

Getting the bead on conception

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A scientifically-based tool developed by researchers from Georgetown University's Institute for Reproductive Health to help women prevent pregnancy naturally, is now being used by a growing number of women to help plan pregnancy.

An estimated twenty percent of women who wish to become pregnant are unsuccessful because they do not know when they are fertile, according to the American [Infertility](#) Association. CycleBeads® is a fertility management aid which allows women to easily identify their "fertile window", the time during which pregnancy is most likely, thus allowing women to know on which days of the [menstrual cycle](#) they are fertile and which days they are not.

Based on sophisticated computer modeling of reproductive physiology data, CycleBeads lets a woman know her cycle length and clearly identifies days 8 through 19 of her cycle as the days during which she is fertile. These 12 days take into account the [life span](#) of the woman's egg (about 24 hours) and the viable life of sperm (about 5 days) as well as the variation in the actual timing of [ovulation](#) from one cycle to the next.

"We originally developed CycleBeads with a focus on helping women prevent pregnancy. However we've been pleasantly surprised with the number of women who are also using them to achieve pregnancy. Since this tool helps women identify their fertile days, it significantly improves their likelihood of conceiving," said Victoria Jennings, Ph.D., director of the Institute for Reproductive Health and co-developer of CycleBeads.

Now the manufacturer of CycleBeads will be offering the fertility management tool as part of a conception kit to help women contemplating pregnancy attain that goal naturally. In addition to the deluxe version of CycleBeads, the new kit includes a specially designed fertility journal to record key information, a supply of folic acid -- recommended for all women contemplating pregnancy -- and a scented candle.

The fertility journal includes useful information related to conception. For example, it notes that to maximize likelihood of pregnancy, physicians recommend that couples have intercourse every other day during their fertile time to ensure that [sperm](#) counts are healthy. Importantly, data recorded by a woman in the journal can provide valuable information both to her and her physician.

"Many doctors recommend that women try to get pregnant for up to a year before addressing concerns about fertility. If a woman is using the information that CycleBeads provides and is tracking key data such as when she is having intercourse and when she gets her periods, potential fertility issues can be identified more quickly. This gives her and her doctor a lot more information with which to work," said Jennings.

Like the classic CycleBeads, the deluxe version is a string of 32 color-coded beads. A reddish bead marks the first day of a woman's cycle, the colored beads represent days when pregnancy is unlikely, and the white beads represent days when pregnancy is likely. A black marker is used to track the days.

To use CycleBeads, a woman simply moves the black marker over the color-coded beads that represent her fertile and low fertility days. Each day she moves the ring one bead forward, always in the direction of the arrow located on the clasp. When the ring is on any of the colored beads, there is a very low likelihood of pregnancy. When the ring is on the

white beads there is a high probability of getting pregnant.

"Given the large number of women who fail to get pregnant because they are mistaken about when they are likely to conceive, it is important that the healthcare community let women know about the importance of tracking their fertility and the availability of an easy to use, low cost, scientifically-based tool to help them do so," said Jennings, an anthropologist who studies reproductive health behavior.

The Institute for Reproductive Health has developed the only natural methods of family planning that have been clinically tested and introduced on an international scale in more than 25 years. Information on the Institute can be found at www.irh.org. The CycleBeads Conception Kit is available at www.cyclebeads.com. A high resolution photo is available upon request.

CycleBeads are a patented technology owned by Georgetown University that has been licensed to Cycle Technologies for commercialization. Jennings is one of the inventors on the patent.

Provided by Georgetown University Medical Center

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