

## Menstrual Hygiene Management

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### ABSTRACT

Menstruation and menstrual practices still face many social, cultural, and religious restrictions which are a big barrier in the path of menstrual hygiene management. In many parts of the country especially in rural areas girls are not prepared and aware about menstruation so they face many difficulties and challenges at home, schools, and work places. We found that, incomplete knowledge about menstruation is a great hindrance in the path of personal and menstrual hygiene management. Girls and women have very less or no knowledge about reproductive tract infections caused due to ignorance of personal hygiene during menstruation time. In rural areas, women do not have access to sanitary products or they know very little about the types and method of using them or are unable to afford such products due to high cost. So, they mostly rely on reusable cloth pads which they wash and use again. So, there should be a need to educate and make them aware about the environmental pollution and health hazards associated with them. Globally, approximately 52% of the female population (26% of the total population) is of reproductive age. Of these women and girls will menstruate each month for between two and seven days. In most part of the world, it is rarely talked about this matter.

**Key Words:** Menstruation, Menstrual Cycles, Periods, Menstrual Hygiene Management.

### INTRODUCTION

#### What Is Menstruation?

This is the Greek word. Menstruation may be defined as a periodic physiological discharge of blood, mucus and other cellular debris.

This monthly uterine bleeding through vagina happens once in every 28days during the reproductive life of women from menarche to menopause [1].

Menstruation is also sometimes known as “menses” or described as a “menstrual period or menstrual cycle”. The average

age at which menstruation begins is between 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> year.

Now a day, due to mechanical life style and sedentary life style, girls typically start to menstruate (the time of menarche) during puberty or adolescence, typically between the ages of 10 and 19 and also at the age of 7. The cycle may vary from 21 days to 40 days without any anatomical problems. Menstruation continues until they reach menopause, when menstruation ends, usually between their late 40 and mid 50es [1].

Menstrual cycle is usually around 28 days but can vary from 21 to 35 days. Each

cycle involves the release of an ovum which moves into the uterus through fallopian tubes.

Tissues and blood start to line the walls of the uterus for fertilization. If egg is not fertilized, the lining of the uterus is shed through the vagina along with blood. The bleeding generally lasts between 2 to 7 days, with some lighter flow and some heavier flow days. The cycle is often irregular for the 1<sup>st</sup> year or two after menstrual begins [2].

Most women and girls suffer from period such as abdominal cramps, nausea, fatigue, feeling faint, headache, back ache and general discomfort. They can also experience emotional and psychological changes due to changing hormones. This varies from person to person [2].

Menstrual cycle is a natural process. If not properly managed, it can result in health problems [2].

**Amenorrhea (Absence of Periods) is normal in [2]–**

- 1) During pregnancy.
- 2) During frequent breast feeding (lactation amenorrhea).
- 3) At the time of menarche (when the menstruation first begins).
- 4) When food intake is severely limited.
- 5) Following the menopause when menstruation ceases.

#### **Duration**

- 1) It lasts for 4 to 5 days.
- 2) According to Bhavamishra and Vagbhata – 3days
- 3) According to Charaka – 5days
- 4) According to Harita and Bhela – 7 days.

#### **Quantity of Bleeding**

The amount of blood lost is estimated to be between 50 to 200ml.

#### **Infections Related To Menstruation**

Girls and women may be more at risk of infections during menstruation. Some of common infections are –

- 1) Bacterial vaginosis
- 2) Vulvovaginal candidiasis (thrush)
- 3) Trichomonas vaginalis
- 4) Gonorrhoea
- 5) Syphilis
- 6) Hepatitis B
- 7) HIV
- 8) Urinary tract infections
- 9) PID pelvic inflammatory disease
- 10) Vaginitis.

#### **Potential Risks to Health of Poor Menstrual Hygiene**

- 1) Unclean sanitary pads/materials, bacteria may cause local infections and travel up to vagina and enter in to the uterine cavity.
- 2) Changing pads infrequently, wet pads can cause skin irritation which can then become infected.
- 3) Using highly absorbent tampons may lead toxic shock syndrome.
- 4) Wiping from back to front, may cause bacterial infections.
- 5) Unsafe disposal of used sanitary materials, risk of infecting others.
- 6) Lack of hand – washing, after changing the sanitary pad or cloth lead to spread of infections such as Hepatitis B etc.

#### **MANAGEMENT [3]**

##### **How to Capture the Menstrual Blood**

1. Place a cloth, pad, cotton or tissue on your underwear.
2. Never insert the material inside the vagina.
3. Change the material every 2 to 6 hours or more frequently, if one thinks that the blood flow is getting heavy.
4. Now a day, Menstrual Cup and Tampons are used for collecting the Menstrual Blood.



### How to Dispose of Cloth, Pad, Cotton or Tissue [3]

- 1) If girls are using a cloth, put it in to a plastic bag until one can wash it with hot water and soap and then dry it under sun or iron it.
- 2) If girls are using a pad, cotton or want to dispose of cloth, wrap it in a paper and put it in a bin and that can be burn later.



### **What Hygiene Practices Should Be Followed During Menstruation? [3]**

- 1) Change napkins regularly, every 4 – 6 hours.
- 2) Remember to take change of napkins whenever going out.
- 3) Wash the genital area after each use of the toilet, also after urination.
- 4) Keep the area between the legs dry otherwise soreness and chaffing may develop.
- 5) One can take bath every day during menstruation.
- 6) Do not wash inside the vagina with soaps or any vaginal hygiene products.
- 7) Discard the sanitary napkin properly.

### **What If Using Cloth?**

- 1) Ensure that clean, dry and absorbent cloth is used.
- 2) In case, it is being reused, it must be washed thoroughly and dried in private, but sunny place.
- 3) After drying, if possible it should be ironed.
- 4) Store in a clean and dry place.
- 5) Do not share this cloth with anyone.
- 6) After multiple uses, dispose of this cloth.

### **How Often To Change Sanitary Napkin?**

- 1) Change at least once a day.
- 2) Changing every 6 to 8 hours is recommended.
- 3) During heavy menses, may need to change every 3 to 4 hours.
- 4) Do not keep till completely soaked.

### **What Are Advantages Of Sanitary Napkin?**

Sanitary napkins can be used and disposed in a much easier way as compared to cloth.

- 1) It has absorbent material layer, which provides a dry feeling.
- 2) Decreases chance of infections.
- 3) Helps in mobility and ease of daily routine work.

### **What Should We Not Do In Period? [3]**

- 1) Salt: consuming lots of salt leads to water retention, which can result in bloating.
- 2) Sugar, coffee, alcohol, spicy foods, meat, foods you don't tolerate well.

### **Foods to Eat During the Period [4]**

- 1) Water: plenty of water is required during period to manage dehydration and headaches.
- 2) Fruits: water rich fruits are required. Ex – watermelon, cucumber *etc.*
- 3) Leafy green vegetables.
- 4) Ginger tea: reduces nausea, act as anti inflammatory effect.
- 5) Protein diet.
- 6) Turmeric milk.
- 7) Nuts.
- 8) Peppermint tea: relieve menstrual cramps, nausea and diarrhea.

### **Exercises During Menstrual Period [4]**

- 1) Light walking.
- 2) Running.
- 3) Yoga and pranayama.
- 4) Light lifting.
- 5) Dancing.

### **Exercises Should Be Avoided During Periods [4]**

- 1) Avoid exercises for a prolonged time.
- 2) Inversion poses with yoga is not recommended.



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