

More than contraception



THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF WOMEN
USING STM FOR CONTRACEPTION IN
GERMANY

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Question



How do German women using the Sympto-Thermal Method (STM) for contraception motivate and experience its use?

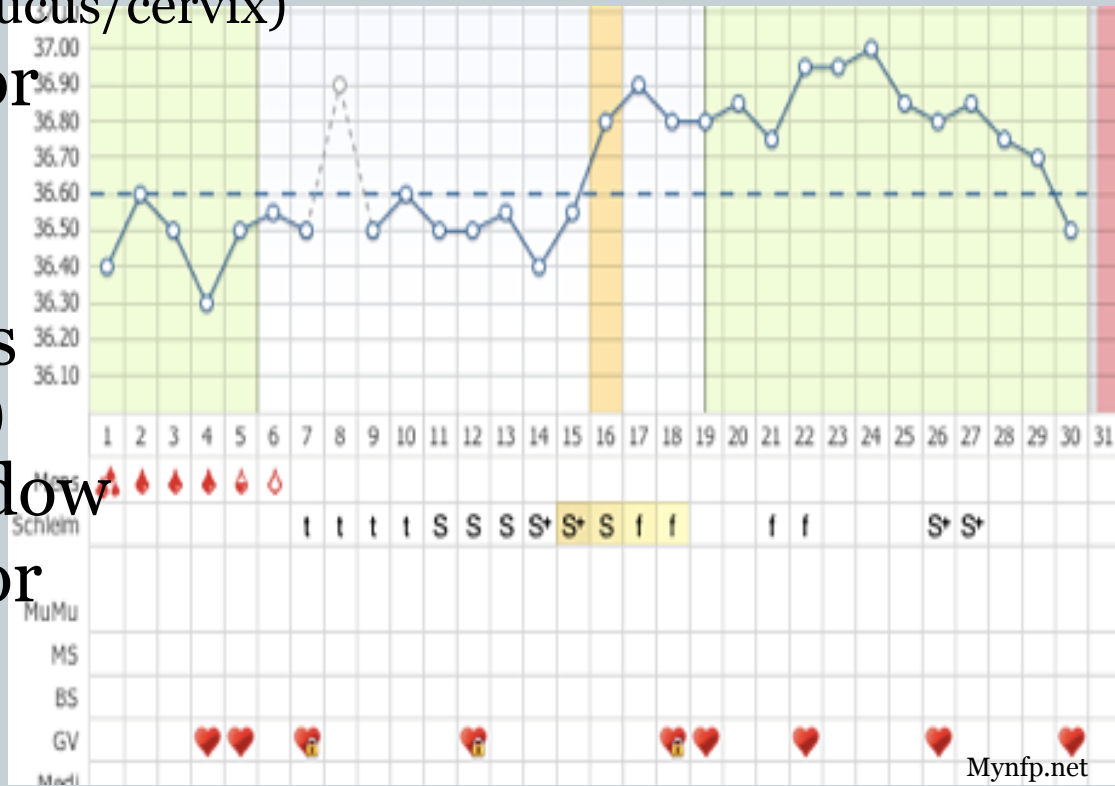


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What is STM?



- Fertility awareness-based Method
- Interpretation of bodily signs (temperature, cervical mucus/cervix)
- Knowledge used for different purposes
- Different versions with differing rules (e.g. NER and Sensiplan)
- During fertile window either abstinence or barrier method



How is this relevant?



- Contraception is a topic affecting everyone
- Right to make an informed choice
- Current situation:
 - hormonal methods most popular
 - Natural contraception is not given much attention
 - Sensiplan claims to be as safe as the pill
 - Germany highest rate of users
- Natural contraception accepted by the Catholic Church

Research questions



- How do German women using STM for contraception motivate and experience its use?
- How are their partners involved?
- In how far does the knowledge of STM have an impact on women's relationships with their bodies?
- What obstacles do women face in accessing STM?

Methods



- Qualitative Research, explorative study
- Sample through online appeal
- 17 Interviews
- Internet observation
 - On Internet platform nfp-forum.de and social network groups
- Main location Berlin, 10 weeks of fieldwork

Reasons for motivation



- **Health – Rejection of hormonal contraception**
 - Physical, mental and sexual health
- **Social awareness**
 - Sustainability, veganism etc.
- **Costs**
 - Cheaper than other methods
- **Religion (online observation)**
 - Catholic Church accepts STM





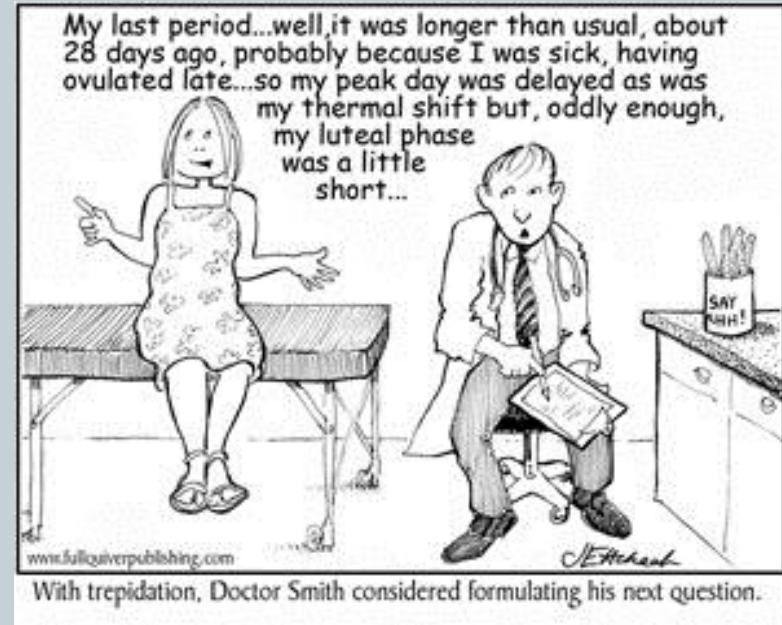
Women's experiences with STM

Pros and Cons

Pros



- **Partners:**
 - supportive
 - fertility is valued → sharing responsibility
- **Bodies:**
 - treated with respect
 - Menstruation as something necessary
 - Embodiment of knowledge
 - Knowledge experienced as empowering
 - Informed choice



Cons



- **Environment:**

- Prejudices
- Non-cooperative partner → too much responsibility
- Life circumstances

- **Body:**

- Lacking trust

→ STM is not the right contraceptive method for everyone

BUT: STM is still appreciated as body knowledge to monitor the menstrual cycle

Access to STM



Access to STM is limited and not equal for all German women

They:

- Need to take the initiative
- Have to challenge their doctor's opinion
- Need to acquire knowledge
- Need to overcome prejudices
- Have to trust themselves/ their bodies

Recommendations



- Increasing awareness of ‘safe’ natural contraception
- Improving sexual education
- Improving access for women → also from other social and cultural backgrounds
- Further research is needed e.g. among
 - Immigrants in Germany
 - Partners
 - Gynecologists
 - Women in other cultural contexts



Time for questions