

Differences between Natural Family Planning and Artificial Birth Control

[Note: Contraception/Artificial Birth Control = the use of mechanical, chemical, or medical procedures to prevent conception from taking place as a result of sexual intercourse.]

Natural Family Planning (NFP)

- Spouses give their whole selves to each other. Love is total self-gift.
- No harmful side effects.
- Low cost.
- NFP is not just a means of responsibly postponing pregnancy; it can also be used to ACHIEVE pregnancy since it pinpoints ovulation.
- Quickly reversible (from avoiding pregnancy to achieving pregnancy).
- Non-invasive.
- Charting for NFP provides information about reproductive health, including some causes of infertility.
- Protects future fertility.
- Is a shared method of family planning; fosters communication between the couple.
- Encourages awareness of one's body or natural bodily signs.

Artificial Birth Control (ABC)

- Spouses deliberately hold a part of themselves back from each other either chemically or through barriers.
- Side effects include: blood clots, stroke, high blood pressure, cancer, death, etc.
- Costs (sometimes high) involved for all types of ABC.
- ABC is only used as a means of avoiding pregnancy.
- Often not easily reversible.
- Often invasive.
- Often masks or hides information about reproductive health and infertility.
- Some methods are harmful to future fertility (e.g., sterilization, artificial hormones that can cause cancer in reproductive organs, etc.)
- Often falls on just the woman to utilize family planning; does not promote shared communication between the couple.
- Does not encourage awareness of one's body or natural bodily signs.

- Does not separate the unitive (love-giving) from the procreative (life-giving) aspects of sex.
- NFP is based on virtue and sexual self-mastery (because of abstinence during the wife's fertile time when avoiding conception), which are necessary for healthy marriages.
- Allows the natural functioning of the body; does not violate the body's integrity.
- NFP couples learn to express their love with a full repertoire of acts of tenderness and verbal expression, and demonstrate an appreciation for the presence of the other.
- Does not use an immoral means to the good end of responsibly spacing children (with prayerful discernment and an informed conscience).
- Allows every act of intercourse to be open to the creation of new life.
- NFP is never abortifacient.
- NFP accepts the woman's cycle, and thereby accepts dialogue, reciprocal respect, shared responsibility, and self-control.
- Respects the way God ordained conception to occur; does not interrupt or sterilize an act of intercourse.
- Separates the unitive from the procreative aspects of sex.
- Gives free reign to the temptation to make pleasure the dominant element in the couples' relationship, rather than virtue; encourages couples to think that sexual self-mastery is not necessary.
- Frustrates the natural functioning of the body; tries to "fix" something that does not need fixing (the healthy functioning of the reproductive system).
- Contracepting couples tend to concentrate on the genital dimension of spousal love (even unconsciously).
- Uses an immoral means to reach the end of spacing children.
- Blocks the openness to creation of new life during acts of intercourse.
- Some forms of contraception (e.g., the pill) can be abortifacient at times (killing a living human embryo by making the womb inhospitable).
- Contraception does not accept the woman's cycle, which is an integral part of her. This thereby can cause her to feel used and not respected.
- Deliberately interrupts, sterilizes, and works against (contra) conception; suppresses and manipulates fertility; involves a deliberate frustration of the act of intercourse and its end.