the Symptothermal Method. Unplanned pregnancies can be categorized in two ways:

- pregnancies that occur even though the couples have applied the method carefully, consistently and correctly (**perfect use** or method-related pregnancy rates), and
- all unplanned pregnancies that occur, including the pregnancies resulting when the couples used the method incorrectly or inconsistently (**typical use** or general pregnancy rates)

Clinical studies of the Symptothermal Method used to avoid pregnancy

PREGNANCY RATES					
Ref.	Country	No. of couples	No. of cycles	Perfect use ¹	Typical use ¹
2	Germany	900	17 638	0.43%	1.79%
3	Canada	125	2 651	0.5%	5%
4	Belgium	58	940	0%	2%
5	France	626	6 740	1%	6%

Note: It is often quoted that natural methods have unplanned pregnancy rates of 20% or 25%. These figures come from old demographic surveys, which used questionnaires. People just stated they had used what they called *Natural Family Planning* or *rhythm*. No distinction was made between old and approximate methods and more recent evidence-based observational methods or whether the couple had had proper instruction and followed the rules of the method.

¹ TRUSSELL J, AIKEN ARA, MICKS E, GUTHRIE KA. in HATCHER RA *et al* (eds). *Contraceptive Technology* (21st revised edition), Ayer Company Publishers, New York, 2018, p. 100.

² FRANK-HERRMANN P, HEIL J, GNOTH C, TOLEDO E, BAUR S, PYPHER C, JENETZKY E., STOWITZKI T, FREUNDL G. The effectiveness of a fertility awareness based method to avoid pregnancy in relation to a couple's sexual behaviour during the fertile time: a prospective longitudinal study. *Hum. Reprod.* 22, 5: 1310-1319, 2007.

³ RICE FJ, LANCTOT CA, GARCIA-DEVESA C. Effectiveness of the Sympto-thermal Method of Natural Family Planning: an International Study. *Int. J. Fertil.*, **26**: 222-231, 1981.

⁴ De LEIAZOLA. Première phase d'une étude prospective d'efficacité du planning familial naturel réalisée en Belgique francophone. *J. Gynecol. Obstet. Biol. Reprod.*, **23** : 359-364. 1994

⁵ ÉCOCHARD R, PINGUET F, ÉCOCHARD I, DE GOUVELLO R, GUY M, GUY F. Analyse des échecs de la planification familiale naturelle. *Contracept. Fertil. Sex.* **2**, 4 : 291-296.1998.