No-Commodity, No-Cost Family Planning: TwoDay Method®

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While there are significant regional differences in family planning use, in about half the countries in sub-Saharan Africa the majority of women have never used a method, and Guatemala has one of the lowest contraceptive prevalence rates in Central America.

Contraceptive commodities and distribution can be costly and stock-outs common.

Method-related reasons for not using family planning include concern about side effects or health consequences of methods.

Although women typically notice their cervical secretions, most do not know they are a reliable fertility indicator.

Intra-vaginal practices to remove healthy, naturally occurring secretions can be harmful.
Fertility Awareness-Based Methods

- Identify days of the menstrual cycle when intercourse can result in pregnancy (fertile window)

- Users of these methods:
  - determine the beginning and end of the fertile window by monitoring indicators of fertility (typically cervical secretions or cycle length calculations)
  - avoid unprotected intercourse on fertile days

- Users who select these methods often are new to family planning, have concerns about side effects and health consequences of other methods, and cost considerations
TwoDay Method®

• Uses cervical secretions as the indicator of fertility

• A woman pays attention each day to the presence or absence of secretions

• If she notices any secretions today or yesterday, she considers herself fertile today; to prevent pregnancy she avoids unprotected intercourse today
TwoDay Method

Did I note any secretions today? 

- YES: I can get pregnant today.
- NO: Did I note any secretions yesterday?

Did I note any secretions yesterday? 

- YES: I can get pregnant today.
- NO: Pregnancy is not likely today.
In addition to being a reliable indicator of fertility, cervical secretions:

- Protect sperm from the acidic environment in the vagina
- Transport sperm (prevent or enhance motility)
- Provide an energy source for sperm
Cervical Secretions during the Menstrual Cycle

Pre-ovulatory days
- Less water
- Less fluid
No noticeable secretions

Peri-ovulatory days
- More water
- More fluid
Yes, notices any secretions
(umbil until there are two days in a row with no secretions)

Postovulatory days
- Less water
- Less fluid
No noticeable secretions
TwoDay Method Efficacy Study

- Prospective, multi-site study
  5 culturally diverse sites in Guatemala, Peru and the Philippines
- 450 clients followed for up to 13 cycles
- Results: more than 96% effective preventing pregnancy
  - with correct use 3.5 (using abstinence on fertile days)
  - with typical use 13.7

(Fertility and Sterility, 2004)
Who Can Use TwoDay Method

- Women with healthy secretions
- Couples who can use condoms or abstain for several consecutive days each cycle

Women with cycles of any length can use this method
How TwoDay Method Is Offered

- Screen for method eligibility
- Explain secretions and the menstrual cycle
- Teach how to observe secretions and keep track of observations
- Discuss the couple’s ability to manage fertile days
- Describe when to return to a provider
A Woman Using TwoDay Method:

1. Identifies whether she has secretions each day

2. Asks herself if she had any secretions, and notes her observation

3. Determines whether today is a day she can get pregnant, and communicates this with her partner
Previous Secretion Reminder Approaches

1. **Date your period starts**
   - Look for the day of the week your period started and begin marking on that day.
   - Mark:
     - ○ the days you have your period
     - □ the days you do not have secretions
     - X the days you have secretions
   - Remember to mark every night before going to bed.

2. **When can you get pregnant?**
   - Begin marking a new card when your period returns or if you have completed this card.

3. **When is pregnancy unlikely?**
   - Go to next page.
Study Purpose

Phase 1:
To develop and test a further-simplified reminder approach for offering the TwoDay Method to lower-literacy women at the community level

Phase 2:
To test the feasibility and effect of offering the TwoDay Method using this new approach through community agents
Partners

Study direction
- IRH/Georgetown University

Research, training and technical assistance
- IRH/Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
- IRH/Guatemala

Local community-based and research organizations
- Community Project for Integrated Development (PROCODI) and Health Action Development (ASD)
- Association BPD and The Manoff Group
Phase 1
Formative research to design a few simplified reminder approaches, tailored to the local context

- In-depth interviews with local women and men (N=5-10 women and 5-10 men)
- Focus groups with local women
- Interviews with TwoDay Method providers in the region

Trials for Improved Practices (TIPS) interviews to test new reminder approaches with women during actual use

- Bi-weekly in-depth interviews with new users and their partners (N=10-15 women and 10-15 men) for four to six months
Formative Research: Preliminary Results
In-depth interviews with TwoDay Method providers
N=8

- Prior to TwoDay Method use some women:
  - perceived their secretions as unhealthy, bad, not normal
  - consulted traditional healers or used herbal compounds

- After learning the purpose of secretions:
  - reported no longer being bothered by the presence of secretions
  - stopped drying up their secretions

- Providers suggested using a found object, like different colored beans, to help users remember the fertile window

- Had stock outs of client cards, and used paper and pencil to record secretions

- Suggested more pictorial representation of messages for women with lower literacy

- Indicated breastfeeding women could use this method sooner than other fertility awareness methods
Focus group with women in DRC to test visual images/drawings of TwoDay Method messages

- Suggested changes to better represent the local community
  - Families with significant resource constraints
  - Engaged in activities like helping their child with homework
  - Couples of similar age (not an older man with a younger wife)
  - Use a latrine or hole in the ground to represent where a woman would check secretions

- Suggested local words for describing secretions
  - At first women did not admit seeing secretions, then shared experiences with the group
  - Interested in learning more about the method
Next Steps: Trials for Improved Practices (TIPS)

Qualitative research on behavior change with “in-use” testing of new, simplified approaches for remembering fertile days

• Community members test health practices in their daily lives

• Interviewer/researcher and community member:
  - analyze together current practices
  - discuss what could be improved
  - reach an agreement on what the participant will do for a trial period

• Results help determine which behaviors are doable, motivating factors and barriers to healthy practices, and guidance for tailoring a TwoDay Method reminder approach to the needs and reality of the local community
Phase 2

• Collaborate with community-based partners: PROCODI in DRC and Association BPD in Guatemala
  
  - Determine the program-specific process for offering the TwoDay Method with the new approach that was tailored to the local context in phase 1
  
  - Train community agents and begin the intervention
  
  - Evaluate the outcome through interviews with clients, community agents and other staff, and stakeholders in the area

• Determine the feasibility and effect of offering the TwoDay Method with the new, tested approach through community agents who have not previously offered family planning
Potential health and human rights benefits of community-based delivery of family planning that is effective AND:

- Raises awareness and personal power to control one’s fertility
- Fosters gender equity
- Supports vaginal health and alerts the woman to signs of possible reproductive tract infection

**TwoDay Method** is always available
- No commodity
- No distribution
- No cost, and eventually may be offered direct-to-consumers
For more information

www.irh.org