

The Seven Standards Summary

ECOLOGICAL BREASTFEEDING AND NATURAL CHILD SPACING PROGRAM

Basic Principles

1. Frequent and unrestricted nursing is the primary factor in producing natural lactation amenorrhea and infertility. (Lactation amenorrhea is the absence of menstruation due to breastfeeding.)
2. Ecological breastfeeding (EBF) according to the Seven Standards almost always provides this frequent nursing and natural infertility. It is that type of baby care which follows the natural mother-baby relationship. It avoids the use of artifacts and mother substitutes; it follows the baby-initiated patterns. EBF is the norm and offers many built-in benefits, one of which is extended natural infertility. A lengthy postpartum amenorrhea is the norm.
3. The following Seven Standards help to ensure the frequent nursing.

The Seven Standards: Phase 1 of Ecological Breastfeeding

This phase almost invariably produces natural infertility as long as the program is complete.

1. Breastfeed exclusively for the first six months of life; don't use other liquids and solids, not even water.
2. Pacify or comfort your baby at your breasts.
3. Don't use bottles and don't use pacifiers.
4. Sleep with your baby for night feedings.
5. Sleep with your baby for a daily-nap feeding.
6. Nurse frequently day and night, and avoid schedules.
7. Avoid any practice that restricts nursing or separates you from your baby.

Phase 1 is the time of exclusive breastfeeding and thus usually lasts six to eight months.

The Six Standards: Phase 2 of Ecological Breastfeeding

- Phase 2 of EBF begins when your baby starts taking solids or liquids other than breast milk.
- You begin to give liquids when your baby shows an interest in the cup, usually after six months.
- Aside from Standard #1, the other Six Standards of Phase 1 will remain operative until the baby gradually loses interest in breastfeeding. Phase 2 is a situation in which the **frequency** and **amount** of nursing is 1) not decreased at all at first, and 2) lessened only gradually at baby's pace. Phase 2 is frequently longer than Phase 1 with regard to natural infertility **if** EBF continues with frequent and unrestricted nursing.

Return of Fertility

The First 6 Months. The *first 8 weeks postpartum* for the exclusively breastfeeding mother are so infertile that in 1988 scientists agreed that any vaginal bleeding during the first 56 days postpartum can be ignored for determining amenorrhea or fertility for the exclusively breastfeeding mother. This rule applies to the EBF mother.

During the *first 3 months postpartum*, the chance of pregnancy occurring is practically nil **if** the EBF mother remains in amenorrhea. Because of the above paragraph, this means the mother has no menstrual bleeding after the 56th postpartum day.

During the *next 3 months postpartum*, there is only a 1% chance of pregnancy **if** the EBF mother continues to remain in amenorrhea.

After 6 months. For the nursing mother there is about a 6% chance of pregnancy occurring prior to the first menstruation. This assumes no fertility awareness and unrestricted intercourse. This risk can be reduced to close to 1% through the techniques of systematic natural family planning—observing the signs of fertility and abstaining accordingly.

Natural Spacing by Breastfeeding Alone

About 70% of EBF mothers experience their first menstruation between 9 and 20 months postpartum. The average return of menstruation for EBF mothers in the North American culture is between 14 and 15 months. For those couples who desire 18 to 30 months between the births of their children, ecological breastfeeding will usually be sufficient.

Copyright © 1972, 1999, 2008 by Sheila Kippley, author of *The Seven Standards of Ecological Breastfeeding; Breastfeeding and Natural Child Spacing;* and *Breastfeeding and Catholic Motherhood* and co-author of *Natural Family Planning: The Complete Approach*. Permission is given to copy this sheet provided it is reproduced in full.

www.NFPandmore.org