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
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.

**Standard Days Method**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pregnancies for every 100 woman-years</th>
<th>Correct use</th>
<th>Typical Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SDM*</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TDM**</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* 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 1\textsuperscript{st} year of use

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Correct Use</th>
<th>Typical Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No Method</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spermicides</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaphragm</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condom</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OC</td>
<td>.3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Days Method</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TwoDay Method</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Contraceptive Technology, 18\textsuperscript{th} edition, 2004
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 to 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.
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.
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of the last period known</th>
<th>Start immediately</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date of last period unknown</td>
<td>Start on first day of next period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Criteria for Starting the SDM
*(Special Circumstances)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Timing Requirements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 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

Did I note secretions today?

Yes
I can get pregnant today

No

Did I note secretions yesterday?

Yes
I can get pregnant today

No

No

Probably not fertile
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

Menstrual Cycle

After your period, you may have a few days without secretions.

Then secretions start in very small amounts. You must pay very close attention to notice them.

As days go by, the amount of secretions increases and they are easier to see and feel.

After several days, the amount of secretions decreases until they disappear.

Then your period returns.
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
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

- 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
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-use and use fertility awareness-based method of family planning that is 95% effective when used correctly. The SDM is offered in conjunction with CycleBear, a simple device consisting of cotton-covered 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 underserved 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 their service delivery system. These actions include:

- Training providers on how to screen and counsel clients;
- Building SDM into the ongoing supervision system;
- Promoting the SDM and providing information about it to the community to both women and men who are potential SDM users;
- Ensuring that CycleBear is 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 medically trained providers, 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 trainers. 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 to ensure quality with the classroom training and the time providers spend in the classroom and away from services.

Assuring the availability of CycleBear
The CycleBear, a plastic ring loaded with hormone that is inserted into the cervical canal, can help couples prevent pregnancy. It can be inserted at any time during the cycle and removed at any time, allowing for flexible use. In Bolivia, PROSALUD, a social marketing organization, is managing the procurement and distribution of CycleBear for both the public and NGO sector.

- CycleBears are available from Cycle Technologies, the distributor, and USAID-supported programs can purchase them at a negotiated price. To order them, contact Hires@cycletechnologies.com or use the electronic order form listed in Resources and Materials on page 2.
- Donors or ministries can be asked to cover the costs of CycleBears.
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”
- Download published papers, materials
- Link to related sites

www.irh.org
Thank You!