

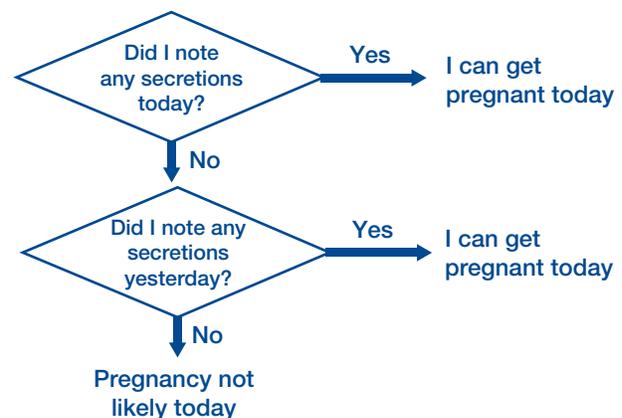
Two Day Method: A New Method of Family Planning

The TwoDay Method™ (TDM), a new method of family planning, developed by the Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University, is based on identifying the fertile days of a woman's menstrual cycle. More than 96% effective when used correctly,¹ this method is well grounded in research that shows the relationship of such physiological signs as cervical secretions to fertility.² Several studies have shown that changes in the characteristics of cervical secretions represent a good indicator of the fertile days of a woman's menstrual cycle. Established natural methods, such as the Billings Ovulation Method and the Sympto-thermal Method, are based on monitoring and interpreting these characteristics.³ The TwoDay Method is another approach to interpreting these changes that is easier to teach, learn, and use.

How the TwoDay Method Works

The TwoDay Method requires a woman to monitor each day the presence or absence of secretions to determine if she can get pregnant today. The woman asks herself two simple questions: (1) *Did I note any secretions today?* and (2) *Did I note any secretions yesterday?* If she notes secretions either today or yesterday, pregnancy is likely today. She is advised to avoid unprotected intercourse if she wishes to prevent a pregnancy. If she does not note secretions on both days, pregnancy is not likely today. Women are instructed to monitor their secretions each afternoon and evening, either by sensation or by

TwoDay Method Algorithm



observation. They are also instructed to consult with their health provider if they feel or observe more than 14 consecutive days of secretions, to assess the possibility of infection.

How Effective is the TwoDay Method

Researchers from the Institute used several large data sets to determine the theoretical efficacy of the TwoDay Method, including data from a World Health Organization study and from a multi-center European study.⁴ The analysis was designed to answer two questions: (1) *How effective would the TwoDay Method be in helping couples avoid pregnancy?* and (2) *How long is the fertile phase identified by the TwoDay Method?* They determined that the theoretical

efficacy of the method compares very well with reports on the efficacy of other widely used family planning methods and that the fertile phase of the cycle would average 12 days.⁵

The Institute then conducted an efficacy study of the TwoDay Method, following 450 women in Guatemala, Peru, and the Philippines for up to 13 cycles of method use. The study sites included rural, urban and semi-urban communities where health and family planning services were offered in clinics as well as in the community.

To participate in the study women needed to be between 18 and 39 years of age, sexually active, neither pregnant nor amenorrheic, and with no history of infertility. Providers taught the method to their clients and collected data on a monthly basis. The women who participated in the study contributed almost 4000 cycles of method use.

Results show that the TwoDay Method is more than 96% effective when used correctly.⁶ Additional studies are underway to establish continuation rates (how long women continue to use the method) and to examine other service delivery issues.

The TwoDay Method is a promising new approach that does not require having regular menstrual cycles. It is also a method that may be suitable for women with limited literacy or numeracy. Its simplicity to teach and use could make it an extremely advantageous method in contexts where unmet need for family planning is high or where couples rely on some kind of periodic abstinence to avoid pregnancy but have little knowledge about the woman's fertile phase. 

Endnotes:

^{1,6} Arévalo, M., Jennings V., Nikula M., and Sinai I. (2004). "Efficacy of the new TwoDay Method of family planning". *Fertility and Sterility* 82(4):885-892.

² Hilgers, T.W., Abraham, G.E., and Cavanagh, D. (1978), "Natural Family Planning. I. The Peak Symptom and Estimated Time of Ovulation", *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 52(5): 575-582. Odeblad, E. (1997), "Cervical Mucus and their Functions", *Journal of the Irish College of Physicians and Surgeons* 26: 27-32.

³ Billings, E. and Westmore A. (1991), *The Billings Method: Controlling Fertility Without Drugs or Devices*, Makati, Philippines: St. Paul Publications; Clubb, E. and Knight J. (1996), *Fertility*, 3rd edition, Great Britain: David & Charles; World Health Organization (WHO) (1981) "A Prospective Multicenter Trial of the Ovulation Method of Natural Family Planning. II. The Effectiveness Phase", *Fertility and Sterility* 36(5): 591-69.

⁴ World Health Organization (WHO). "A prospective multicentre trial of the ovulation method of natural family planning. I. The teaching phase". *Fertility and Sterility* 1981; 36:152-8; Colombo B, Masarotto G. "Daily fecundability: First results from a new data base". *Demographic Research* 3: article 5 2000 (<http://www.demographic-research.org/?http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol3/5/>).

⁵ Dunson, DB, Sinai I., Colombo B. (2001). "The relationship between cervical secretions and the daily probabilities of pregnancy: effectiveness of the TwoDay Algorithm". *Human Reproduction* 16(11):2278-2282; Jennings, V. and Sinai, I. (2001), "Further Analysis of the Theoretical Effectiveness of the TwoDay Method of Family Planning", *Contraception* 64: 149-153; Sinai, I., Jennings, V., and Arevalo, M. (1999), "The TwoDay Algorithm: A New Algorithm to Identify the Fertile Time of the Menstrual Cycle". *Contraception* 1999; 60:65-70.

For more information on the TwoDay Method, contact Dr. Marcos Arévalo at arevalom@georgetown.edu or visit our website: www.irh.org.

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The **Institute for Reproductive Health** conducts research and provides technical assistance on expanding access to natural methods of family planning and improving options for women and couples worldwide.

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