

Centre for the Advancement and Protection of the Rights of Vulnerable People (CAPRIGHTS-VP) is a registered non-governmental Organization committed to the advancement and Protection of the Rights of Vulnerable People. We are interested in the cause of women, children, the youth, the less privileged, vulnerable and marginalized communities.

In line with this mandate, we assessed an empowerment grant under Voice Nigeria for a project called 'Reclaim your future' which we implemented in Ikotun/Igando community, both in Alimosho local government area of Lagos State. This project aims at strengthening the capacity of the Community Women with skills, knowledge and opportunities that will enable them to reclaim their future particularly with respect to economic independence, and sexual & reproductive health rights.

To address these issues, we established a safe space Platform, where the women meet once a month to learn and understand family planning and its various method, how to make a better living, importance of savings and financial independence for women etc.. Within this platform, our rightsholders can express how they feel without being judged, mocked or condemned.

This guideline is one of the key outputs of this project and will remain our legacy for the rightsholders. We hope that it will guide the users properly in selecting the right family planning method for themselves.

You can support our projects through donations, funding, and collaborations and by providing feedback to us. We can be reached via the following channels:

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**CENTER FOR THE ADVANCEMENT AND PROTECTION
OF THE RIGHTS OF VULNERABLE PEOPLE**

GUIDELINE FOR FAMILY PLANNING

An Initiative of Centre for the Advancement and Protection
of the Rights of Vulnerable People (CAPRIGHTS-VP)

WITH SUPPORT FROM **VOICE** NIGERIA

Under the Reclaim your life Project

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Thank you.

Mrs Clara Kanu

Executive Director of CAPRIGHTS-VP

FAMILY PLANNING METHODS



Overview

The Global Strategy for Women's, Children's, and Adolescent Health and other major global programmes stress the importance of providing family planning services to all women and girls as a human right and a prerequisite to good health. Access to high-quality, cheap sexual and reproductive health services and information, such as a full range of contraceptive methods, is important for women, girls, and boys to realise their rights and stay healthy. Access to voluntary family planning and reproductive health services for all, including women, men, couples, and adolescents, promotes the health and well-being of individuals and can have positive economic, environmental, and social impacts on families and communities. This guide provides basic information on family planning, its various methods, its benefits, and women's general hygiene.

Sexual and reproductive health and rights of women



Reproductive health rights for women refer to the right of women to make informed decisions about their reproductive health, including access to information, services, and resources that enable them to exercise their right to have control over their own bodies and lives. These rights are recognized by international human rights law, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Reproductive health rights encompass various issues, including access to contraception, prenatal care, maternal health care, and prevention and treatment of sexually transmitted infections. They also include the right to education, information about reproductive health, and the right to make decisions about one's own body and sexual activity without coercion or discrimination.

Ensuring reproductive health rights for women is crucial for promoting gender equality, reducing maternal mortality and morbidity, and empowering women to make choices about their own lives and bodies. Therefore, governments, health care providers, and civil society organizations have a responsibility to respect, protect, and fulfil these rights for women.

What is family planning?



Family planning is the process of deciding how many children you want to have and when to have them. It involves the use of contraception and other methods to prevent unplanned pregnancies. It is an important aspect of reproductive health and can have significant impacts on the well-being of individuals, families, and communities.

Key aspects of family planning:

Understanding family planning, why it is important and the different methods available. It is important to consult with a healthcare provider to determine the best method for you. Overall, family planning is an important aspect of reproductive health that offers individuals and families the ability to control their family size and spacing. By understanding the different options available and consulting with healthcare providers, individuals can make informed decisions that are right for their unique circumstances.

1. Birth control options: There are many types of birth control methods such as pills, condoms, intrauterine devices (IUDs), implants, patches, and injections. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. Consider factors such as effectiveness, convenience, and potential side effects when choosing any birth control method.

2. Emergency contraception: In case of unprotected sex, emergency contraception can be used to prevent pregnancy. There are two types of emergency contraception - the morning-after pill and the copper intrauterine device (IUD).

3. Natural family planning: Some couples choose to use natural family planning methods to track ovulation and avoid sex during the fertile period. These methods include tracking basal body temperature, cervical mucus, and menstrual cycles.

4. Preconception planning: Preconception planning is important if you are planning to have a child. This includes visiting your healthcare provider for a check-up, taking folic acid, and avoiding harmful substances like tobacco and alcohol.

6. Sterilization: Sterilization is a permanent method of birth control. It involves surgical procedures like vasectomy for men and tubal ligation for women.

7. Prevention of sexually transmitted infections (STIs): Family planning methods do not protect against STIs, so it is important to use condoms to prevent the spread of infections.

8. Counselling and education: Counselling and education are important aspects of family planning. Healthcare providers can provide information on family planning methods, answer questions, and provide support for decision-making.

Why is family planning important?

Family planning can help individuals and couples make informed decisions about their reproductive health and future. By having control over when and how many children they have, individuals and couples can plan their lives and better provide for their families. Family planning can also help reduce maternal and infant mortality rates, and improve overall health outcomes for women and children.

Advantages of family planning

For Mother:

- Allows mother's body to rest from last birth thus promoting good health
- Allows mother to plan and utilize her time productively
- Removes the fear of unintended pregnancy
- Promotes mother's nutritional status
- Reduces maternal ill health and death.

For Father:

- Eliminates the fear of unwanted pregnancy and more mouths to feed
- Promotes father's social well being
- Allows father to plan for the future of the children

For Child:

- Reduces infant illness and death
- Promotes bonding with family
- Enjoys opportunity for better life

For Family:

- Enhances the family's nutrition
- Promotes economic growth
- Promotes education of children

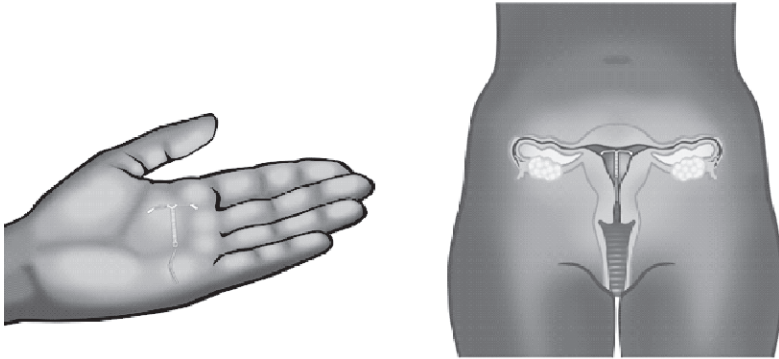
For Community:

- Allows community to plan and manage its resources effectively
- Discourages social delinquencies
- Promotes community unity
- Enhances appropriate use of resources
- Reduces infant and maternal illness and death
- Reduces teenage pregnancy and abortion
- Enables longer breastfeeding period

For Country:

- Promotes socio-economic development
- Improves quality of life

Specific Methods of Family Planning Intrauterine contraceptive device (IUD)



What is it? A small flexible plastic frame inserted into the womb to prevent pregnancy.

How does it work? It makes the womb unfavourable to the sperm or egg hence there can be no pregnancy

Hormonals Oral contraceptives (pills)



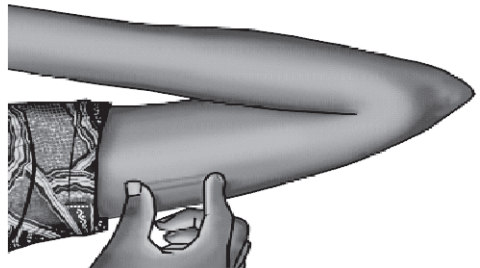
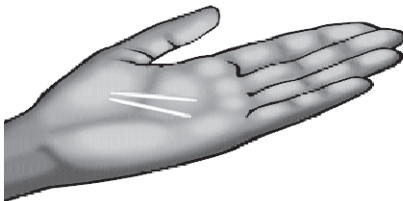
What are they? They are tablets taken orally to prevent pregnancy. How do they work? When taken regularly as prescribed, oral contraceptives will temporarily prevent the woman's body from releasing eggs from the ovaries. Also thickens cervical mucus making it difficult for sperm to pass through.

Injectables

What are they? Injectables stop ovulation and thicken cervical mucus, making it difficult for sperm to pass through



Implants

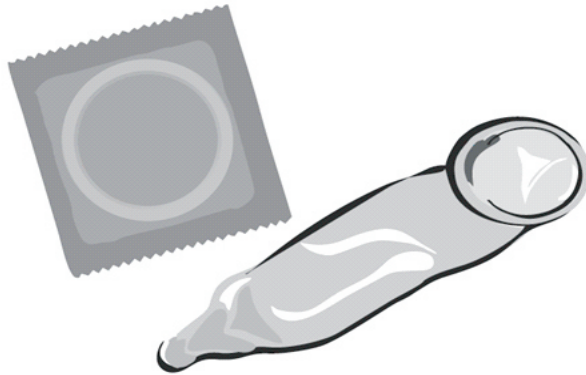


What are they? Implants are silicon tubes (capsules) containing synthetic hormones inserted under the skin of the upper arm.

How do they work?

- The contraceptive hormone is released continuously into the body of the woman.
- The implant mainly thickens cervical mucus, making it difficult for sperm to pass through it and also prevent the body from producing eggs on a temporary basis.

Barrier methods (Physical) Male condom



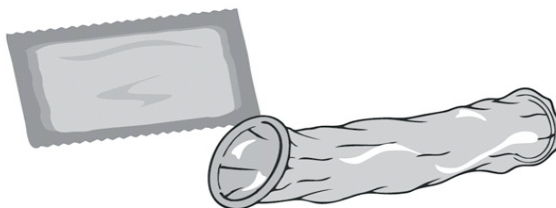
What is it?

It is a rubber sheath worn on an erect penis before and during sexual intercourse.

How does it work?

It prevents the man's sperm from getting into the vagina, hence there can be no pregnancy when used as instructed. It also prevents sexually transmitted infections.

Female condom



What is it? It is a plastic sheath that is inserted into the vagina before sexual intercourse.

How does it work?

It prevents sperm from getting into the womb so that there can be no pregnancy and prevents sexually transmitted infections.

Contraceptive diaphragm or cap

What is it?

It is a flexible cup-shaped object made of rubber and is inserted into the vagina to cover the neck of the womb.

How does it work? It prevents sperm from entering the womb so that there can be no pregnancy but does not prevent sexually transmitted infections.

Chemical spermicides

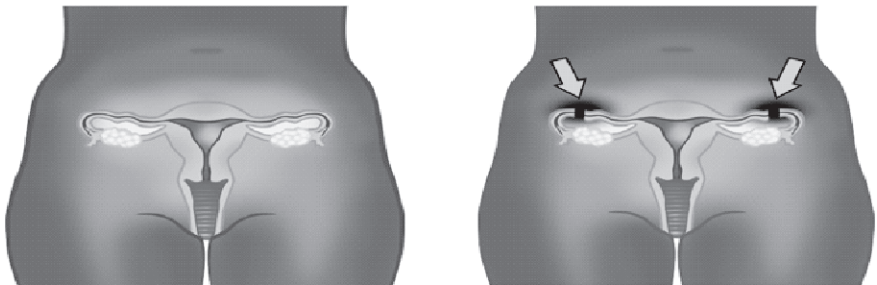
What are they? These are chemical agents (foaming tablets, suppositories, cream and jelly) that kill the sperm.

How do they work?

When a spermicide is inserted into the vagina before sex, it blocks the entrance of the womb and kills the sperm on contact. The tablet usually produces foam.

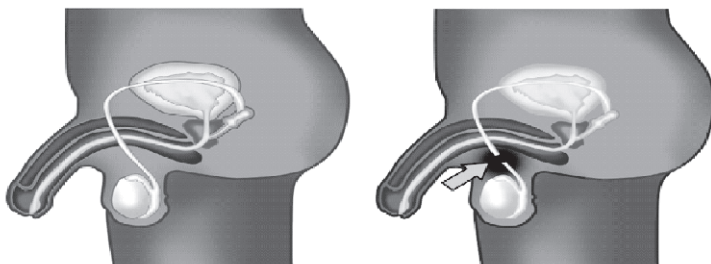
Voluntary surgical contraception

What is it? Surgical contraception is a non-reversible permanent method of family planning. It involves a minor operation on either of the partners.



How does it work?

Tubal occlusion – the tubes that carry the woman's egg into the womb are blocked (show the client the tubal ligation chart). The woman will continue to menstruate till she reaches menopause.



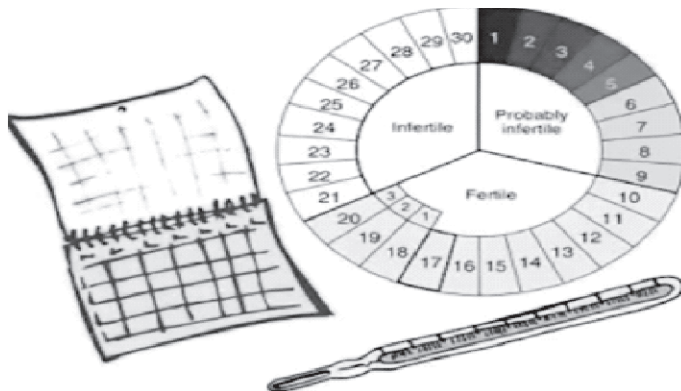
Vasectomy – the tubes that carry the sperm from the man's testes to the penis are blocked (show client the vasectomy chart). After the operation, the man will not be able to make a woman pregnant, but will continue to be sexually active and produce semen but without spermatozoa.

Fertility awareness-based methods

Abstinence

What is it? Abstinence is the complete avoidance of sexual intercourse. With calendar/rhythm, the couple decides not to have sexual intercourse when the woman is most likely to get pregnant. They count calendar days to identify the start and end of the fertile period. The number of days depends on the length of the previous menstrual cycles

Billings (cervical mucus) method



What is it? The Billings method involves the use of predictable changes in the pattern of cervical mucus to identify when a woman is likely to get pregnant. When a woman sees or feels cervical secretions, she may be fertile and couples using this method must avoid sexual intercourse during this period. The basis of this method is awareness of the mucus. This mucus can indicate whether you are fertile or infertile by its sensation and appearance. It is produced by cervix, which is the part of the uterus that joins with the vagina, and which is under the control of the reproductive hormones.

How do you observe the mucus?

1. Sensation; the mucus produces a sensation on the skin outside the vagina, this is more important observation.

2. Appearance; At anytime you feel the presence of the mucus you can note its appearance. It can be checked for clarity, slipperiness, blood staining, thickening, stickiness, blobs and lumps and changes in quantity.

Is the Billings Ovulation Method more suitable for some couples than others?

Yes, couples in a stable relationship usually find it easier to accept a method that requires commitment. It appeals most strongly to couples who are motivated to use a natural family planning method.

How do I know when I am fertile?

Your cervical mucus will indicate whether you are fertile or infertile by its characteristics and patterns (Sensation and Appearance)

Basal body temperature (BBT)

What is it? Basal body temperature involves checking a woman's resting body temperature increases slightly around the time of ovulation, when she could become pregnant.

Sympto-thermal method

What is it? Sympto-thermal method is the combination of calendar, temperature and mucus methods to determine when a woman is likely to get pregnant. When intercourse is avoided during this period, pregnancy is not likely to occur.

Lactational amenorrhoea method (LAM)

What is it? It is the use of breastfeeding as a temporary family planning method. When a woman breastfeeds a child exclusively (day and night) she may not ovulate. Therefore, she may not get pregnant. It provides natural protection against pregnancy and encourages couples to start making alternate family planning arrangements.

Withdrawal method

What is it? Withdrawal method involves deposition of sperm outside the vagina during sexual intercourse thus preventing sperm from getting into the womb.

What other family planning services are available?

In addition to contraception, family planning services may also include:

1. Counselling and education about sexual health and reproductive rights.

2. Screening for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and HIV.
3. Pregnancy testing and counselling.
4. Preconception counselling to help prepare for a healthy pregnancy.
5. Infertility counselling and treatment.

Hence, it's important to talk to a healthcare provider about your specific needs and concerns, and to access these services in a safe and non-judgmental environment.

Here are some other advantages and disadvantages of family planning:

Advantages:

1. Improved health outcomes: Family planning allows couples to have fewer children, which can reduce the risk of maternal and infant mortality, as well as the incidence of sexually transmitted infections.
2. Better economic opportunities: Family planning can also help families better manage their finances by allowing them to have fewer children and invest more resources in education and other economic opportunities.
3. Increased gender equality: When women have access to family planning, they can more easily pursue education and career opportunities, and have greater control over their own lives.

Disadvantages:

1. Ethical concerns: Some people may view family planning as a violation of religious or moral beliefs, particularly if it involves the use of contraceptives or other methods that prevent conception.
2. Access barriers: In some parts of the world, access to family planning services may be limited due to cultural, social or economic factors. This can make it difficult for couples to make informed decisions about their reproductive health.

3. Side effects: Some contraceptive methods can have side effects, such as weight gain, nausea or headaches, which can be uncomfortable or unpleasant for some people.

4. Misuse: Improper use or misuse of family planning methods can result in unintended pregnancies, which can lead to a range of negative outcomes, such as maternal and infant mortality, poverty, and limited economic opportunities.

Overall, family planning can have many benefits for individuals, families, and society as a whole. However, it is important to ensure that individuals have access to accurate information and a range of safe and effective contraceptive options, in order to make informed decisions about their reproductive health.

More on Natural Family Planning

Natural family planning (NFP) is a method of regulating fertility without the use of contraceptives. It involves monitoring a woman's menstrual cycle to determine when she is most likely to be fertile, and then either abstaining from sexual intercourse or using a barrier method of contraception during that time. NFP can be used both to achieve and to avoid pregnancy, and it can be an effective and low-cost option for couples who want to plan their families.

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Here are some key points to consider when using natural family planning:

1. Understand the menstrual cycle: In order to use NFP effectively, it is important to understand the menstrual cycle and how it affects fertility. The menstrual cycle is typically 28 days long, but can range from 21 to 35 days. Ovulation, or the release of an egg from the ovaries, typically occurs around day 14 of the cycle. However, this can vary from woman to woman and even from cycle to cycle.

2. Track fertility signs: In order to determine when ovulation is likely to occur, women can track various fertility signs, such as changes in cervical mucus, basal body temperature, and cervical position. These signs can be tracked using a fertility awareness method (FAM) chart or an app.

3. Use a backup method: Because NFP relies on abstinence or barrier methods during the fertile window, it is important to have a backup method in case of a mistake or unexpected changes in the menstrual cycle. Condoms are a popular choice for a backup method.

4. Seek education and support: Natural family planning can be a complex method to use effectively, and it is important to seek education and support from a qualified healthcare provider or a trained NFP instructor. These resources can help ensure that couples are using NFP correctly and can answer any questions that may arise.

5. Consider personal preferences: While NFP can be an effective method of family planning, it may not be the best choice for everyone. Couples should consider their personal preferences and lifestyle when deciding whether to use NFP or another method of contraception.

In summary, natural family planning is a method of regulating fertility that can be effective and low-cost for couples who want to plan their families without the use of contraceptives. By tracking fertility signs, using a backup method, seeking education and support, and considering personal preferences, couples can use NFP safely and effectively.

Some potential advantages of NFP include:

1. No side effects: Unlike hormonal contraceptives, NFP does not involve the use of drugs or devices, so there are no side effects associated with it.

2. Increased awareness of fertility: NFP requires couples to track the menstrual cycle and other fertility signs, which can lead to increased awareness of the woman's fertility and a better understanding of the reproductive process.

3. Improved communication: NFP involves regular communication between partners about fertility and sexual activity, which can lead to improved communication and intimacy in the relationship.

4. High effectiveness: When used correctly and consistently, NFP can be just as effective as other forms of contraception in preventing pregnancy.

5. Compatibility with religious or ethical beliefs: For couples who have religious or ethical objections to other forms of contraception, NFP may be a viable option.

It's worth noting that NFP requires commitment, diligence, and a willingness to learn and understand the method. It may not be the best option for everyone, and it's important to discuss your options with a healthcare provider to determine what method of contraception is best for you.

Personal hygiene

Personal hygiene is important for everyone, but it is especially important for women as they have different anatomy and are more prone to certain health issues. Here are some guidelines for personal hygiene for women:

1. Shower or bathe regularly: Daily showers or baths are recommended to keep your body clean and fresh. Use a mild soap or body wash and focus on areas that tend to sweat or collect bacteria, such as your underarms, groin, and feet.

2. Wear clean clothes: Change your clothes daily and avoid wearing the same clothes for more than one day in a row. This includes underwear and socks, which should be changed daily as well.

3. Use deodorant or antiperspirant: These products can help control body odour and reduce sweat. Choose a product that works well for you and apply it daily after showering or bathing.

4. Practice good oral hygiene: Brush your teeth at least twice a day and floss daily to keep your mouth clean and healthy. Consider using mouthwash for additional freshness.

5. Clean underwear: Always wear clean underwear and change it daily. Avoid wearing underwear that is too tight or made of synthetic materials.

6. Menstrual hygiene: Change your sanitary pads or tampons every 4-6 hours during menstruation. Wash your genital area with water and mild soap regularly.

7. Hand hygiene: Wash your hands regularly with soap and water, especially before and after using the toilet, handling food, or touching your face.

8. Dental hygiene: Brush your teeth twice a day and floss regularly to prevent gum disease and bad breath.

9. Hair hygiene: Wash your hair regularly with a mild shampoo to keep it clean and healthy.

10. Nail hygiene: Trim your nails regularly and keep them clean. Do not bite your nails or use them to pick at your skin.

11. Foot hygiene: Keep your feet clean and dry, especially between the toes. Wear clean socks and shoes that fit well.

12. Genital hygiene: Wash your genital area with water and mild soap regularly. Avoid using scented products or douching, as they can disrupt the natural balance of bacteria in your vagina and lead to infection.

13. Regular health check-ups: Visit your gynaecologist regularly for routine check-ups and to discuss any concerns you may have.

Overall, practicing good personal hygiene is important for your health and well-being. By following these guidelines, you can maintain cleanliness and freshness throughout the day and prevent a range of health issues.

Education for women

Education is important for everyone, but it can be particularly beneficial for women. Here are some advantages of education in women:

1. **Better job opportunities:** Education can open up a wider range of job opportunities for women, including higher-paying and more fulfilling careers. This can lead to increased financial independence and stability.

2. **Improved health:** Educated women are more likely to make informed decisions about their health and the health of their families. They are also more likely to seek out and access healthcare services, leading to better health outcomes.

3. **Increased empowerment:** Education can help women develop critical thinking skills, confidence, and self-esteem. This can lead to increased empowerment, allowing women to participate more fully in their communities and make positive changes in their lives and the lives of those around them.

4. **Reduced poverty:** Educated women are better equipped to break the cycle of poverty by earning higher incomes and providing for their families. This can lead to improved living conditions and greater economic stability.

5. **Improved gender equality:** Education can help break down gender barriers and promote gender equality. When women are educated, they are better able to challenge gender stereotypes and participate fully in society.

6. **Improved child development:** Educated women are more likely to have healthier and better-educated children. They are also more likely to make informed decisions about their children's education and well-being.

Overall, education is a powerful tool for women's empowerment and can lead to numerous benefits for both individuals and communities.

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