



CycleBeads[®]

Description

CycleBeads[®] are a color-coded string of beads that help a woman use the Standard Days Method[®], a clinically tested natural method of family planning that enables women to manage their own fertility. CycleBeads work for women with periods 26 to 32 days apart. Using CycleBeads, a woman can track her menstrual cycle, identify the days when unprotected intercourse is likely to result in pregnancy, and monitor her cycle length. She either uses a barrier method or abstains on her potentially fertile days—identified as days 8–19 of the menstrual cycle—to avoid pregnancy.

A woman can use CycleBeads by placing the ring on the RED bead on the first day of her period. She moves the ring one bead each day, even on the days when she has her period. She abstains or uses a condom when the ring is on any WHITE bead if she does not want to become pregnant. She can have unprotected sex when the ring is on any BROWN bead, as she is not likely to get pregnant on those days. She needs to move the ring to the RED bead again when her next period starts, skipping over any remaining beads.

Efficacy

Research has shown that the Standard Days Method is more than 95 percent effective with correct use (condoms or abstinence during days 8–19 of the menstrual cycle), and more than 88 percent effective in typical use¹, similar to a number of other user-directed methods². The Standard Days Method does not require special equipment, facilities, or costly commodities. Thus, it can be offered through a wide variety of programs without significant additional resources. The Standard Days Method provides two couple-years of protection. It is included in numerous documents of the World Health Organization, the US Agency for International Development, International Planned Parenthood Federation, and Contraceptive Technology.^{3,4,5,6}

Current program/sector use

The Standard Days Method and CycleBeads have been introduced in over 38 countries and have been successfully integrated into many existing family planning programs and community networks, resulting in approximately 600,000 users worldwide. Programs in several countries have found that including the Standard Days Method and CycleBeads among the choices they offer contributes to contraceptive prevalence, enhances the method mix, and brings first-time users to family planning. CycleBeads are easy to teach and use; therefore, they can be used in a wide variety of programs. The Standard Days Method and CycleBeads can be offered by physicians, nurses, auxiliary nurses and community volunteers, public- and private-sector reproductive health programs, faith-based organizations, and social marketing programs through

pharmacies and other retailers. This method also addresses the needs of diverse populations with varied religious and ethical beliefs, education, and socioeconomic status. It has no side effects and can be used by women who want a pregnancy as well as by those who do not.

The primary impediment to expanded availability and use of this method is ensuring sufficient supply of CycleBeads. Because the Standard Days Method is a relatively new method, integrated to varying degrees into health information systems, governments and implementing partners often do not have data about current use on which to forecast future demand and base estimations for CycleBeads procurement. However, a tool is available to aid countries interested in procuring CycleBeads by providing a step-by-step process for estimating the initial supply of CycleBeads needed in their country. It is available electronically from the USAID | DELIVER PROJECT (email: askdeliver@jsi.com); individuals may also contact irhinfo@georgetown.edu. For additional information, see www.cyclebeads.com and www.irh.org.

Manufacturer/Supplier

Cycle Technologies (contact: +1 202-237-0662; info@cyclebeads.com) is the licensed manufacturer of CycleBeads. CycleBeads have been available since 2003 and are now offered through nongovernmental organizations, faith-based organizations, and public social-marketing programs.

Public-sector price agreements

CycleBeads are now offered as part of the contraceptive method mix available through the Central Contraceptive Procurement (CCP) Project of the Commodities Security and Logistics (CSL) Division at USAID.

Missions can provide funding requests for procurement of CycleBeads to the CCP Project either as field support or as a Modified Acquisition and Assistance Request Document. Orders should be forwarded to the CSL country backstopper.

Non USAID-funded groups interested in purchasing CycleBeads should contact the manufacturer, Cycle Technologies, directly (see www.cyclebeads.com).

¹ Arevalo M, Jennings V, Sinai I. Efficacy of a new method of family planning: the Standard Days Method. *Contraception*. 2002;65:333–338.

² Sinai I, Jennings V, Arevalo M. The two-day algorithm: A new algorithm to identify the fertile time of the menstrual cycle. *Contraception*. 1999;60(2):65–70.

³ Medical Eligibility Criteria for Contraceptive Use 3rd Ed. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2004. Available at: www.who.int/reproductive-health/publications/mec/fab.html.

⁴ Jennings V, Lundgren R. Standard Days Method: A Simple Effective Natural Method. USAID Global Health Technical Briefs 2004. Available at: <http://www.irh.org/resources/pdf/SDM/English/USAID%20SDM%20Technical%20Brief%202004.pdf>.

⁵ IPPF Medical and Service Delivery Guidelines for Sexual and Reproductive Health Services 3rd Ed. 2004. Available at: www.ippf.org/en/Resources/Medical/IPPF+Medical+and+Service+Delivery+Guidelines.htm.

⁶ Jennings V, Arevalo M. Chapter 15: Fertility Awareness-Based Methods. In: Hatcher RA, Trussell J, Nelson AL, Cates W, Stewart F, Kowal D, eds. *Contraceptive Technology 19th Revised Edition*. New York: Ardent Media, Inc; 2007:343–349.

Available at: http://irh.org/SDM_Implementation/pdfs/Cont_Tech_%20Chapter_15_Excerpts.pdf

This publication forms part of a series of technical briefs, written by members of the Caucus on New and Underused Reproductive Health Technologies, a thematic group established under the auspices of the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition. The Caucus' aim is to broaden the discussion within the Coalition of reproductive health technologies that are not well integrated into the public or commercial sectors. Responsibility for the selection and contents of the technical briefs rests solely with the Caucus and does not imply endorsement by the Coalition or its wider membership. For additional information, please contact secretariat@rhsupplies.org.