

TwoDay Method Community-Based Study

TwoDay Method®

is a fertility awareness method of family planning that relies on noting the presence or absence of cervical secretions to identify fertile days and avoiding unprotected sex on those days to prevent pregnancy. A multi-country efficacy trial showed TwoDay Method to be more than 96% effective with correct use and 86% effective with typical use, well within range of other user-dependent methods.ⁱ Women can learn and use the method successfully regardless of when during the menstrual cycle they initiate use.ⁱⁱ A counseling protocol and provider and client tools were developed and adapted for use in clinic settings in Peru, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Honduras, and the United States.

Community-based service provision is recognized by USAID and others in the global health community as a high-impact practice in family planning to expand access and reduce unmet need. Research was conducted to develop strategies and materials for offering TwoDay Method® outside the health system. A simplified tracking tool and accompanying low-literacy teaching materials were developed and tested using TIPs-style research methodology.ⁱⁱⁱ Community-based workers were trained to offer TwoDay Method using these simplified tools.

Materials Development

Formative research was conducted with providers and potential TwoDay Method clients to develop and then pre-test the following materials.

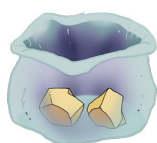
- Job aid appropriate for community workers with little or no health background.
- Client brochure with key instructions about method use appropriate for community members with low literacy.
- Tracking tools for method users to record secretions and identify the fertile days.



Recording card: Vertical strip of days of the week. Uses three different symbols to note menstrual period, days with secretions, and days with no secretions. Previously developed and used successfully in clinic settings. Used daily.

Janvier 2013						
Dimanche	Lundi	Mardi	Mercredi	Jeudi	Vendredi	Samedi
	1	2	3	4	5	
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Calendar: Uses the same symbols as recording card, but noted on a monthly calendar. Used daily.



Container with two found objects: A woman places two objects (e.g., bottle caps, rocks) in a container, such as a bowl or jar, that correspond to whether she observes secretions. This tracking tool is employed only during the fertile days.

ⁱ Arevalo M, Jennings V, Nikula M, Sinai I. Efficacy of the new TwoDay Method of family planning. *Fertility and Sterility*, 2004;82(4):885-92.

ⁱⁱ Jennings V, Sinai I, Sacieta L, Lundgren R. TwoDay Method: a quick-start approach. *Contraception*, 2011;84(2):144-9.

ⁱⁱⁱ Trials of Improved Practices (TIPs) is a methodology developed by The Manoff Group.

STUDY SITES

Chichoy, Guatemala:

Setting: rural, indigenous village
Language: Kaqchikel, Spanish

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC):

Setting: peri-urban neighborhood
Language: Lingala, French

PARTICIPANTS

Married, non-pregnant women of reproductive age (18-39 years) with healthy secretions, not currently using hormonal contraception & their partners (if interested)



Women using the method in DRC and Guatemala study sites preferred counseling from a community worker.

Pilot Testing

Materials were tested using Trials of Improved Practices (TIPs) methodology. TIPs combines anthropology and commercial marketing research techniques to determine obstacles and motivating factors for trying a new health behavior or practice.

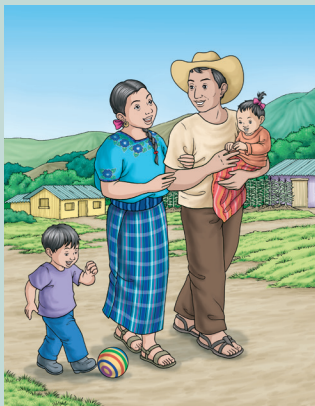
In each site, IRH partnered with a community-based organization (CBO) for outreach and method instruction. IRH sought out CBOs that had minimal health counseling experience to determine the feasibility of including TwoDay Method service provision in their portfolio of activities.

Five community workers in DRC and two community workers in Guatemala were trained to provide TwoDay Method as part of their regular job responsibilities, without receiving additional remuneration. All community workers had at least a high school education, though their background in health and counseling skill level varied. Community workers visited study participants five times over 19 weeks in DRC and four times over 11 weeks in Guatemala to gather information on how the tools were being used and their experience with community-based method provision.

Potential clients in the community received information on all family planning methods prior to deciding if they wanted

to use TwoDay Method. The community worker then counseled interested women and offered them the choice of tracking tools. Women were also given a brochure with key reminders for method use, and condoms, if desired, for managing the fertile days.

Since TwoDay Method was offered outside the health system, a thorough assessment of area health services was conducted in each site, in order to equip community workers to appropriately refer clients for other family planning methods, if desired, or for diagnosis and treatment of unhealthy secretions.



Formative research and pre-testing helped design culturally relevant images and materials appropriate for low literacy populations.

Results

Overall, 13 women in Guatemala and 20 in DRC enrolled in the study. Their husbands also were asked to participate. Three men in DRC formally enrolled, and post-study interviews were conducted with two men in Guatemala. Of the 33 women participating in the study, seven were exited for different reasons. One woman in Guatemala and one in DRC became pregnant. In DRC, three more withdrew (moved, method too time-consuming, husband refusal), and two were later determined ineligible, as they found out they were pregnant prior to study enrollment.

Successful community-based service provision

CBOs without health-focused activities were able to integrate TwoDay Method service provision into their portfolio. Community workers with various levels of health knowledge and counseling skills learned and provided TwoDay Method to members of their community. Many clients expressed appreciation for community-based access to a family planning method and preferred counseling from a community worker rather than a clinic-based health service provider.

High satisfaction with method

Participants found TwoDay Method easy and practical to use. All women in DRC and several in Guatemala planned to continue using TwoDay Method after the study ended. Nearly all would recommend the method to a friend, and some began talking about it with their friends and neighbors by the end of the testing period.

Women were able to learn to check and track secretions from community worker instruction. They easily incorporated checking their secretions into daily activities, such as when going to the bathroom, after daily afternoon prayers, while doing chores, before or after work, or while washing up in the evening. They found the client brochure clear and helpful and referred to it frequently.

Preference for paper-based memory aids

Women showed a strong preference for the recording card and calendar (see Table 1). Women reported selecting these tools because they were easy to use, had clear instructions, and helped them remember to check each day.

- Recording Card:** This tool was largely preferred in Guatemala. As the study progressed, some women adapted the use of the recording card—instead of marking every day, they marked from the first day of menses until three or four days without secretions, then ceased marking until the onset of a new cycle. The recording card did not survive pre-testing in DRC and was not offered in the trial. DRC participants found the vertical orientation and lack of dates confusing.
- Calendar:** Women in DRC strongly preferred this tracking tool, primarily because they were accustomed to using a calendar to track their menstrual cycle.

Table 1. Selected reminder approaches by site

REMINDER APPROACH	DRC	GUATEMALA
Recording card	not offered	11
Calendar	17	1
Container with 2 objects	3	1

Women in Guatemala strongly preferred using a recording card to track their secretions, while those in DRC opted for marking on a calendar.

Despite perceived ease of use, some DRC participants still had difficulty determining their risk of pregnancy using the calendar approach, especially on the first day without secretions. Community workers reviewed and reinforced this during follow-up visits until all women could correctly interpret the calendar symbols.

- **Container with two found objects:** Only four women (three in DRC; one in Guatemala) chose this tracking tool. Participants said it was easy to understand and use, but many did not choose it because they expressed concern their children would play with it or they would forget to look at it each day, given that it did not require daily use.

Women had the option of switching tracking tools if the one they selected was inconvenient or difficult to use, but none at either site did so at any point during the study.

Engaged men

All women reported they were able to communicate their fertile days to their husband. Data showed that women's husbands not only accepted the method, but helped their wives remember to check and record secretions. Men in both countries felt empowered by the improved understanding of their wives' menstrual cycle and ability to achieve the couple's fertility desires. In DRC, all women were able to plan for or negotiate alternate behaviors with their partners on those days, though one woman dropped out of the study because her husband did not want to use the method. In Guatemala, women were able to successfully negotiate alternate behaviors on fertile days during the first months, but this waned by the end of the study, and several felt their husbands were not committed to continue using the method.

One of the trained community workers at each site was male, though in Guatemala did not complete the study due to competing agricultural activities. Male participants preferred counseling from male community workers. Though offered, no male or female study participants requested counseling with their partner present.

Useful teaching tool for vaginal health and fertility awareness

Learning TwoDay Method helped women better understand their menstrual cycles and the fertile window. It also helped them distinguish unhealthy secretions and learn that healthy secretions are a normal sign of fertility. In DRC, for example, it is commonly believed that all vaginal secretions are dirty or unhealthy. For this reason, as well as to enhance sexual pleasure, some women use products to wash away secretions or dry out the vagina.

TwoDay Method improves couple communication

"She tells me the days in which we can't [have intercourse] because her days of secretions have started. There has been more communication. As you learn, it becomes easier and then you are not embarrassed."

Male interviewee, Guatemala



The TwoDay Method engages men as active partners in family planning.

It is not known what effect these practices have on TwoDay Method effectiveness. If secretions are obscured (dried/washed away), it may impair a woman's ability to accurately assess her fertile days. In order to ensure most effective use of the method, community workers educated women to check for secretions before vaginal washing. They also successfully negotiated with women to modify their use of desiccants or stop such practices altogether.

Conclusions

CBOs can successfully engage their community workers to offer TwoDay Method through their existing activity platforms, even if they are not experienced in health or family planning. The newly designed, low literacy TwoDay Method client education materials were highly effective. Despite efforts to move away from text-based tracking tools, results showed women still prefer daily, paper-based approaches. Even when counseling was conducted with women only, TwoDay Method still engaged men as participatory partners in family planning. Nevertheless, additional reinforcements with men may be necessary to ensure ongoing commitment to method use, especially in Guatemala. This study also found that participants improved their knowledge of healthy and unhealthy secretions and increased their understanding of the fertile window. Community-based provision of TwoDay Method has the potential to reduce unmet need for family planning by improving access to a highly acceptable, commodity-free family planning method.

TwoDay Method teaches fertility awareness

"I learned that secretions exist. It's a good method because it's natural and doesn't require going to the hospital. I have become a doctor of my own organism, because you have to know how your body functions."

Female participant, DRC

Available Materials

The following materials are available in English, Spanish, and French at www.irh.org:

- **Training Module:** Designed for programs to include in their community worker trainings in health, family planning, or otherwise.
- **Community Worker Job Aid:** A tool for community workers to use when counseling clients about TwoDay Method.
- **Client Brochure:** A low literacy brochure with key TwoDay Method information for the client to use as a reference, after initial counseling.
- **Tracking Tools:** The recording card and calendar and the instructions for using them. Countries or programs interested in offering TwoDay Method can decide whether to have available either one or both approaches from which clients can choose, based on what best fits their context.

This publication and the project featured were supported by the U. S. Agency for International Development under Cooperative Agreement GPO-A-00-07-00003-00.

www.irh.org



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

