



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® are appropriate for women with menstrual cycles 26 to 32 days long. 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 to 19 of the menstrual cycle—to avoid pregnancy.

A woman can use CycleBeads® by placing the rubber ring on the *red* bead on the first day of her period. She moves the ring one bead each day. 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 to 19 of the menstrual cycle), and more than 88 percent effective in typical use, similar to a number of other user-directed methods.^{1,2} Similar levels of efficacy have been found when the method is offered in regular service delivery.³ Further, studies of women who purchased CycleBeads® in the context of social marketing—and thus relied on the CycleBeads® instructional insert and point-of-sale materials for method use—showed that their ability to understand and use the method correctly was equal to that of women who received instruction from a trained provider.⁴ The Standard Days Method® provides 1.5 couple-years of protection.⁵

Current program/sector use

To date, the Standard Days Method® and CycleBeads® have been used in more than 50 countries and have been successfully integrated into many existing family planning programs and community networks, resulting in more than 2.5 million users worldwide.⁶ The Standard Days Method® does not require special equipment, medical procedures, facilities, or costly commodities, and as a knowledge-based method, it is easy to teach and learn. Thus, it can be offered through a wide variety of programs and by a range of providers—including physicians, nurses, auxiliary nurses, community volunteers, public- and private-sector reproductive health programs, faith-based organizations, and social marketing programs through pharmacies and other retailers—without significant additional resources. This method also addresses the needs of diverse populations with varied religious and ethical beliefs, educational backgrounds, 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. Programs in several countries have found that including the Standard Days Method® and CycleBeads® among the options they offer contributes to contraceptive prevalence, enhances the method mix, and brings first-time users to family planning.³ Given the scientific and programmatic evidence, the Standard Days Method® and CycleBeads® are included in numerous documents of the World Health Organization, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), International Planned Parenthood Federation, and Contraceptive Technology.^{7,8,9,10} Notably, utilizing social marketing channels and the support of community health workers to provide the Standard Days Method® with CycleBeads® are considered high-impact practices in family planning by USAID.^{11,12}

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, governments and implementing partners often do not have data about current use on which to forecast future demand and base estimations for CycleBeads® procurement.

A toolkit 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 or visit www.irh.org.¹³ An additional resource that contains information on CycleBeads®—*A Forecasting Guide for New and Underused Methods of Family Planning*—supports program managers and others involved in forecasting as they plan to introduce a contraceptive technology for the first time in a country and/or position an underused method for scale up.¹⁴

Up-to-date data on CycleBeads® procurement by country and donor can be found on the Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition's online RHInterchange, which supports pipeline monitoring, commodity management, analysis, and planning for program managers, donors, researchers, and advocates.

For additional information, see www.cyclebeads.com and www.irh.org. The fact that CycleBeads® require no special storage facilities, have an indefinite shelf life, and are impervious to environmental conditions make them an ideal product for low-resource settings.

Manufacturer/supplier

Cycle Technologies 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 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, and can be ordered by USAID programs alongside other contraceptive methods. 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 backstop.

CycleBeads® are also included in the 2013 AccessRH Catalog at pre-negotiated prices.¹⁵ AccessRH is a procurement service managed by the United

Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) that aims to improve access to high-quality, affordable sexual and reproductive health commodities. Its clients are governmental and nongovernmental organizations in low- and middle-income settings worldwide.

The World Health Organization published an advisory note in 2012 to explain the procedure that should be followed to procure CycleBeads®.¹⁶ Procurers interested in purchasing CycleBeads® through means other than USAID and AccessRH should contact the manufacturer, Cycle Technologies, directly (see www.cyclebeads.com).

References

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For more information on the Caucus on New and Underused RH Technologies, please visit our web page at <http://www.rhsupplies.org/working-groups/caucus-on-newunderused-rh-technologies.html>.

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 health sectors. Responsibility for the selection and contents of the product 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.