

Life Cycles



Winter 2009

The newsletter of the

Philadelphia Natural Family Planning Network (PNFPN)

NFP and Premenopause by Tara Plymouth

At the Family Life Office, we have received many calls over the past year by women having difficulty interpreting their NFP charts during the premenopausal period. This is a very important issue to many couples who are in their forties and fifties. Menopause is clinically defined by the permanent cessation of menstrual periods for one year. Half of all women experience menopause by around age fifty, but it can occur earlier or later. Premenopause is the time before menopause, beginning generally around age forty-three, when a woman's fertility starts to wind down gradually.

Some differences in the monthly cycle that women can expect during premenopause (and which sometimes make interpreting NFP charts difficult) include:

- Ovulation occurring early, late, or not at all in a cycle
- Mucus "patches" (one or more days of mucus, followed by dry days), due to fluctuating estrogen levels
- Longer or shorter periods or cycles
- Breakthrough bleeding (non-menstrual spotting in the middle of the cycle)
- Mucus quality and quantity decreasing
- A lower temperature rise after ovulation

All of these changes occur for several reasons: the ovaries and egg follicles don't respond to hormones as well; fewer follicles are present; the amount of hormones released may be less; and hormone levels may wax and wane. Also, each woman "has her own pattern of hormonal fluctuations, and each woman's symptoms are related to many variables within her life."

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Letter from the President

Dear Supporters of PNFPN,

Where did 2009 go? We are already in Advent, getting ready to celebrate the anniversary of the greatest birth ever to occur in the history of the world. A young Jewish virgin with an unexpected pregnancy said yes to God's will. She could have had an abortion—yet, she said yes to the will of God, and we have our Savior and Redeemer and an opportunity for salvation. Because of the state of our culture of death, we have over 4,000 abortions a day, over 50 million surgical abortions since 1973. What have we done? The root of this tree of death is contraception. This is what we are all about. Fighting the culture of death and trying to spread God's message of life and love through Natural Family Planning.

Next year's PNFPN conference will be held May 1, 2010, at Our Lady of Good Counsel Trinity Parish Center from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. **PLEASE SAVE THE DATE.** Our topic is "The Bitter Pill: The Truth about Hormonal Contraception." We will have two

keynote speakers, Brian Gail, author of *Fatherless*, and Dr. Angela Lanfranchi, director of the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute. We will also have Fr. Philip Bochanski, chaplain for the Philadelphia Catholic Medical Association, and Theresa Kuhar, R.N., along with me. We will explore the roots of this abortion tree and tell the truth about what the pill is doing to our culture. Please join us. Visit our website, www.pnfpn.org, for more information.

Also, let us give thanks for Our Lord and Savior for becoming man and to His mother Mary for saying yes to God's plan. Let us say yes to combat contraception and spread the truth about NFP.

God's Blessings to all,
Les Ruppertsberger, D.O.
NFP-Only Gynecologist

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The newsletter of the Philadelphia
Natural Family Planning Network (PNFPN)

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Life Cycles is a quarterly publication.
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Become a Member of PNFPN

In the past, the PNFPN existed solely through the generosity of a few people and never asked its members to pay dues. While we continue to believe that news and information regarding NFP in the Philadelphia region should remain free, our promotional efforts are severely limited without a source of income. Thus, we are asking our members to consider a yearly donation to assist our efforts in spreading the good news of NFP. We request \$15 for an individual membership, \$25 for a couple, and \$10 for a student. Free copies of *Life Cycles* will still be distributed to everyone on the mailing list, but those who donate will be eligible to vote for the executive board members each year. To make a much appreciated contribution, please send your name, address, and phone number with a check payable to PNFPN to P.O. Box 220, Jenkintown, PA 19046.

The "Net"works

NFP Classes and Introductory Sessions

READING, PA

JANUARY 12

Free introductory sessions of the Creighton Model FertilityCare™ System will be held at 7:00 p.m. at St. Joseph Medical Center, Bern Township Campus, 2500 Bernville Road. Please call Elisabeth Laskowski at (484) 332-9084 for more information and registration.

NORRISTOWN, PA

JANUARY 22

The Philadelphia Family Life Office will sponsor a class in the Sympto-Thermal method of Natural Family Planning at Mercy Suburban Hospital, 2701 DeKalb Pike. For more information or registration, please call (215) 587-5639.

YARDLEY, PA

FEBRUARY 3 • MAY 11

The Philadelphia Family Life Office will sponsor a class in the Sympto-Thermal method of Natural Family Planning at St. Margaret Church, 208 North Narberth Avenue. For more information or registration, please call (215) 587-5639.

NARBERTH, PA

MARCH 8 • APRIL 12

The Philadelphia Family Life Office will sponsor a class in the Sympto-Thermal method of Natural Family Planning at St. Margaret Church, 208 North Narberth Avenue. For more information or registration, please call (215) 587-5639.

Save the Date: May 1, 2010

THE BITTER PILL: The Truth about Hormonal Contraception

PNFPN annual conference featuring Brian Gail, author of *Fatherless* and Dr. Angela Lanfranchi, director of the Breast Cancer Prevention Institute

Our Lady of Good Counsel Trinity Parish Center
611 Knowles Avenue • Southampton, PA 18966

8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Fatherless by Brian J. Gail

A review by George Finnin

Normally I don't read novels, but this one was recommended by a friend. I picked it up and found it was hard to put down. By using fictional characters, Brian points out vulgarities in today's contraceptive culture and problems it causes. He shows many difficulties in how the Catholic Church tries to present the truths of contraception and Natural Family Planning. Through one of his fictional characters, he presents one of the best histories of the development of the Pill and its harmful side effects that I have read. The following is from promotional material:

"It is the searing journey to the center of conscience... In its pages we meet flesh and blood characters—noble and flawed, driven and seeking; each struggling to achieve the American Dream... discovering instead a uniquely American nightmare. How each confronts the reality of ethical and moral dilemmas—while struggling to balance faith, family and career—goes to the very heart of the Catholic experience in America in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century."

Visit www.omsoul.com/Fatherless.php to learn more.

PNFPN Directory

Included in this issue is a directory of people who are willing to be visible in supporting Natural Family Planning. When people sign up to be on the mailing list for *Life Cycles*, they are asked if they want their names listed. If so, they will be included in the directory. If your name is not listed and you would like it to be, please e-mail George Finnin at grfinnin@verizon.net.

A New PNFPN Web Page

A new web page has been added to the www.pnfpn.org website. It references many other web pages that contain information relative to NFP. It is a good place to look for "talking points" for telling others about the good news of Natural Family Planning. You can view the new page by going to the left side of the PNFPN website and clicking on the "Why not Contraception?" link. If you know of any other sites that should be included on this page, please e-mail them to grfinnin@verizon.net.

A view of NFP in the USA

By George Finnin

There is so much good stuff on the web, I find it hard to come up with words that haven't already been written. The following is from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' 2008 report on the state of NFP: www.usccb.org/prolife/issues/nfp/08profile.pdf

THE HARVEST IS SLIM:

"When ... the total number of marriages in the Church (196,420) is compared to the total number of individuals (13,655) that took part in a class of NFP instruction, it could be strongly inferred that less than 7% have taken the necessary steps to use NFP in their marriages. Given the fact that the latest data from the National Survey of Family Growth regarding current use of NFP among all U.S. women of reproductive age is only 0.2%, this suggests that currently most Catholic married couples are not using NFP."

BUT THERE IS HOPE:

"Seven dioceses and increasing numbers of individual priests/parishes require engaged couples to take a full NFP course of instruction before marriage. It is still too early to tell if this is a national trend."

HOWEVER, THERE ARE FUNDING PROBLEMS:

"Adequate funding remains the greatest stumbling block to successful diocesan NFP programs. Nationally, diocesan funding for NFP programs is meager at best." ... "Often, NFP funding is so limited that it is not identified as a specific line item in diocesan budgets. To correct this problem, an annual diocesan NFP program report should be required and NFP funding identified in departmental budgets."

WHICH LEADS TO:

"In conclusion, the basic pastoral question when examining diocesan NFP ministry is: Can couples who wish to be faithful to Church teaching on conjugal love and responsible parenthood readily get the NFP support they need? The answer to this fundamental question will determine how best to plan and support local diocesan NFP ministry."

The Philadelphia Natural Family Planning Network is trying to help couples discover the blessings of Natural Family Planning. Please send stories of your efforts to promote NFP to grfinnin@verizon.net.

NFP and Premenopause

Continued from front cover

The good news is, during the premenopausal time, NFP remains highly effective in avoiding pregnancy (for appropriately serious reasons), or in helping one to conceive. The key is that one must try to chart carefully every day, know how to interpret changes in one's fertility signs, and know who to contact for assistance. The Couple to Couple League (CCL) recently created a special premenopause NFP class and book, *The Art of Natural Family Planning, Premenopause Guide*. The book itself is an excellent guide for interpreting fertility signs during this time, and gives understandable explanations and graphics. It can be purchased from CCL at www.ccli.org; one can also search for local CCL premenopause classes on that site. Another very helpful resource is the newly revised book *Fertility, Cycles, & Nutrition* by Marilyn M. Shannon. It has a special chapter on pre/perimenopause and menopause, detailing common symptoms during this phase of life, and helpful suggestions and nutritional remedies.

Sometimes it is necessary to talk to a person versed in NFP, in order to interpret fertility signs during this time. At such times, one can call:

- One's NFP instructor
- The Archdiocese of Philadelphia NFP Office at 215-587-3516
- The Diocese of Camden NFP Office at 856-583-6120
- Or local doctor Lester Ruppensberger, D.O. at 215-750-6611

Also, some organizations can provide knowledgeable and helpful support:

- Couple to Couple League at 800-745-8252
- Creighton Model FertilityCare™ at <http://www.fertilitycarefriends.org/3.html>

Don't Forget the 2010 PNFPN Conference on May 1

Visit www.pnfpn.org for more information.

Life Cycles

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