

Fertility app can take place of the Pill, women told

By Cara McGoogan

A MOBILE app has been granted medical approval to be used as a contraceptive in a breakthrough that could spell the end for hormonal and intrusive birth control measures.

Natural Cycles is a fertility tracking app that tells users whether they are fertile by monitoring their temperature. It purports to be used by 150,000 people around the world, and has received approval from Tuv Sud, a certification body in Germany, to be marketed as a contraceptive device.

The certification by a body within the European Economic Area approves it for use in Britain.

It is the first time such technology has been classed as being effective in preventing pregnancy. Similar to the natural planning or "rhythm" method, the app tells users whether they can or cannot have sex without being at risk of pregnancy.

The app works in conjunction with a thermometer to determine whether users are fertile on any given day.

For it to work accurately, women must take their temperature every morning and enter it into the app. Because

of minor temperature fluctuations after ovulation, which increase by up to 0.45C, the app can tell the days users will be fertile.

It was created by Dr Elina Berglund, a Nobel Prize-winning physicist, and her husband Dr Raoul Scherwitzl, who designed an algorithm that can learn individual women's temperature fluctuations over time.

Natural Cycles gives users red and green days that indicate whether they are safe to have unprotected sex - if using it as a contraceptive.

However, fertility experts warned that medical approval does not mean that the app will prevent pregnancy.

"Women who wish to use fertility awareness-based contraception are advised to receive guidance from a qualified teacher to learn how to effectively monitor the different indicators," said Diana Mansour, from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists.

Dr Berglund, said: "Women around the world are interested in exploring effective non-hormonal and non-invasive forms of contraception, and now they have a new, clinically verified and regulatory approved option."

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