

Long-term use of the Standard Days Method: Results of a 3-year study

The Standard Days Method is a simple fertility awareness-based method of family planning that identifies the fertile period as days 8-19 of the cycle for women with cycles that usually range 26-32 days. Users who wish to avoid pregnancy do not have unprotected sex on these days. The method was developed by the Institute for Reproductive Health, Georgetown University, to meet the needs of women for a simple, accurate way to identify their fertile window.

An efficacy trial of the Standard Days Method, following 478 women for up to 13 cycles of method use in five sites in Bolivia, Peru, and the Philippines, resulted in a 4.8 one-year pregnancy rate with self-reported correct use of the method. A one-year pregnancy rate of 12 was calculated when taking into account all pregnancies, including those occurring in cycles in which users had unprotected sex on days identified as fertile (Arévalo et al., 2002).

At the end of the efficacy study we continued to follow study participants for two more years. The purpose of this long-term follow-up study was to estimate continuation rates of the Standard Days Method, to find out the long-term efficacy of the method, and to explore long-term method acceptability. This presentation will present results from this study.

The 214 women who successfully completed 13 cycles of method use in the efficacy study were invited to participate in the long-term follow-up study. A total of 199 women agreed to participate. These women were scheduled to be interviewed at 3, 6, 12, 18, and 24 months after completing the efficacy study.

We used multi-censoring life tables to estimate method efficacy. Efficacy of the method continues to be good. In the presentation we will show second year efficacy, third year efficacy, and three year efficacy rates.

Because the Standard Days Method was developed for women with cycles ranging 26-32 days, participants were asked to stop using the method if they had two cycles within a year that were outside of the 26-32 day range. About a quarter of efficacy study participants stopped using the method for this reason during the efficacy study period. This rate greatly decreased in the second and third years of use. Approximately 65% of women who enrolled in the long-term follow-up study were still using the method at the end of the two years. Of the women who discontinued use of the Standard Days Method, many wanted to become pregnant or change to a different method. In the presentation we will show detailed figures of discontinuation and reasons for exiting the study.

Interviews with study participants show that the method continues to be acceptable to them and their partners. The presentation will include discussion of acceptability and explore strategies used by participants for managing the 12-day fertile window.

Reference

Arévalo M., Jennings V. and Sinai I. (2002). "Efficacy of a new method of family planning: the Standard Days Method." *Contraception* 65:333-338.

