

# Algorithm for Using the Balanced Counseling Strategy Plus

## Pre-Choice Stage

1. Establish and maintain a warm, cordial relationship. Listen to the client's contraceptive needs.
2. Rule out pregnancy using the pregnancy checklist card with 6 questions.

If client answers:	Then:
"Yes" to any of the questions and she is free of signs and symptoms of pregnancy	1) Pregnancy is unlikely. 2) Continue to <b>Step 3</b> .
"No" to all of the questions	1) Pregnancy cannot be ruled out. 2) Give client a pregnancy test, if available, or refer her to an antenatal clinic. 3) Ask her to return when she has her menstrual bleeding. 4) Provide her with a back-up method, such as condoms, to use until then. 5) Go to <b>Steps 12 to 19</b> .

3. Display all of the method cards. Determine whether the client wants a particular method.
4. Ask **all** of the following questions. Set aside method cards based on the client's responses.
  - a) Do you wish to have children in the future?  
If "Yes," set aside vasectomy and tubal ligation cards. Explain why.  
If "No," keep all cards and continue.
  - b) Are you breastfeeding an infant less than 6 months old?  
If "Yes," set aside the combined oral contraceptives (the Pill) and combined injectable contraceptive (CIC) cards. Explain why.  
If "No," or she has begun her monthly bleeding again, set aside the lactational amenorrhea method (LAM) card. Explain why.
  - c) Does your partner support you in family planning?  
If "Yes," continue with the next question.  
If "No," set aside the following cards: Standard Days Method<sup>®</sup> and TwoDay Method<sup>®</sup>. Explain why.
  - d) Are there any methods that you do not want to use or have not tolerated in the past?  
If "Yes," set aside the cards the client does not want.  
If "No," keep the rest of the cards.

## Method Choice Stage

5. Give information on the methods that have **not** been set aside and indicate their effectiveness.
  - a) Arrange the remaining cards in order of effectiveness (number on back of each card).
  - b) In order of effectiveness (lowest number to highest), read the 5 to 7 attributes on each method card not set aside. Ensure that client fully understands the information given on the method before proceeding to the next card.
6. Ask the client to choose the method that is most convenient for her/him.
7. Using the method-specific brochure, determine whether the client has any conditions for which the method is not advised.
  - a) Together with the client, review the section under "Method not advised if you..." in the brochure of the method chosen.
  - b) If the method is not advisable for the client, ask the client to select another method from the cards that remain. Repeat the process from **Step 6 (Step 4 if the client already had a method in mind)**.

## Post-Choice Stage

8. Discuss the method chosen with the client using the method brochures as a counseling tool.
9. Determine the client's comprehension and reinforce key information.
10. Make sure the client has made a definite decision. Give her/him the method chosen and/or a referral and back-up method, depending on the method selected.
11. Encourage the client to involve partner(s) in decisions about/practice of contraception through discussion or a visit to the clinic.

## STI/HIV Prevention, Risk Assessment, and Counseling and Testing Stage

12. Discuss STI/HIV transmission and prevention and the client's HIV status using the counseling card.
13. Conduct STI/HIV risk assessment using the counseling card. If the client has STI symptoms, treat her/him syndromically.
14. Discuss dual protection using the counseling card. Offer condoms and instruct the client in correct and consistent use.
15. Conduct HIV counseling and testing (C&T) awareness using the counseling card. If the client is known to be HIV positive, skip to Step 17.
16. Discuss and offer the client an opportunity for HIV C&T. If willing, test the client and counsel her/him on the test results according to national protocols.
17. Encourage the client to disclose HIV status to her/his partner(s). Let the client know the benefits and risks of disclosure.
18. Give follow-up instructions, a condom brochure, and the brochure of the method chosen.
19. Complete the counseling session. Invite the client to return at any time. Thank her/him for the visit. End the session.