

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Q. How do CycleBeads work?**

A. CycleBeads are a visual tool that help a woman with regular cycles between 26 and 32 days long to keep track of the days of her cycle and know when she is likely to get pregnant if she has unprotected intercourse. They are a string of 32 color-coded beads, with each bead representing a day of a woman's menstrual cycle. They have a black rubber ring that the woman moves one bead each day in the direction of the arrow. When the woman starts her period, she puts the ring on the first bead, which is red. She continues moving the ring one bead each day of her cycle. When the ring is on a dark bead, she is on a day in her cycle when she can have intercourse without getting pregnant. But when she is on a day represented by the white beads, she may be fertile and could get pregnant if she has unprotected intercourse.

### **Q. How effective are CycleBeads?**

A. In studies conducted by the Institute for Reproductive Health, the method on which CycleBeads are based, The Standard Days Method, was found to be more than 95% effective. That means that, out of 100 women using the method for 1 year, fewer than 5 of them would get pregnant if they used the method correctly. However, the study also found that women who do not keep careful track of their cycle days or have unprotected intercourse on days 8 through 10 of their cycles are much more likely to get pregnant. When women sometimes used the method correctly, but sometimes had unprotected sex on days 8 through 19, 12 out of 100 got pregnant during their first year of use.

### **Q. What is the Standard Days Method?**

A. The Standard Days Method is a new, simple method of family planning that was developed by the Institute for Reproductive Health at Georgetown University. The Institute developed a computer model, based on data from the World Health Organization, and determined that women who usually have menstrual cycles between 26 and 32 days long are potentially fertile – or able to get pregnant – on days 8 through 19 of their cycles. So the Standard Days Method identifies a fixed set of days in each menstrual cycle as the days when a woman can get pregnant if she has unprotected intercourse. If the woman doesn't want to get pregnant, she and her partner avoid unprotected intercourse on days 8 through 19 of her cycle. The Institute has tested the Standard Days Method in a clinical trial with about 500 women in 3 countries – Bolivia, Peru and the Philippines. They found that women were able to use the method correctly, and when they did use it correctly, it was more than 95% effective. That is, out of 100 women using the method for 1 year, fewer than 5 would get pregnant.

### **Q. How is this different from the rhythm method?**

A. Actually, it's very different. The rhythm method involves having exact information about the last 6 menstrual cycles and every month making complex calculations – adding and subtracting – to figure out which days in the current cycle you're likely to get pregnant. And the rhythm method has never actually been tested in a well-designed efficacy study. The Standard Days Method on which CycleBeads are based, is simple – it doesn't involve any calculations, and it is

the same every cycle. It has also been tested in a well-designed effectiveness trial, with excellent results.

**Q. Can I use the Standard Days Method without using CycleBeads?**

A. Yes you can. CycleBeads have been found to be an efficient, easy-to-use tool for helping women keep track of their cycles and know which days are fertile and which are not. However, a woman could simply keep track of her cycle on a calendar and count the days, starting with her period so that she would know when she was in her fertile window – Days 8 through 19 of her cycle – and could get pregnant. She would also need to be sure that her cycles were regularly between 26 and 32 days so that this fertile window is accurate for her.

**Q. Why do women choose to use CycleBeads?**

A. The most common answer we hear is that women want to use them because they are based on a method that is natural, effective, and has no side effects. Many women want an easy to use family planning method that is natural – that doesn't involve hormones or surgical procedures. Some women are concerned about side effects with other methods; others don't want to do anything that might impair their future ability to get pregnant. Some women want to use it for religious reasons. And others want a method that helps them involve their partners instead of one that is only the woman's responsibility.

**Q. Can I use CycleBeads to help me get pregnant?**

A. Yes you can. No research has been conducted to date to see exactly how effective the Standard Days Method is in helping a couple who wants to get pregnant, but because CycleBeads identify the fertile days, using CycleBeads can be an important first step in trying to get pregnant. This is because when they are using CycleBeads,

1. a woman and her partner can see on which days she is fertile, and they can have intercourse on those days; and
2. keeping track of the number of days in her cycle gives a woman information about her cycle that she can share with her doctor and thereby make appropriate choices to help her conceive.

Of course, there are women who are not ovulating, or have some other biological issue that makes it difficult for them to conceive. Or the man may not be fertile. While CycleBeads will not directly help them to conceive, it can be useful in helping them to at least establish the woman's potentially fertile days and her cycle lengths.

**Q. If I'm only fertile for a few days of my cycle, why is the "fertile window" 12 days long?**

A. The research on which CycleBeads are based identifies the fertile window – the time during which most women could get pregnant - as days 8 through 19 of the menstrual cycle. While it is true that a woman can get pregnant during only a few days of her cycle, these days may not be at the same time from one cycle to the next. The “fertile window” identified is 12 days long because it takes into account both the days around ovulation and the possible changes in the actual timing of ovulation from one cycle to the next.

**Q. Will CycleBeads protect me from sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)?**

A. No. Like most other family planning methods except condoms, the Standard Days Method on which CycleBeads are based does not protect people from STDs. If you think you are at risk of an STD, you should consult your doctor immediately to find out how you can protect yourself.

**Q. Where can I get CycleBeads?**

A. CycleBeads are available through a limited number of providers and local retailers. You can also order them online from [www. CycleBeads.com](http://www.CycleBeads.com)

**Who can use CycleBeads?**

**Q. Can anyone use CycleBeads?**

A. No. The Standard Days Method, on which CycleBeads are based, works very well for women who usually have menstrual cycles between 26 and 32 days long. Women who often have cycles shorter than 26 days or longer than 32 days are not good candidates for this method. Also, women who would not be able to avoid unprotected intercourse on the days they might get pregnant are not likely to be successful using this method. So, like any method of family planning, it isn't for everyone.

**Q. How can I find out if CycleBeads will work for me?**

A. CycleBeads are an easy-to-use tool that can help many women – whether they want to avoid pregnancy or to get pregnant. But they are not for everyone. Please take the Cycle Bead Self Screen to determine if they could work for you. Screen Yourself.

**Q. How can I determine if my cycle length is between 26 and 32 days?**

A. A woman does not need a record of her previous cycles, but we ask a woman to answer a few questions that will help her or her provider to know whether or not she is in this range. These questions include:

- Do my periods usually come about when I expect them?
- When did my last period start?
- When do I think my next period will start?
- How many days are there between the day my last period started and the day I think my next period will start?

If you can tell by answering these questions that your cycles are likely to be between 26 and 32 days long, you can use CycleBeads. If you are still not sure, it would be a good idea for you to use the CycleBeads or a calendar for two or three cycles just to keep track of your cycle lengths. But you should not rely on this as a way to prevent pregnancy until you are sure your cycles are usually between 26 and 32 days long.

**Q. How many women have cycle lengths that are between 26 and 32 days long?**

A. According to data from the World Health Organization, about 80% of cycles are between 26 and 32 days long and most women have most of their cycles within this range.

**Q. Can I use CycleBeads if I just stopped taking the pill?**

A. Yes, if your cycles were 26-32 days long before you started taking pills. If you are still taking pills and want to use CycleBeads, you should finish taking the pills for this current cycle. Then, on the first day of your next period, you can begin using the method. If you have already stopped taking pills, you should wait until your next period starts before you start using the method.

**Q. Can I use CycleBeads if I just stopped taking an injectable form of birth control?**

A. It depends. First, you must have had regular cycles between 26 and 32 days long before you started using the injection. If you have taken a 1-month injectable recently and you had cycles in this range before you started using the injectable, you can use CycleBeads as soon as you have your next period. However, if you have taken a three-month injectable, it may be a while before your cycles return to normal. You'll need to wait until three months have passed since you got your last injection and then wait until you have a cycle that is between 26 and 32 days long.

**Q. Can I use CycleBeads if I just stopped using an IUD?**

A. Yes, as long as during the time you were using the IUD your cycles were between 26 and 32 days long. Once the IUD is taken out, you can start using CycleBeads on the first day of your next period.

**Q. Can I use CycleBeads if I am breastfeeding?**

A. That depends. Wait until you have had 4 menstrual periods since your baby was born. After you have had 4 periods, if your last cycle was between 26 and 32 days long, you can start using CycleBeads on the first day of your next period.

**Q. Can I use CycleBeads if I am close to menopause?**

A. Yes, as long as your cycles are between 26 and 32 days long. However, as you approach menopause, your cycles may become irregular – either shorter or longer. When this happens, CycleBeads will not work for you.

**Q. Can I use CycleBeads if I have recently used emergency contraception?**

A. Yes, you can use CycleBeads if you have recently used emergency contraception and your cycles are usually between 26 and 32 days long. However you should wait until you start your next period before using CycleBeads.

**Q. Why is it important that my partner is willing to use CycleBeads and understands how they work?**

A. First it's important that both you and your partner agree about whether or not you want a pregnancy. It is also critical that both of you understand how CycleBeads work so that you can decide how to deal with the days when you can potentially get pregnant. For best results it is important that both you and your partner understand that you are likely to get pregnant if you have sex during your "fertile window." It is also critical that you decide beforehand what you will do during this "fertile window" if you are trying to avoid getting pregnant – you may decide to use another method or abstain from sex during this time.

## **How to use CycleBeads.**

### **Q. What is the darker bead for?**

A. The darker bead on the CycleBeads is to help a woman know if her cycle is shorter than 26 days. CycleBeads are most appropriate for women who have cycles between 26 and 32 days long. If a woman starts her period before she puts the band on the dark bead, she has had a cycle that is shorter than 26 days. If that happens more than once in one year, then she should consider another alternative to meet her family planning needs.

### **Q. What if I'm using CycleBeads and I start my period before I get to the darker bead?**

A. If you start your period before you get to the darker bead that means you have had a cycle that is less than 26 days long. CycleBeads work best for women who usually have cycles between 26 and 32 days long. If you have more than one cycle less than 26 days long in a 12-month period, CycleBeads will not work well for you and you should use another alternative to meet your family planning needs.

### **Q. What if I'm using CycleBeads and I start my period before I finish all the beads?**

A. This is what will happen most of the time. As soon as you start your period, just skip over any remaining beads and put the ring on the red bead. Then continue moving the ring one bead per day.

### **Q. What if I'm using CycleBeads and I get to the last bead, but I still haven't started my period?**

A. If you move the ring to the last bead and you don't start your period by the next day that means you are having a cycle that is more than 32 days long. CycleBeads work best for women who usually have cycles between 26 and 32 days long. If you have more than one cycle that is more than 32 days long in a 12-month period, CycleBeads will not work well for you and you should use another alternative. If you move the ring to the last bead and you don't start your period within a week, you should consult your doctor.

### **Q. What should I do if I forget to move the ring?**

A. It is best to always mark the day that you start your period on a calendar. If you know the date you started your period this cycle, you can go to your calendar and count the days between that date and today. Then count the same number of beads on the CycleBeads, beginning with the red bead. Just move the ring to the correct bead and continue moving the ring every day. If you are unable to determine what day you started your cycle, wait until your next period to begin using CycleBeads.

### **Q. If I start my period late at night or early in the morning, what should I do about moving the ring?**

A. You should move the ring to the red bead on the day that you start your period. If you know that you started your period anytime before midnight, move the ring to the red bead that day. The next morning (or whenever you normally move the ring) you should move it to the following bead. If you started your period during the night and are not sure what time it started, move the ring to the red bead when you wake up and consider that day to be Day 1 of your menstrual cycle. You will then move the ring the following day.

**Q. What if I bleed a little in the middle of my cycle?**

A. If you bleed any time except when you are having your period, you should check with your health provider. But for many women, a small amount of bleeding around the time they ovulate is normal. Bleeding in the middle of the cycle should not affect use of the CycleBeads.