

PERIOD HEALTH EMPOWERMENT GUIDE



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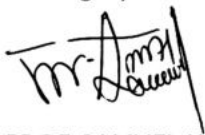
Menstrual health is an essential yet often overlooked aspect of adolescent and women's health. It directly impacts the well-being, dignity, confidence, and full participation of individuals in everyday life, including in school, work, and community engagement. Despite its importance, taboos, stigma, and misinformation continue to prevent open discussions, creating barriers to education, access to products, and informed choices.

The **Period Health Empowerment Guide** is a timely and essential resource that seeks to change that narrative. It is designed not only to provide accurate and practical information on menstrual health but also to empower individuals especially adolescents and young women with the knowledge, tools, and confidence to manage their periods with dignity. The guide serves as a comprehensive tool for educators, health workers, caregivers, and advocates who work with young people and are committed to advancing menstrual equity.

By addressing topics such as menstrual hygiene, myths and misconceptions, emotional wellbeing, and access to menstrual products, this guide contribute to creating a more supportive and inclusive environment where menstruation is understood as natural part of life, not a source of shame.

This guide reflects the commitment of health stakeholders to promoting health literacy and gender equality. It aligns with broader efforts to ensure that no girl misses out on opportunities because of her period.

We encourage all who read this guide to become champions of period health empowerment by breaking the silence, fostering respect, and building a future where every individual can manage their menstruation safely and with dignity.



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OVERVIEW

Menstrual hygiene and Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) are essential components of overall well-being, especially for women and girls. This comprehensive guide empowers individuals with in-depth knowledge and practical advice to manage their menstruation with dignity effectively. By addressing these crucial aspects, the guide aims to foster a greater understanding of menstrual hygiene and health, promote healthy practices, and ensure everyone has the tools and information needed to maintain their well-being. This guide is developed to be carried on the go and can be easily understood by anyone.

KEY TERMINOLOGIES FOR ADOLESCENTS

Anatomy

It is the study of the structure and parts of the body and how they work together.

Body Changes

The physical and hormonal transformations occurring during puberty, including breast development, acne, and voice changes.

Body Safety

The practice of protecting one's physical body from harm, abuse, or exploitation, emphasizing autonomy and consent.

Consent

The voluntary and enthusiastic agreement to engage in any physical or sexual activity, respecting personal boundaries and autonomy.

Growing Up

The process of physical, emotional, and psychological development during puberty, including changes in body shape, size, and function.

Heavy Flow

Menstrual bleeding that is more profuse or prolonged than usual, sometimes requiring extra absorbency or medical attention.

Hygiene

The practice of maintaining cleanliness and self-care, especially during menstruation, to prevent infection and promote health.

Hygiene (Menstrual Hygiene)

The practices and habits of maintaining cleanliness and health during menstruation, including product changes, washing, and self-care.

Menstrual Cycle (Cycle)

The regular, approximately 28-day process by which the uterus prepares for a potential pregnancy, ending with menstruation.

Menstrual Flow (Flow)

The blood and tissue released from the uterus during menstruation, varying in colour, texture, and amount.

Menstrual Health

The overall well-being and normal functioning of the menstrual cycle, influenced by physical, emotional, and lifestyle factors.

Menstruation (Period)

The monthly shedding of the uterine lining, resulting in bleeding, cramps, and hormonal changes.

Menstrual Products

Items used to absorb menstrual flow, such as pads, tampons, cups, or period panties.

Period Cramps (Cramps)

Mild to severe uterine contractions causing discomfort, pain, or spasms in the lower abdomen, back, or thighs.

Period/Menstruation

The monthly shedding of the uterine lining, resulting in bleeding, cramps, and hormonal changes.

PMS (Pre-Menstrual Syndrome)

Physical, emotional, and behavioural changes experienced before menstruation, such as mood swings, bloating, or breast tenderness.

Private Parts

The parts of the body considered personal and intimate, including genitals, breasts, and buttocks.

Relationships

Emotional and romantic connections with others, including friendships, crushes, and romantic partnerships.

Safe Sex

Sexual activity protected by contraceptives, condoms, or other measures to prevent pregnancy, STIs, and unintended consequences.

Safer Sex Practices

Actions taken to minimize risks during sexual activities, such as using condoms, getting tested regularly, and communicating with partners.

Sexual Health

The overall well-being and functioning of the reproductive system, including physical, emotional, and psychological aspects.

Spotting

Light bleeding or discharge before or between periods, often indicating ovulation or hormonal fluctuations.

STIs (Sexually Transmitted Infections)

Infections spread through sexual contacts, such as chlamydia, gonorrhoea, herpes, or HIV.

CHAPTER 1

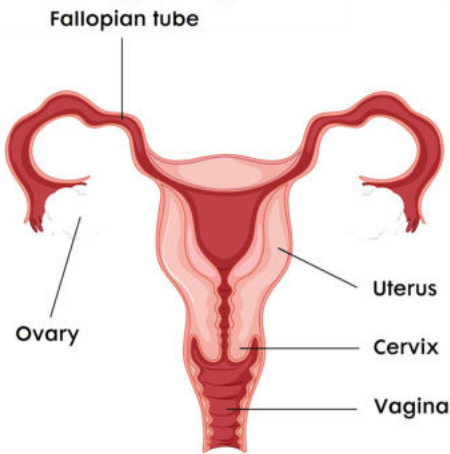
THE AMAZING FEMALE BODY



Introduction

Hey there! Let's talk about something really important: our bodies and health. Menstruation is a natural part of life, but it can be confusing and overwhelming, especially for young people. That's why we created this book - to give you information on menstrual and sexual reproductive health and help you feel more comfortable and confident about your own body. We'll cover the basics of anatomy and physiology, and dive into topics like menstrual cycles, hygiene, and self-care. We'll also tackle common issues like cramps, mood swings, and body changes. Our goal is to give you the knowledge and support you need to take care of yourself, and feel proud and empowered in your own skin. So let's get started. Meet the squad!"

FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM



Uterus (Womb): A muscular, stretchy sac that nurtures a growing baby during pregnancy. Imagine a cozy little home for a tiny human!

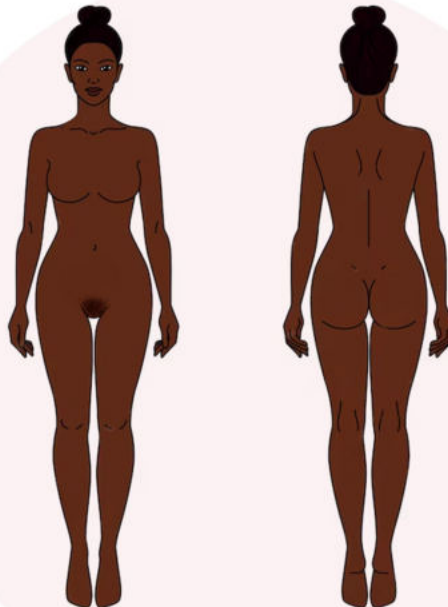
Ovaries: Two small organs that produce eggs (ova) and hormones. Think of them as tiny factories creating special cells!

Fallopian Tubes: Narrow tubes that connect the ovaries to the uterus. Picture two slender highways for the eggs to travel!

Vagina: A muscular canal that connects the outside of the body to the cervix (the lower part of the uterus). It's like a strong, flexible tunnel!

Cervix: The lower, narrow part of the uterus that opens into the vagina. Imagine a tiny gatekeeper that helps keep the uterus safe!

Why is my body changing?



P
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R
T
Y

PUBERTY

Puberty is when your body goes through a bunch of changes. As you grow from a child into a young person. It is when adolescents reach sexual maturity and become capable of reproduction. The changes you experience during puberty are usually different for boys and girls. That's why if you look at all the little boys and girls around you, they seem similar, but the young boys and girls look quite different. It's because they've gone through puberty. The onset and process of puberty differ from person to person and between boys and girls.

WHAT ARE THE CHANGES THAT HAPPEN TO THE BODY DURING PUBERTY

Body parts

You will begin to notice growth in some body parts such as your breasts (for girls) and the penis (for boys) this is a normal process that everyone goes through. Your legs and arms also grow and you become taller.

Voice

Your voice may start sounding 'deeper' or stronger when you speak. This happens little by little and you will probably not notice it yourself!

Hair

Hair starts to grow under your armpits and in your pubic area.

Acne

Little buttons called 'pimples' or 'acne' may start appearing on your face.

Smell

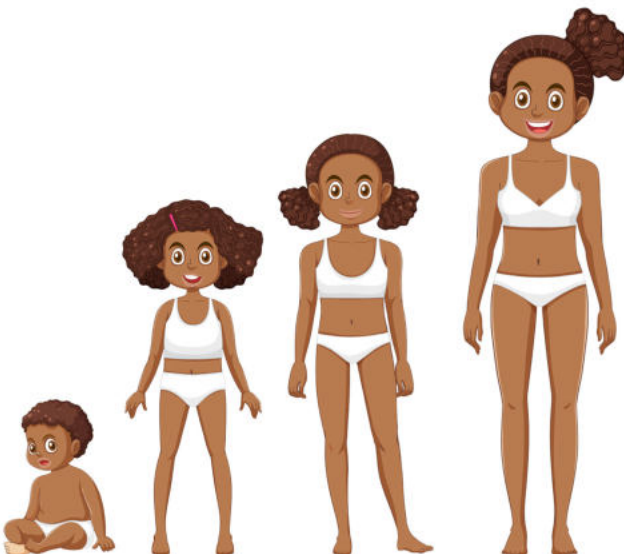
Your body can start smelling more during puberty. To keep smelling fresh, make sure to wash yourself properly, especially your underarms! You can also use a deodorant.

Curves

Typically, girls start to grow wider hips during puberty and their bodies may start to become generally curvier.

Mood swings

Apart from the physical changes to your body, puberty can also cause emotional changes. Normally, you don't 'feel normal'. This is because some of our feelings are controlled by substances in the body called hormones and during puberty, the levels of hormones in your body start changing. Some people feel a bit sad sometimes, others can feel easily upset by little things. That is totally ok! The important thing is to understand what is happening to you and to learn to manage your feelings. Likewise, if you know a young teenager who starts behaving differently, be patient. S/he might be dealing with puberty and trying to manage all these big changes.



CHAPTER 2

MENSTRUATION AND MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT



Introduction



Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is a crucial aspect of overall health and well-being for individuals who menstruate. Proper management of menstrual hygiene not only ensures physical health but also promotes emotional well-being, social acceptance, and empowerment. Despite its importance, menstruation is often surrounded by stigma, misinformation, and a lack of access to necessary resources. This chapter is designed to provide comprehensive information and practical advice on managing menstrual hygiene effectively. It aims to break down the barriers and stigma associated with menstruation, promote open discussions, and advocate for better access to menstrual products and education. By empowering individuals with knowledge and resources, we can create a supportive environment that respects and dignifies the natural process of menstruation.



Menstruation, also known as a period, is the monthly discharge of blood and tissue from the uterus through the vagina. It is a sign that the reproductive system is functioning normally.

Why is blood coming out of my vagina? It's my period!

Blood coming from the vagina is typically due to menstruation, which is a natural part of the menstrual cycle.



Menarche, the first menstrual period, typically occurs during puberty when a girl's body transitions into adulthood. Typically 9 to 14 years is the range for menarche, although it can vary widely.

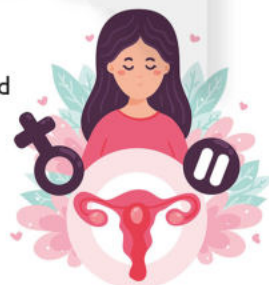


Physical Signs of Menarche



-  **Breast Development (Thelarche):** One of the earliest signs of puberty is the development of breast buds, which usually begins 1-2 years before menarche.
-  **Growth Spurt:** A significant increase in height and weight often occurs before menarche.
-  **Pubic and Underarm Hair:** The appearance of hair in these areas typically begins a year or so before the first period.
-  **Body Odor Changes:** Increased activity of sweat and sebaceous glands can lead to stronger body odour.
-  **Acne:** Hormonal changes during puberty can lead to acne or increased oiliness of the skin.

Menopause is a natural biological process marking the end of a woman's menstrual cycles and reproductive years. It is diagnosed after 12 consecutive months without a menstrual period and typically occurs in women in their late 40s to early 50s.



A menstrual cycle is a monthly process that prepares you for pregnancy. Your body doesn't know when you want to be pregnant, so it gets ready every month, just in case!

The menstrual cycle typically lasts about 28 days, but it can range from 21 to 35 days in adults and from 21 to 45 days in young teens.

During the menstrual cycle, a female's body prepares an egg for potential fertilization. If she does not become pregnant, her body will shed the lining of the uterus, which has thickened in anticipation of a possible pregnancy. This shedding involves the expulsion of the unfertilized egg along with blood and tissue from the uterine lining. This process is known as a period, or menstruation, and typically lasts between 3 to 7 days.

After the period, the menstrual cycle starts anew, repeating approximately every month.

A period is a natural and normal bodily process experienced by most women around the world. The characteristics of periods can vary greatly from person to person. Periods can be long or short, painful or painless, and involve a lot of blood or very little. Each individual's menstrual cycle and period are unique.

The Hormones

Estrogen

The "Builder" hormone
It helps prepare the uterus for a fertilized egg.

Progesterone

The "Preparer" hormone
It helps thicken the uterine lining for a fertilized egg.

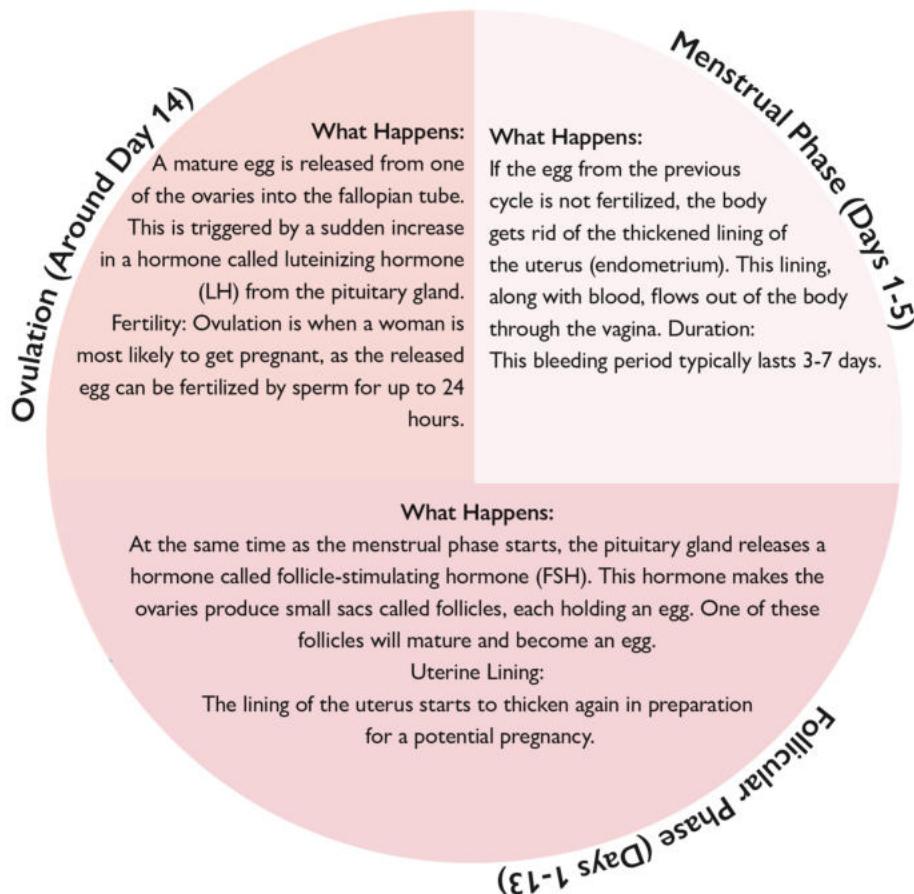
Follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH)

The "Egg-Release" hormone
It helps the ovary release an egg.

Luteinizing Hormone (LH)

The "Ovulation" hormone
It helps the egg release from the ovary.

The Phases of the Menstrual Cycle



Signs of Ovulation

Here are some common signs of ovulation:

1. **Ovulation Pain:** Some people feel a mild cramp or small pain on one side of their lower abdomen.
2. **Increased Cervical Mucus:** You might notice more clear, slippery, or stretchy mucus (like egg whites).
3. **Change in Cervical Position:** Your cervix might feel softer, higher, or more open.
4. **Breast Tenderness:** Some people experience breast tenderness or swelling.
5. **Mood Swings:** Hormonal changes can lead to mood swings or feelings of anxiety.
6. **Energy Boost:** Some people feel more energetic or alert.
7. **Sense of Smell:** Your sense of smell might become stronger.
8. **Libido Increase:** You might feel more interested in sex.
9. **Light Bleeding or Spotting:** Some people experience light bleeding or spotting.
10. **Body Temperature Change:** Your body temperature might rise slightly (about 0.4°F).

Note:

Remember, not everyone experiences all of these signs, and their intensity can vary from person to person. Keep in mind that these signs can also be subtle, so it's essential to pay attention to your body and track your cycle to understand your unique signs of ovulation better.

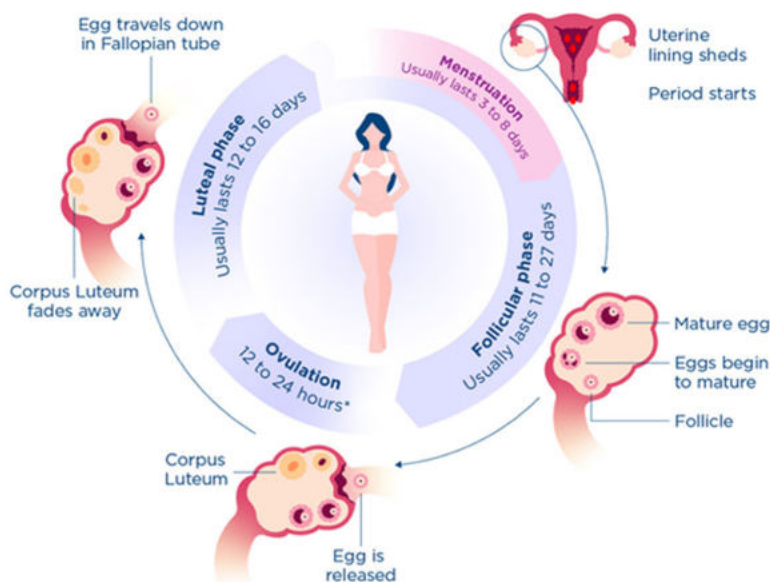
Luteal Phase (Days 15-28)

What Happens:

After ovulation, the empty follicle transforms into a structure called the corpus luteum, which produces progesterone. Progesterone helps thicken the uterine lining further, preparing it for the possible implantation of a fertilized egg.

Hormonal Changes: If fertilization does not occur, hormone levels decline towards the end of this phase, leading to the shedding of the uterine lining and the start of a new menstrual cycle.

Example of a typical menstrual cycle



Menstrual hygiene management (MHM)
is essential for health, comfort, and dignity
during menstruation.

Reusable Cloth

Reusable cloth pads are a sustainable and cost-effective alternative to disposables. Change regularly, wash with soap and water, and dry in sunlight for hygiene.



Reusable Cloth Pads

After washing your hands, you put it inside your underwear with the absorbent side facing your vagina. During the day, it absorbs the blood and protects you. After around 4-8 hours, you should remove the pad, neatly wrap it, put it in a bin, and put a new one on. Some pads are reusable. A reusable pad usually has a thick absorbent layer inside and a cloth material sewn around it. If your pad is a reusable one, you can put it in a clean place after using it.

- Fold the reusable pad, and place it in its bag, before placing it in your bag or pocket.
- Make sure you wash it with clean water and soap as much as you can so you can use it when you next need it.
- Make sure you dry it in the sun or iron it.
- Fold it and keep it in its bag.

Reusable pads are economical and they are also good for the environment as they don't produce waste.

Tampons

Tampons are cylindrical menstrual products made of absorbent material like cotton. They come in different sizes based on flow and vaginal opening size. Change every 4-8 hours and use the lowest absorbency needed to prevent Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). Dispose of used tampons



How it works:

After washing your hands, open your legs either in a standing or sitting position and gently insert the tampon into your vagina. During the day, it absorbs the blood and protects you.

Disposable Sanitary Pads

Sanitary pads are menstrual hygiene products worn in underwear to absorb menstrual blood and prevent leaks. They should be changed every 4-6 hours for hygiene and comfort.



Menstrual Cup

A menstrual cup is a reusable, non-toxic plastic cup used to collect menstrual blood. Available in different sizes based on flow and vaginal opening size, it can be worn for up to 12 hours. Clean thoroughly before reinserting and sanitize between cycles for proper hygiene.





5 min

1

Boil menstrual cup for 5 minutes before first use



2

Wash your hands



3

Fold it tightly in half into a 'C' shape



4

With one hand, put the folded cup inside the vagina



5

Rotate the cup until it opens up



6

Keep the menstrual cup in for 4-8 hours



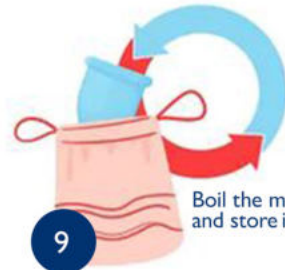
7

Empty the cup



8

Wash thoroughly



9

Boil the menstrual cup and store in a cloth bag

Menstrual Hygiene Titbits

- Wash/bath regularly
 - Wash your vagina at least twice a day during your menstruation. (NB: clean from front to back and avoid getting soap inside your vagina)
 - Wash your hands under running water with soap
 - Keep your clothes clean and well-washed
 - Change underwear/menstrual products (make sure hands are clean!)
1. Sanitary Pads (Disposable): Absorbent pads attached to underwear to absorb menstrual flow.
 2. Tampons (Disposable): Inserted into the vagina to absorb menstrual flow, changed every 4-8 hours.
 3. Menstrual Cups (Reusable): Inserted into the vagina to collect menstrual flow, emptied and cleaned every 12 hours.
 4. Reusable Pads (Cloth Pads): Washable pads made of absorbent materials, attached to underwear.
 5. Tampon Applicators: Plastic or cardboard tools are used to insert tampons into the vagina.

How will a period feel?

Most women experience changes in mood and health in their cycle. This can be before, during or after your period, and can include:

- Abdominal cramps (pain in the lower abdomen)
- Changes in appetite, or hunger for specific foods
- Pain in your head or lower back
- Changes in mood
- Breast sensitivity
- Sore, swollen and tender breasts
- Tiredness

When do I See a doctor?

It's important to consult a healthcare provider if you experience:

- Heavy or prolonged bleeding
- Bleeding between periods
- Bleeding after sex
- Severe pain
- Severe pain
- Symptoms of pregnancy (such as a missed period followed by bleeding)
- Any other unusual symptoms

How do I make my period feel better?

Discomfort is normal, and is a natural part of this process. It is your body's way of telling you to rest and look after yourself. Periods can be made less painful by:



Drinking enough water



Placing a warm towel or water bottle on your stomach



Take painkillers, for example paracetamol (consult a health professional before taking any medicine!)



Engage in light physical activities like brisk walk



Move and stretch your body regularly



Taking time to rest

How do I know if something is wrong?

Always listen to your body and talk to someone (teacher, doctor, family member) if something feels wrong. Periods usually happen monthly but can be irregular, which is normal. If period pain is very bad, tell someone you trust. Stress or life changes can affect your period timing.

After a few years, you'll get to know your cycle and notice if it changes. If you miss a period and had sex recently, you might be pregnant.

Remember

If you feel something is wrong, speak up! Talk to a trusted adult, doctor, or friend.

- Irregular periods are common, but if you experience:
- Severe pain that interferes with daily life
- Unexpected changes in your cycle
- Missed period after having sex
- seek help and guidance.



Nutrition During Menstruation

Menstruation is a natural part of life, and eating the right foods can help make this easier. Nutrition is important for your overall health. It means eating the right balance of foods to keep your body working well. Good nutrition helps you grow, fix any damage in your body, and have enough energy. Eating well is especially important because your body is growing and changing quickly. It also helps manage menstrual health. What you eat can have big effects on how you feel during your periods. Some foods can help reduce symptoms like cramps, bloating, mood swings, and tiredness, while others can cause worse symptoms. By learning how food affects your periods, you can choose foods that help you feel better and manage your menstrual health more easily.

Note:

Did you know that when you have your period, certain foods can make things like cramps, bloating, mood swings, and feeling tired worse? Paying attention to what you eat during this time can help you feel better and manage these symptoms more easily.

Some of the foods to avoid during your period are explained below:

1. **Caffeine:** Having caffeine can make you feel more anxious and easily annoyed, which might make you feel more tense during your period. Common sources of caffeine include coffee, energy drinks, and chocolate.
2. **Salty Foods:** Eating too much salt can make your body hold onto water, which can cause bloating and make you feel uncomfortable. Examples are chips and processed foods.
3. **Sugary Foods:** Eating sugary foods can make your blood sugar go up and down quickly, causing you to feel very tired and making mood swings worse. Examples are toffees, pastries, and drinks.

Key Nutrients During Menstruation

Certain foods can help reduce pain and discomfort during your period and also replace the blood you lose. The infographic below shows some important nutrients with their functions and sources:

Iron Replaces lost blood and prevents anemia Sources: Kontomire, lettuce, beans, meat fish, etc.	Calcium Support bone health and help reduce cramps Sources: Milk, yogurt, aleefu, bokoboko, kontomire, salmon, anchovies, etc
Vitamin B6 Helps with mood swings and provides energy Sources: chicken, fish, millet, groundnuts, potatoes, avocado, etc	Omega-3 Reduces cramps Sources: Fish, groundnuts

Summary

What you eat affects your periods during your teenage years. Eating well is super important for your body, as it grows and changes fast during this time. Certain foods, like leafy greens and lean meats, can help with period symptoms like cramps and mood swings. They give your body what it needs to stay strong. Building healthy habits, like eating regular meals and drinking enough water, also helps you feel better during your periods and as you grow up.



Myths

(false beliefs)

Menstruation is a curse or punishment from the gods.

Women should not cook or touch food during their period because they're unclean & impure.

Menstruation is a private matter that should not be discussed.

PMS is just an excuse for women to be moody and irritable.

You can't get pregnant during your period.

Your period should last exactly one week each month.

Sex will make the pain (cramps) go away.



Facts

Menstruation is a natural bodily function and is not a curse or punishment. Women should not be shamed or ostracised for menstruating.

There is no scientific evidence to support the belief that women should not cook or touch food during their period. Women should practice good hygiene, such as washing their hands before handling food, regardless of whether or not they are menstruating.

Menstruation is a natural bodily function that affects half of the population. It is important to discuss menstruation openly and without shame to promote awareness and education.

PMS (premenstrual syndrome) is a real condition caused by hormonal changes in the body. Symptoms can include mood swings, irritability, and physical discomfort.

It is highly possible to get pregnant during menstruation when you have unprotected sex.

Every woman's body varies, and so does menstruation. It's normal to flow beyond seven days; make it a point to consult your gynecologist (specialist doctor) if it's

Sex does not take menstrual cramps away. It's normal to experience cramps and abdominal pains during your period.

CHAPTER 3

SEX EDUCATION



Sex education is a crucial component of comprehensive education that provides adolescents with knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to sexual health and reproduction. It aims to equip adolescents with accurate information to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive lives.

What is Sexual Intercourse?

Sexual intercourse, is often simply referred to as "sex". This involves the penetration of the vagina by the penis (vaginal intercourse). Once a girl starts puberty and has her period, she can become pregnant when she has unprotected sex.

Primarily, sex is to make babies.

When a girl reaches puberty and starts menstruating, she can become pregnant if she engages in unprotected sexual intercourse. Sexual intercourse is typically defined as penetration of the vagina by a penis, and its primary biological purpose is reproduction.

However, it's important to understand that sexual activity can lead to unintended pregnancy. If you're not ready to become a parent, it's completely okay to choose abstinence (not having sexual intercourse). The most effective way to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) is to avoid sexual activity altogether. However, if you do choose to engage in sexual activity, practicing safe sex by using contraceptives like condoms can reduce the risk of pregnancy and STIs.

It's essential to consult a trusted adult or healthcare provider to learn more about safe sexual practices and maintaining your reproductive health."

Safe sex refers to practices that reduce the risk of unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) while engaging in sexual activity

'Safe sex' is sex that is:

- Consensual
- Free from STDs
- Free from pregnancy



What is Consent and What is Consensual sex?

Consent

Consent means asking someone if it's okay to do something with them. This is important in all situations, not just sex. Make sure the other person is comfortable and willing to participate.

Remember

consent is important for all sexual activities, not just sex itself.

Consensual sex

Sex with consent means both people agree to have sex. If one person wants to, but the other doesn't, it's not consensual. Sex without consent is rape, and it's illegal.

If someone says no, don't try to change their mind. Make sure they feel safe and comfortable saying no. You can ask for consent by asking, "Do you want to have sex with me?" If they say, "Yes, I want to," then you have their consent.



Guy: [Gazing into your eyes] May I kiss you?

Lady: [Smiling warmly] Yes.

[They lean in gently, sharing a soft, tender kiss. The moment lingers, filled with warmth and affection.]



Guy: [Looking into your eyes, voice gentle] Would you like to take this further?

[You pause for a moment, considering. They notice and reassure you.]



Lady: [Feeling safe and appreciated, you nod] I'd like that.

[A sense of mutual respect fills the air as you both continue at a comfortable pace, knowing you're on the same page.]



What happens if I'm not sure?

If you're not ready for sex, say no. Only have sex when you feel ready. You can change your mind after saying yes, but tell your partner. If they keep trying to have sex when you say no, it's rape.

Always make sure your partner is okay with what you're doing. If you're unsure, ask: "Is this okay?" or "Are you comfortable?"

Remember, consent is an ongoing conversation, and it's important to prioritize your partner's comfort and consent throughout any sexual activity.



The person does not want to have sex with you. You don't have consent "No"

The person is showing signs of hesitation either verbally or physically. There isn't absolute certainty. You don't have consent. "I am not sure yet", "Let's slow down", "Maybe I'd like to have sex with you, but I need some more time to think."

The person is enthusiastic and excited. You have consent at this moment. "Yes", "Yes I want to have sex with you, "Let's do it".



RAPE

What happens if me or someone I know is raped?

If you said no but your partner did not listen, you should tell someone you trust as soon as possible. You can tell:

- A good friend
- An adult you trust, for example, your parents, a teacher, or an older person you are close with
- A healthcare professional: a doctor, nurse, or therapist
- The police

Note:

You may feel too ashamed or afraid - victims of rape often feel very distressed, embarrassed, or even angry about what happened. Do remember that these feelings are normal and completely justified.

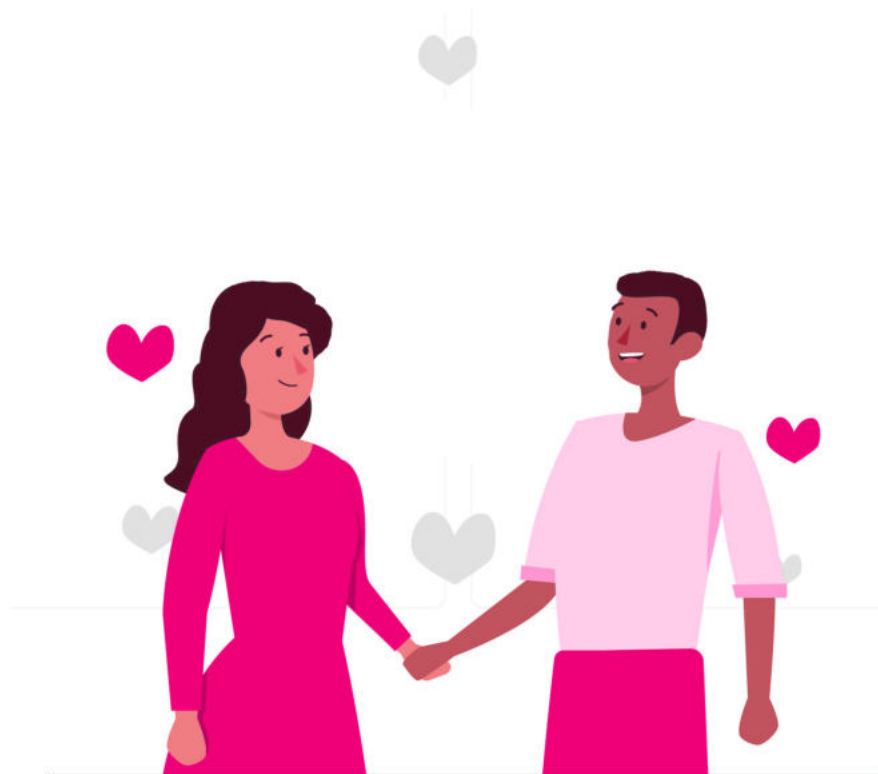
If you tell someone about it, you may feel better. If someone is a rapist, they often do it more than once. This means that by telling someone, you can help stop them.

If someone you know has been raped:

- Respect them: Never tell anyone without their permission; respect their trust in you.
- Listen: show that you are on their side, but let them speak without interruption.
- Be supportive: Encourage them to find help, and go with them if they are too afraid.

REMEMBER

There is nothing wrong with rape victims, and it is not their fault. No one “deserves” rape. Telling someone what happened is very brave, and they should not be shamed!



CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING PREGNANCY



Pregnancy is the period during which a baby develops inside a woman's uterus, typically lasting about 40 weeks from the last menstrual period to childbirth. The process starts with fertilization when a sperm cell from the father merges with an egg cell from the mother.

STAGES OF PREGNANCY



The Role of Sperm and Egg

Sperm: Sperms are the male reproductive cells produced in the testes. Millions of sperm are released during ejaculation. **Egg:** The egg is the female reproductive cell released from the ovaries. Typically, one egg is released each month during ovulation. **Fun Fact:** "Did you know that a single ejaculation can contain up to 300 million sperm?"

How Does Pregnancy Occur



Fertilization: Fertilization happens when a sperm cell meets and merges with an egg cell in the fallopian tube.

Implantation: The fertilized egg travels down the fallopian tube and attaches to the lining of the uterus.

Common Signs and Symptoms of Pregnancy

-  Missed periods
-  Breast tenderness
-  Nausea (morning sickness)
-  Fatigue



Teenage Pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy refers to a pregnancy occurring in a young woman between the ages of 13 and 19. It can have significant impacts on the health, education, and social lives of young parents

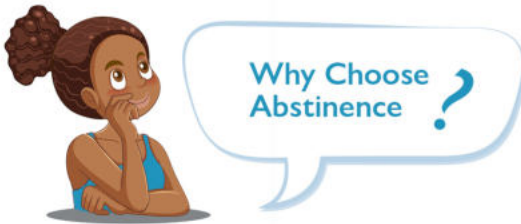
Causes of Teenage Pregnancy

- Inadequate sexual education can lead to a lack of understanding about contraception and safe sex practices.
- Poverty, lack of access to healthcare, and low educational attainment can contribute to higher rates of teenage pregnancy.
- Family structure and dynamics, such as single-parent households or family history of teenage pregnancies, can influence rates.
- Peer pressure to engage in sexual activity or be influenced by media portrayals of sex.
- Cultural norms and religious beliefs can impact attitudes toward contraception and premarital sex.

Prevention of Unintended Pregnancy

1. Abstinence

Abstinence is choosing not to have sexual intercourse. This can be a temporary or long-term decision.



- 1 The only method that is 100% effective in preventing pregnancy and STIs.
- 2 No side effects or health risks associated with contraceptives.
- 3 Reduces the emotional stress and complexity that can come with sexual relationships.
- 4 Allows individuals to make clear, confident choices about their bodies and relationships.

Myths and Facts:

Myth: Abstinence is old-fashioned.

Fact: Abstinence is a valid choice for many people today, regardless of age.

Myth: You can't be intimate if you're abstinent.

Fact: There are many ways to show intimacy and affection that don't involve sexual intercourse.

Handling Peer Pressure

- » Stand Firm: It's okay to say no. Your true friends will respect your choices.
- » Strategies: Have responses ready for situations where you might feel pressured. Practice saying, 'I'm not ready,' or 'I'm focusing on other things right now.'
- » Support System: Surround yourself with supportive friends who respect your decisions.

Supporting Friends Who Choose Abstinence



- Support your friends in their decisions and don't pressure them.
- Encourage open conversations and be a good listener.
- Respecting their choice sets a positive example for others

2. Contraceptives

Contraceptives, also known as birth control, are methods used to prevent pregnancy. They come in different forms to suit various needs and lifestyles. Using contraception is key to preventing unintended pregnancies. Let's review the most common options available to teens:

1. Barrier Methods (Condom)

Made of very thin latex (rubber) and acts as a barrier between a penis and the vagina.

Male Condoms: Worn over the penis to prevent sperm from entering the vagina. They also protect against STIs.

Female Condoms: Inserted into the vagina, offering similar protection.

Effectiveness: 85-98% effective when used correctly.

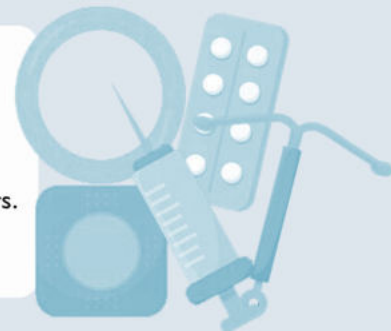


2. Hormonal Methods

Birth Control Pills: Taken daily, they release hormones to prevent ovulation. 91-99% effective.

Injections: Given every three months by a healthcare provider. 94-99% effective.

Implants: A small rod placed under the skin of the arm, effective for up to 3 years. 99% effective



CHAPTER 5

SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS AND DISEASES



Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) are infections that are primarily spread through unprotected sexual contact, including vaginal, anal, and oral sex. They can affect anyone who is sexually active, regardless of age, gender, or sexual orientation. When these infections result in a disease with noticeable symptoms, they are often referred to as STDs.

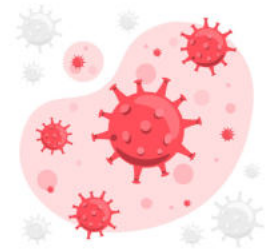
Types

There are many different types of STIs/STDs, including:

- Chlamydia
- Gonorrhea
- Syphilis
- HIV/AIDS
- Herpes (HSV)
- HPV (Human Papillomavirus)
- Hepatitis B and C
- Trichomoniasis

Mode of Transmission

Most commonly transmitted through vaginal, anal, and oral sex, but can also be spread through non-sexual means such as blood transfusions or shared needles



Symptoms

Symptoms of STDs can vary widely. Some people may have no symptoms at all, while others may experience:

- Pain when peeing
- Rashes, lumps, or growths around the genitalia
- Pain during sex or urination
- Bleeding after sex or between periods
- Pain in the stomach
- Abnormal discharge (green/yellow, thick, frothy, smelly)
- Soreness swelling or itching around the vagina/anus
- Change in the flow of urine
- 1 or more painless growths/lumps around the vagina/anus
- Blisters that can burst leaving open sores around the vagina, anus, or thighs
- Intense itching (especially at night)
- Feeling generally unwell, for example by getting frequent headaches

If you notice any of these, you must see a healthcare professional immediately. Sometimes you may have an infection without knowing, hence why it is important to try and visit a sexual health clinic often, so you can get tested. If you find out you have an STI, you must alert your sexual partner(s) so they can get treated and avoid spreading it.

REMEMBER

It's important to understand that vaginal discharge is a normal part of a healthy reproductive system.



Differences between normal and abnormal vaginal discharge

	Normal vaginal discharge	Abnormal vaginal discharge
Colour	Clear, white, or slightly milky.	Green or Yellow: This could indicate an infection, such as trichomoniasis. Gray: Often associated with bacterial vaginosis. Bloody or Brown (when not menstruating): This could be a sign of an infection, irregular menstruation, or, in rare cases, a more serious condition.
Consistency	Can vary from thin and watery to slightly thick and sticky.	Thick and Curdy: Like cottage cheese, which can indicate a yeast infection. Frothy: Often associated with trichomoniasis.
Amount	Varies throughout the menstrual cycle, often increasing during ovulation sexual arousal, or pregnancy.	
Odor	Odorless	Strong- or Foul-Smelling: This could indicate an infection like bacterial vaginosis or trichomoniasis.

Note: Normal vaginal discharge:

- Keeps the vaginal tissues healthy and lubricated.
- Helps to remove dead cells and bacteria, maintaining a healthy balance of vaginal flora.
- Acts as a barrier against infections by maintaining an acidic environment.

Prevention

Preventing STIs involves several strategies:

- Abstinence
- Consistent and correct use of condoms during sexual activity
- Regular STI testing, especially for sexually active individuals
- Vaccinations for preventable STIs like HPV and Hepatitis B
- Limiting the number of sexual partners

REMEMBER

Even if you don't have symptoms, you may still be infected! If you're going to have sex you should always use protection.



IT'S NOT
A TABOO!



It's time to break down barriers and embrace open, honest conversations about topics like sexuality, menstruation, and mental health.

Honouring Your Feelings

Your feelings and well-being should always come first in any situation. Trusting yourself and prioritizing your happiness and safety are fundamental aspects of self-care and empowerment.

Destigmatizing Menstruation

Menstruation is a natural and essential process that should be normalized and respected. Challenging societal norms and openly discussing menstruation helps break down stigma and fosters a culture of understanding and support.

Empowerment and Support

Individuals who menstruate should never feel ashamed or sidelined because of their natural biological process. Every person deserves to be recognized for their strengths and capabilities, regardless of their gender or menstrual status.

Education and Awareness

Education is a powerful tool for dismantling stigma and promoting inclusivity. By increasing awareness and understanding of menstruation and other sensitive topics, we can create a more compassionate and respectful society.

Respecting Individual Choices

Respecting menstruation means respecting individual choices and experiences. Whether someone chooses to openly celebrate their menstruation or keep it private, it's essential to honor their autonomy and diversity of perspectives.

Understanding Trauma

Traumatic experiences like sexual assault do not define a person's identity or worth. With time, support, and the right resources, individuals can heal and overcome their experiences, reclaiming their dignity and resilience.



CHAPTER 6

CLIMATE CHANGE AND PERIOD



What is climate change?

Climate refers to the long-term patterns and averages of weather conditions in a specific region over a long period, say 30 years. When the climate of a particular region starts to move away from normal and this change persists for a longer time (about 30 years), then there is climate change.

How do you notice this change?

Climate change is causing changes in weather patterns, like shifts in temperature and rainfall. This means we can experience unusual weather, like harmattan winds in months when we normally wouldn't. Harmattan, which usually brings dry and dusty winds, might now happen at unexpected times, affecting our daily lives and the environment around us.

What brings about this change?

It is largely driven by human activities, such as burning fossil fuels and deforestation, leading to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

Greenhouse gas emissions refer to the release of gasses into the Earth's atmosphere that can trap heat, leading to the warming of the planet or a rise in global temperature.

The primary greenhouse gasses include carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, and fluorinated gasses.

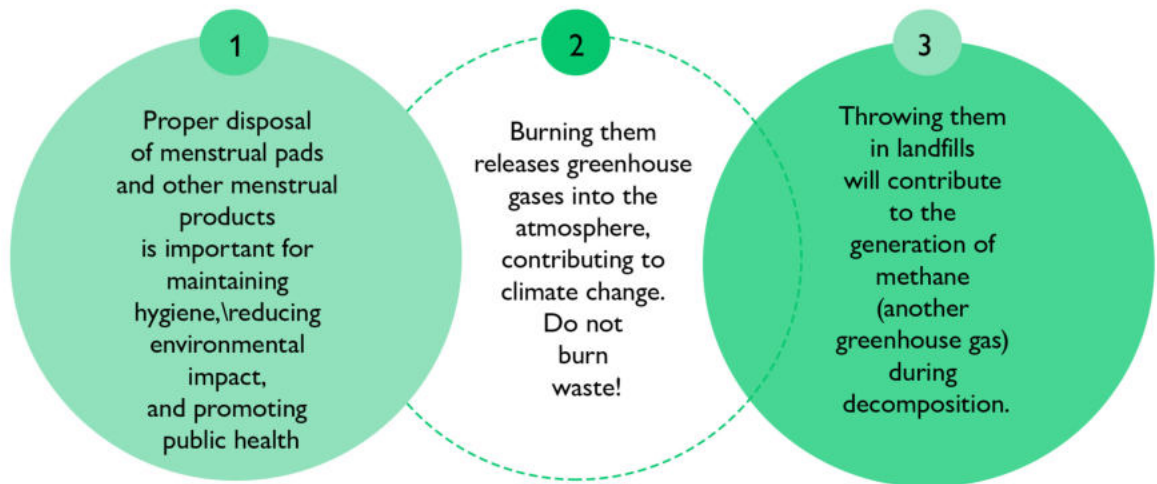
Now what is the relationship between climate change and period?

Climate change and menstrual health (periods) might not seem directly related, but there are several connections between the two, primarily through the lens of public health, environmental impact, and socio-economic factors. Here's how climate change can influence menstrual health and management:

1. **Heat stress:** Rising temperatures and heat waves can lead to heat stress, which can cause menstrual irregularities, cramps, and heavy bleeding.
2. **Hormonal changes:** Climate change can disrupt hormonal balances, leading to changes in menstrual cycles, fertility, and reproductive health.
3. **Water scarcity:** Droughts and water shortages can limit access to clean water, exacerbating menstrual health challenges.
4. **Displacement and stress:** Climate-related disasters and displacement can cause stress, which can affect menstrual cycles and overall reproductive health.
5. **Access to healthcare:** Climate change can impact access to healthcare services, including reproductive healthcare and menstrual health support.
6. **Nutritional Deficiencies:** Extreme weather can affect food production, leading to malnutrition. Nutritional deficiencies can impact menstrual cycles, causing irregularities and other menstrual health issues.

7. **School Attendance:** In many parts of the world, inadequate menstrual hygiene facilities in schools can lead to absenteeism. Climate change-related disruptions like floods and hurricanes can further exacerbate this issue by damaging school infrastructure or making it difficult for girls to attend school during menstruation.
8. **Waste Management:** Conventional (disposable) menstrual products contribute to environmental pollution, especially plastic waste. These end up in landfills, adding up to the contribution of greenhouse gases like methane, causing climate change. This becomes a cycle and needs to be stopped.
9. **Increased Costs:** Natural disasters can lead to increased costs of goods, including menstrual products. This can disproportionately affect women and girls in low-income households.

How do you dispose of your menstrual pads and other products?



Put the wrapped pad or tampon in a regular trash bin. Do not flush them down the toilet as they can cause blockages and are not biodegradable.



What can I do?

1. Use menstrual products that are environmentally friendly and promote sustainability. Fortunately, there are greener and healthier options for managing periods. Reusable sanitary pads, menstrual cups, and organic tampons are becoming more popular because they are better for the environment.
2. Choosing eco-friendly menstrual products not only lessens the environmental burden but also brings personal benefits. These alternatives are cost-effective in the long run, as they are reusable and durable. Moreover, they often lack the harmful chemicals found in some traditional products, promoting better health and well-being.
3. Do not burn used menstrual pads or any other waste. Put them in their required bins.

In Conclusion

Think about how your choices affect the environment, especially during your period. Try to pick products that are good for the planet. Using reusable pads, menstrual cups, or organic tampons can help reduce waste and pollution. By choosing these eco-friendly options, you can make a positive impact on the environment and help save resources. Together, our smart choices can make a big difference.

