

**Did you know?
Natural Family Planning isn't your
mother's rhythm method!
Fertility Awareness Methods
of Family Planning:
A Review of Evidence, Guidelines and
Tools for Program Integration**



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE



IRH's Mission

To address the family planning needs of women and couples and enhance reproductive health programs worldwide through the development, testing, and integration of simple and effective Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM) into family planning programs.

FAM Project Focus

- Work with MOH and other organizations to integrate FAM into systems and expand its availability.
- Research and document SDM scaling up processes, experiences, and better practices.

Workshop Objectives

At this workshop, participants will be able to:

- Review basic information on Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM).
- Understand what is involved in FAM counseling and become familiar with simple tools for method provision.
- Learn about SDM and TDM newest guidelines and program resources available.
- Identify key issues in FAM integration.

Why develop new FAM?

- Very low use of highly effective but more complex natural methods.
- Significant use periodic abstinence yet very poor understanding of fertility in general population.
- Significant unmet need for family planning.
- FAM can contribute to efforts to reduce the gap between contraceptive commodity needs and donor capacity.

IRH's context for FAM

FAM in the context of :

- Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancies (HTSP)
- Informed choice in family planning



Healthy Timing and Spacing of Pregnancies

After a live birth:

- Couples can use an effective family planning method of their choice, continuously for at least 2 years before trying to become pregnant again.
- The SDM and TDM can offer women and couples over 95% protection from pregnancy when the methods are used correctly.

[HTSP Pocket Guide](#)

Informed Choice

- Offering FAM helps programs reach new clients.
- FAM helps expand options for women who want to use a natural method.
- Simple FAM are feasible to integrate in a variety of programs.
- FAM are effective when used correctly.



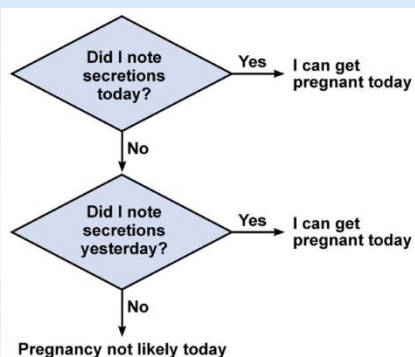
Fertility Awareness Methods (FAM)

- Identify “fertile window” (days intercourse can result in pregnancy)
- Use one or more “indicators” to identify beginning and end of fertile window
- Users of FAM
 - monitor indicators to identify fertile window
 - avoid unprotected intercourse on fertile days

Two Simple Fertility Awareness Methods

The days each method considers fertile:

TwoDay Method



The woman considers herself fertile if she notes secretions of any type that day or noted them the day before.



The woman considers herself fertile on days 8-19 of the cycle

Efficacy Studies SDM and TDM

- Multi-site prospective studies
- Services provided through existing programs
- Clients followed monthly for 13 cycles



Failure Rate

Pregnancies for every 100 woman-years	Correct use	Typical Use
SDM*	4.8	12.0
TDM**	3.6	13.7

* Source: Arévalo et al. Contraception, 2002

**Source: Arévalo et al. Fertility & Sterility, October 2004

Contraceptive Failure of User-Directed Methods

% of women who became pregnant during 1st year of use

	Correct Use	Typical Use
No Method	85	85
Spermicides	18	29
Diaphragm	6	16
Condom	2	15
OC	.3	8
Standard Days Method	5	12
TwoDay Method	4	14

Standard Days Method

- Identifies days 8-19 of the cycle as fertile
- Is appropriate for women with menstrual cycles between 26 and 32 days long
- Helps a couple prevent pregnancy by knowing which days not have sex
- SDM is used with CycleBeads®, a color-coded string of beads that help women track their cycle days to know when they are fertile.

CycleBeads®



How Is the Standard Days Method Offered to Clients?

What is Involved in SDM Counseling?

- **Screening** – Help client determine if the SDM is appropriate for her.
- **Teaching** – Provide information and instructions to use the SDM correctly.
- **Supporting** – Explore and discuss couple issues and support correct method use.

Who Can Use the Standard Days Method® (SDM) Screening Checklist - Initial Visit

A woman can use the SDM if she meets **BOTH** of these conditions:

- She has most cycles between 26 and 32 days long, and
- She and her spouse can abstain from sex on the fertile days.

Determine Whether the SDM is Appropriate for the woman

1 Are her periods about a month apart (cycles between 26 and 32 days)?

Ask: ● Do your periods usually come when you expect them?

● Do your periods usually come about once a month?

Periods that usually come about once a month indicate her cycles are between 26 and 32 days.

● When was the first day of your most recent period?

If the woman knows the first day of her last period and confirms her periods come about once a month, she can start using the SDM immediately.

If the woman does not know the first day of her last period, she will have to wait to start the method.

2 Can she and her spouse avoid unprotected sex on the fertile days?

Couples who want to avoid pregnancy must abstain from sex on the fertile days.

How to Use CycleBeads®

NFP Teacher Cue Card

CycleBeads are based on the Standard Days Method (SDM), a natural family planning method that is more than 95% effective when used correctly.

A woman can use this method if her cycles last between 26 and 32 days. Women who have their periods about once a month have cycles in this range.

CycleBeads help a woman and her spouse know when to abstain from sex to prevent a pregnancy.

CycleBeads represent the menstrual cycle. Each bead is a day of the cycle.

The WHITE beads represent days when a woman **CAN GET PREGNANT**.

The DARK BROWN bead helps to know if her cycle is too short.

The RED bead marks the first day of the period.

The BROWN beads represent days when pregnancy is unlikely.

When can a woman who meets the eligibility criteria start using CycleBeads?

● If she can remember the day her last period started, she can start using CycleBeads immediately.

● If she does not remember the date her last period started, she can begin using CycleBeads when she has her next period.

How to Use CycleBeads

On the first day of your period move the ring to the RED bead. Also mark that day on your calendar.

Every morning move the ring to the next bead. Always move the ring in the direction of the arrow. Move the ring even on days when you have your period.

When the ring is on a BROWN bead you can have sexual intercourse. These are days when pregnancy is very unlikely.

When the ring is on any WHITE bead, use a condom or avoid sex to prevent pregnancy. These are days when you can get pregnant if you have unprotected sex.

The day your next period starts, move the ring to the RED bead again. Skip over any remaining beads. Your period signals that a new cycle has started.

Be sure your cycles are in range.

● If you start your period before you put the ring on the DARK BROWN bead, it means your cycle is less than 26 days.

● If you have not started your period by the day after you put the ring on the last BROWN bead, it means your cycle is longer than 32 days.

If more than once in a year your cycle is shorter than 26, or longer than 32 days, this method will not work for you. See your NFP teacher.

If you forget whether you moved the ring, check in your calendar when your period began. Count the days since your period began and move the ring the same number of beads starting with the RED bead.



Screening

Who Can Use the SDM?

- Women with cycles 26 to 32 days long
- Couples who can avoid unprotected intercourse on days 8 to 19



The SDM does not protect against STIs, or HIV/AIDS

Screening to See if the SDM is Appropriate for the Woman

- Is her cycle between 26 and 32 days long?
- Ask simple questions to assess cycle length and regularity:
 - Whether her period comes about once a month
 - Whether it usually comes when she expects it
 - When her last period started

Criteria for Starting the SDM

Date of the last period known	Start immediately
Date of last period unknown	Start on first day of next period

Criteria for Starting the SDM

(Special Circumstances)

Postpartum/breastfeeding

Wait until for 4 periods

Start after 2 most recent are about a month apart

3-month Injection

Wait 90 days after last injection

Start after 2 most recent periods are about a month apart

OC, patch, implant, EC,
IUS, miscarriage or abortion

Menses prior to using any of these methods came about once a month

Wait to complete for three periods and most recent two were about a month apart

Screening to See if the SDM is Appropriate for the Couple

- Can the couple abstain from intercourse during the fertile days?



Teaching

How to use the SDM

- Teach client how to use the SDM with CycleBeads
- Confirm client knows how to use the method and when to return to the provider



Supporting the couple

During counseling:

- Encourage women to discuss SDM use with their partners
- Engage client in a discussion on how she/partner will handle fertile days
- Identify potential problems and solutions
- Role play talking with her partner
- Offer to talk with her partner



**BE SURE SHE
LEAVES WITH A
PLAN!**

When to contact the provider

- If she has sex on a white bead day.
- If her period starts before the dark brown bead (cycle shorter than 26 days)
- If her period has not started the day after moving the ring to the last brown bead (cycle longer than 32 days)
- If her period has not returned and thinks she might be pregnant
- If she wants to use another method

SDM

What have we learned

- Women of all educational levels can learn SDM
- It can be offered in a 20 min. counseling session.
- Providers' attitudes toward the SDM improve with training and experience.
- The SDM can be taught in clinic and community settings.
- Involving men increases method satisfaction and continuation.
- Women who use the SDM are far more likely to use condoms in conjunction with the method than users of other non-barrier methods.

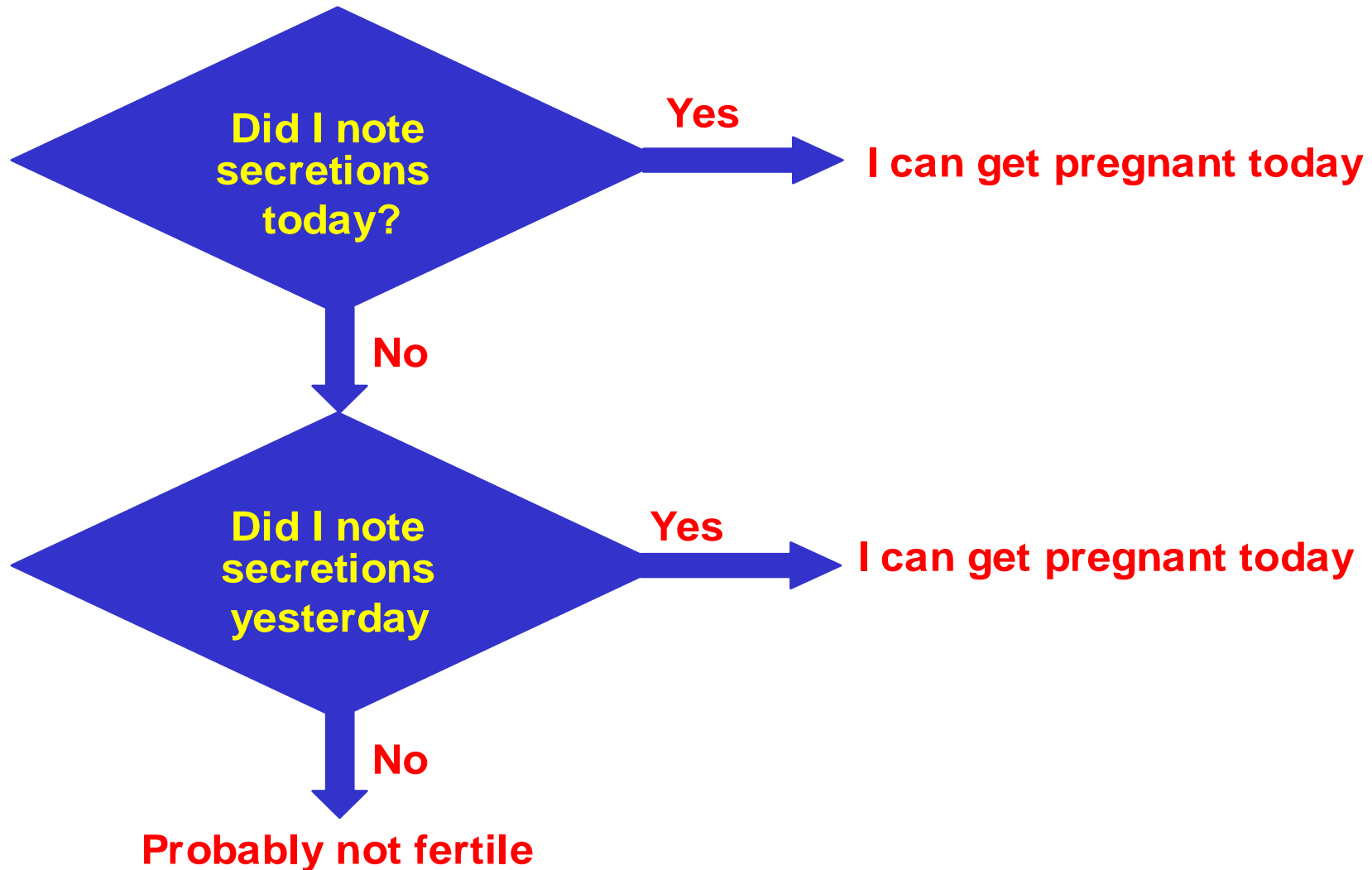
Questions?



TwoDay Method

- Uses cervical secretions as the indicator of fertility
- Women check everyday for the presence of secretions
- If a woman notices any secretions today or yesterday, she considers herself fertile today and avoids unprotected sex today to prevent pregnancy.

Two Day Method



How Is the TwoDay Method Offered to Clients?

What is involved in TDM counseling?

- Screening for method eligibility
- Explaining basics of menstrual cycle
- Discussing secretions
- Teaching method use and recording observations
- Explaining when to return to provider

Screening

Who can use the TwoDay Method?

- Women with cycles of any length
- Women with normal secretions
- Women willing to check for secretions
- Couples who can use condoms or abstain several consecutive days each cycle

Screening Checklist – Eligibility Criteria

Healthy Secretions

1 Are the woman's secretions healthy?

no

Ask the user:

- Have you ever noticed secretions? Have you noticed them recently?
- What do they look like?
- Have you ever had pelvic pain or foul smelling or itchy secretions?

Daily Observation

2 Will the woman be able to pay attention to her secretions several times a day, everyday?

no

Ask the user:

- Will you remember to check your secretions every day?
- Will you be able to check several times a day?
- Will you mark in your client card if you had them or not?

Couple in agreement

10 Does the couple want to avoid pregnancy at this time?

no

Ask the user:

- Are you able to discuss openly with your partner about not getting pregnant at this time?
- Have you agreed that it is important not to get pregnant right now?
- Have you discussed using a family planning method now?
- Have you agreed to use a natural method?

Handling fertile days

11 Can the couple avoid unprotected sex during the fertile days?

no

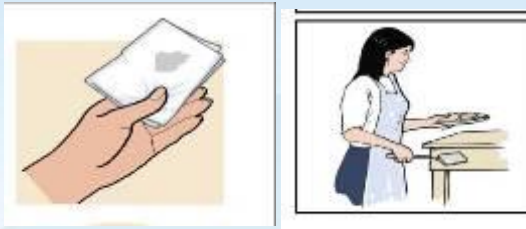
Ask the user:

- How would you and your partner feel about not having unprotected sex for several days in a row?
- What do you think you will do to avoid unprotected sex on your fertile days?
- Can you talk openly with your partner about when you want to have sex and when to avoid it?

Teaching Method Use

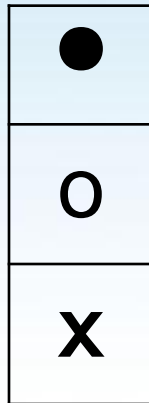
Three Steps to Using TDM

1



Identify
secretions

2



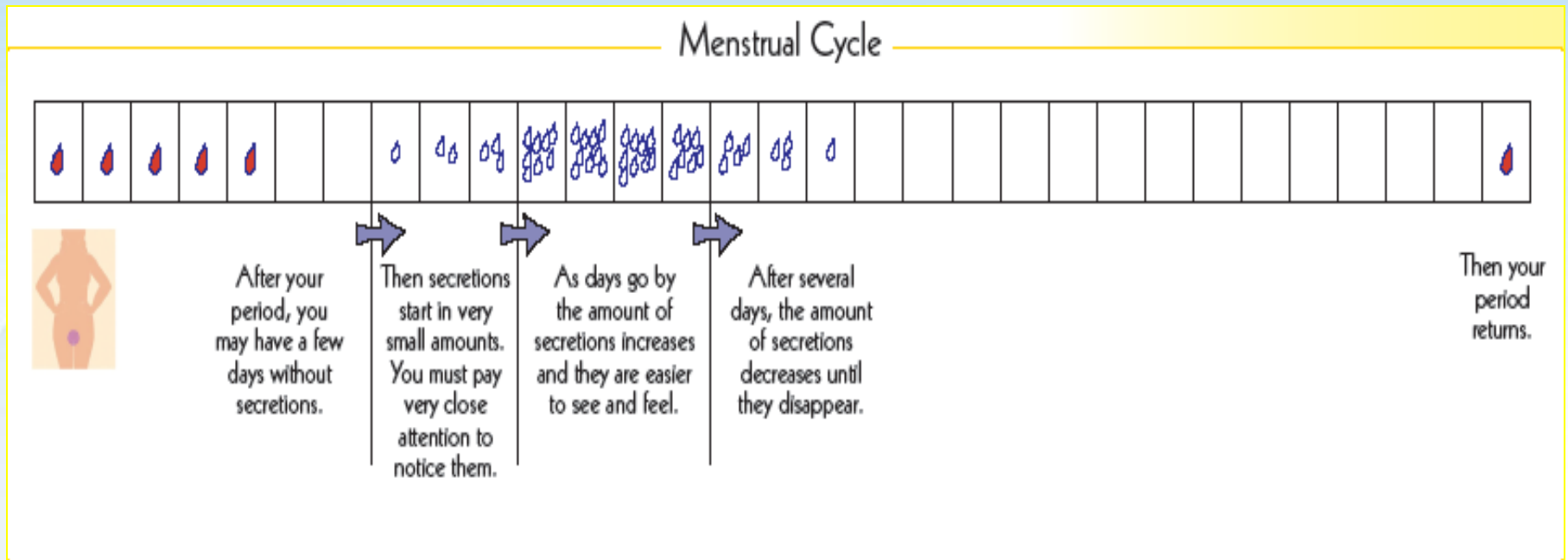
Ask herself if she
had secretions and
record observation.

3



Determine and
decide if she can
or cannot have
sex today.

How secretions look



How to notice secretions

SEE or TOUCH



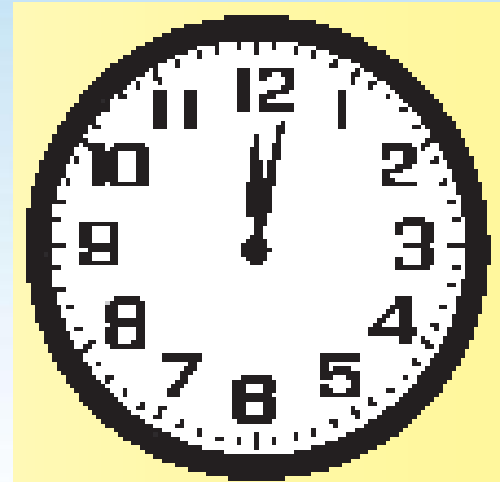
FEEL



When to check for secretions

Pay attention
to your secretions

- At least twice a day
- In the afternoon and evening



Date your period starts

Look for the day of the week you start using the method and begin marking on that day.

Mark:

- ☒ the days you have your period
- ☐ the days you do not have secretions
- ☒ the days you have secretions

Remember to mark every night before going to bed.

When can you get pregnant?

- ☒ Pregnancy is likely if you had secretions (X) today OR yesterday.
- ☐ Do not have sex today.
- ☐

When is pregnancy unlikely?

- ☐ Pregnancy is unlikely today if you are on your period or if you did not have secretions today AND yesterday.
- ☐
- ☐

Begin marking a new card when your period returns or you have completed this card.

Mon	
Tue	
Wed	
Thur	
Fri	
Sat	
Sun	
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Tue	
Wed	
Thur	
Fri	
Sat	
Sun	
Mon	
Tue	
Wed	
Thur	
Fri	
Sat	
Sun	
Mon	
Tue	
Wed	
Thur	
Fri	
Sat	
Sun	
Mon	
Tue	
Wed	
Thur	
Fri	
Sat	
Sun	

Recording Observations

- Mark the card every night
- Decide if you are fertile today
- Avoid unprotected sex if you are fertile today.
- If you forget to check secretions, consider yourself fertile today.

When to contact the provider

- If she has difficulty determining whether or not she has secretions
- If she has difficulty avoiding unprotected sex during the fertile days
- If she has secretions for less than 5 days
- If she has secretions for more than 14 days
- If her period has not returned and thinks she might be pregnant
- If she needs a new client card.

TwoDay Method

What have we learned?

- Women want to know about their bodies
- Women are comfortable touching themselves
- Women are able to notice if they have secretions
- Couples are able to avoid unprotected intercourse on fertile days

Questions?



Guidance Documents

- IPPF Medical Bulletin – 2000, 2003
- IRH Reference Guide – 2002
- WHO Medical Eligibility Criteria – 2002, 2004
- WHO Selected Practice Recommendations -- 2004
- Contraceptive Technology - Contraceptive Technology – 2004
- USAID Global Health Technical Briefs – 2004
- Pocket Guide to Managing Contraception – 2004
- Pop Report (New Contraceptive Methods) – 2005
- WHO FP Decision-Making Tool - 2005
- WHO Global Handbook for Family Planning – 2006
- Pop Council Balanced Counseling Strategy – 2006



Albania
Angola
Armenia
Azerbaijan
Bangladesh
Benin
Bolivia
Burkina Faso
DR Congo
Ecuador
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Ghana
Guatemala

Haiti
Honduras
India
Kenya
Malawi
Mauritius
Mozambique
Nicaragua
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Romania
Rwanda

Senegal
Tajikistan
Tanzania
Timor Este
Turkey
Uganda
Ukraine
United States
Zambia



Implementing the FAM through partnerships

- ADRA
- BBC Education Trust
- CARE
- CEDPA
- Chemonics
- CRS
- EngenderHealth
- FHI
- Futures Group
- Global Health Council
- INTRAHealth
- IPPF
- Jhpiego
- JHU/CCP
- JSI
- MercyCorps
- MSH
- Pathfinder
- Plan International
- Population Council
- Project Concern
- Project Hope
- PSI
- Save the Children
- UNFPA
- URC
- USAID
- WHO

Essential Steps

Process for Integrating the Standard Days Method into Services: Essential Steps

Benefits of offering the Standard Days Method

The Standard Days Method (SDM), developed by the Institute for Reproductive Health (IRH) at Georgetown University, is an easy-to-teach and use fertility awareness-based method of family planning that is 95% effective when used correctly. The SDM is offered in conjunction with CycleBeads, a simple device consisting of color-coded beads to help users easily monitor their fertile and infertile days. It has been proven to be acceptable to providers and couples, and is currently being offered by ministries of health, NGOs, and faith-based and community-based organizations in more than 20 countries worldwide. Programs adding SDM to their family planning and reproductive health services benefit by:

- Addressing unmet need, particularly among hard-to-reach and under-served populations;
- Attracting new family planning users;
- Improving contraceptive prevalence;
- Offering women increased family planning options;
- Increasing the participation of men in family planning; and
- Controlling recurring commodity costs.

Steps in Integrating the SDM

Programs need to undertake a number of steps to ensure that the SDM is successfully introduced and made a regular part of the service delivery system. These actions include:

- Training providers on how to screen and counsel clients;
- Building SDM into the on-going supervision system;
- Promoting the SDM and providing information about it in the community to both women and men who are potential SDM users;
- Ensuring that CycleBeads are available where services are offered;
- Collecting data on SDM clients and services for reporting and management purposes; and
- Creating a supportive environment to facilitate sustainability.

Training and supervising providers

Training providers is a first step in building capacity to offer the SDM. Training helps ensure that providers have knowledge about the method and skills to screen and counsel clients in how to use it. Because the SDM can be offered by clinically-trained providers such as nurses and doctors, as well as by community-based health workers, who may have less experience in counseling, the training approach needs to match the needs of the trainees. Options for training staff include:

- ▶ Distance learning approaches can provide training in the SDM to a large number of providers in a cost-effective way. Online training for providers with computer access can be completed in less than 2 hours and self-paced to meet the learner's schedule.
- ▶ In Guatemala, a self-study manual for training health care professionals in the SDM is helping minimize the costs associated with classroom training and the time providers spend in the classroom and away from services.

- One-day training covering information about the method and practice in SDM counseling primarily for providers with limited family planning counseling skills or experience;
- Four-hour workshop for health and family planning providers with counseling skills and experience;
- Pre-service training for medical, nursing and midwifery students;
- Computer-based instruction for experienced providers with access to computers is available online; and
- Self-study training for health care professionals.

Supervisors can play an important role in monitoring and supporting providers in offering the method correctly. Thus the SDM should be incorporated into on-going supervision systems. The SDM Knowledge Improvement Tool (KIT) supports supervision by identifying and assessing provider skills essential to quality SDM services.

Increasing awareness of the SDM

Women and men need to know about the SDM and its characteristics to assess whether it would be an appropriate option for them. Providers, policymakers and other stakeholders also need to know about the method and where to obtain more information about it. Approaches for providing this information to the public include:

- Placing information about the SDM in public service advertisements or programs on radio or TV and in newspapers and popular magazines;
- Including displays about the SDM in health fairs and community events;
- Incorporating the SDM into clinic posters and materials, waiting room videos and client brochures; and
- Including information about the SDM in communication strategies with a wide variety of stakeholders.

Assuring the availability of CycleBeads

The CycleBeads Instructional device, with an estimated product life of more than two years and an estimated annual cost of US\$0.75, can help programs reduce the recurring costs of contraceptives.

- CycleBeads are available from Cycle Technologies, the distributor, and USAID-supported programs can purchase them at a negotiated price. To order them, contact info@cyclistechnologies.com or use the electronic order form listed under Resources Materials on page 2;
- Donors or ministries can be asked to cover the costs of CycleBeads,

▶ A mass media TV campaign in Ecuador promoting the SDM resulted in substantial increases in awareness and inquiries among the target audience.

▶ Electronic media, such as the USAID E-learning Center, can be a tool for engaging and informing mission officials about the SDM.

▶ In Bolivia, PROSALUD, a social marketing organization, is managing the procurement and distribution of CycleBeads for both the government and NGO sector.

Where Can Clients Get **CycleBeads**?

www.cyclebeads.com

www.irh.org

Where Can Clients Get **TDM cards**?

www.irh.org

Where to find more resources?

[K4Health-SDM Toolkit](#)

Plan or Prevent Pregnancy Naturally



For More Information

- Register for on-line training
- Answer “frequently-asked questions”
- Down-load published papers, materials
- Link to related sites

www.irh.org

Thank You!

