

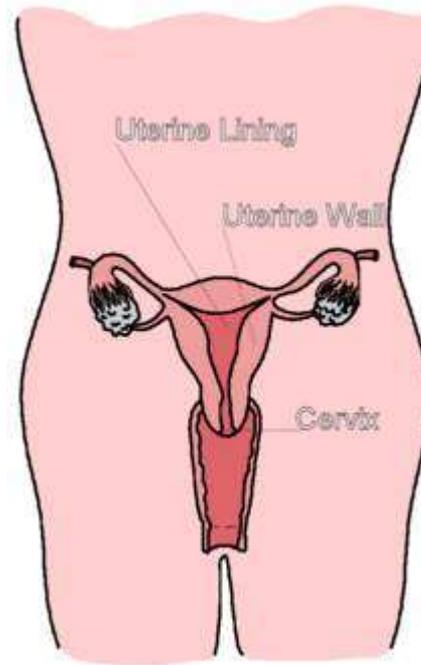
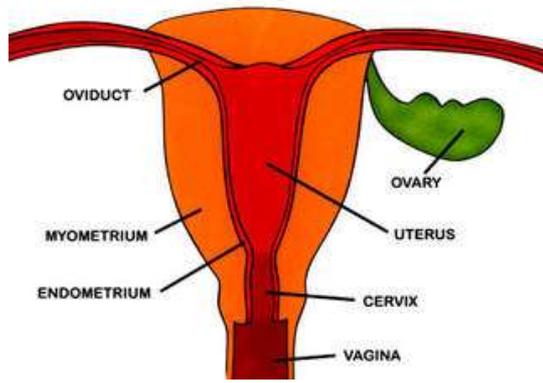
Menstrual Hygiene

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Resource:

Why considering menstrual hygiene is important for all

- **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 parts of the world, it remains taboo and is rarely talked about**
- **Currently, cultural practices and taboos around menstruation impact negatively on the lives of women and girls, and reinforce gender inequities and exclusion.**



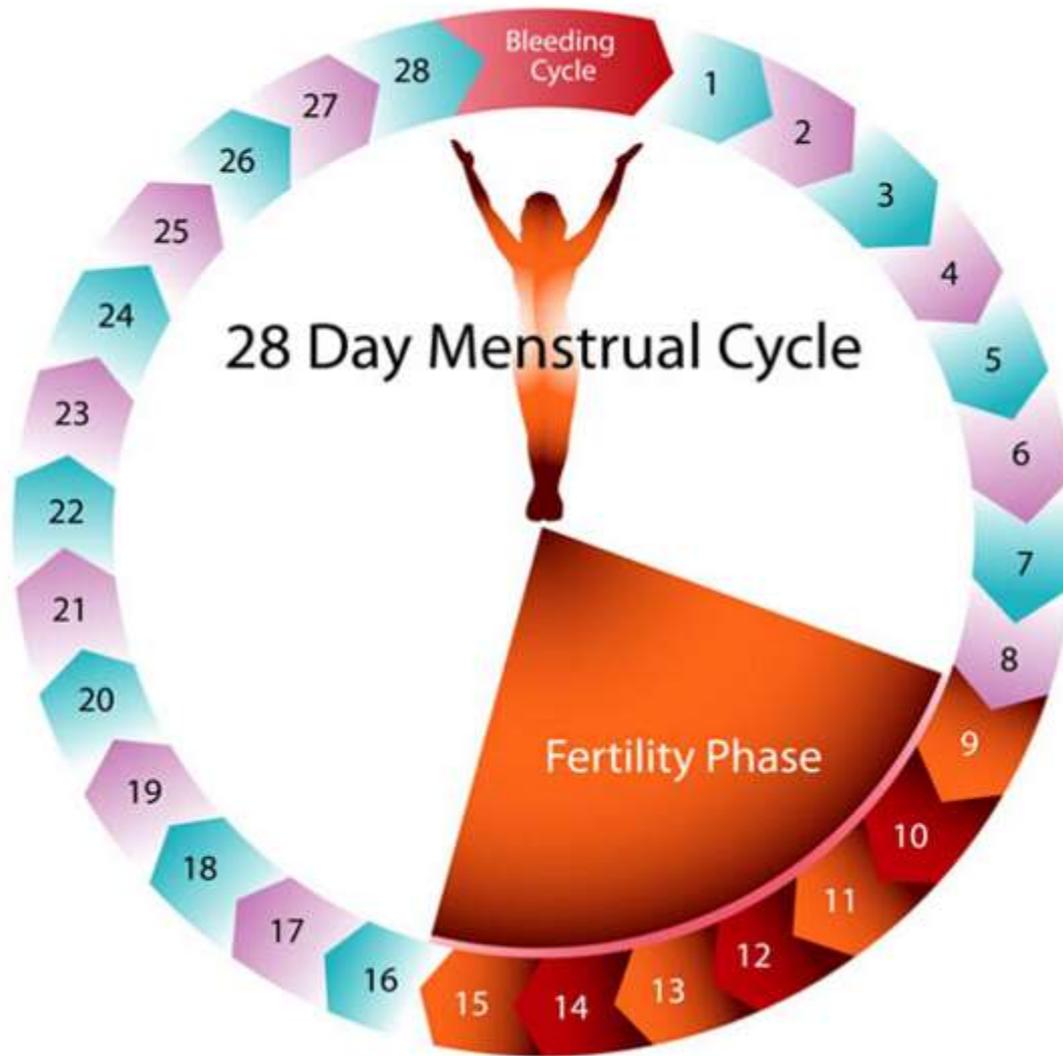
What is menstruation?

- **Girls typically start to menstruate ('the time of menarche') during puberty or adolescence, typically between the ages of ten and 19**
- **. At this time, they experience physical changes (eg growing breasts, wider hips and body hair) and emotional changes due to hormones.**
- **Menstruation continues until they reach menopause, when menstruation ends, usually between their late forties and mid fifties**
- **Menstruation is also sometimes known as 'menses' or described as a 'menstrual period'.**



The female reproductive system

- **The menstrual cycle is usually around 28 days but can vary from 21 to 35 days.**
- **Each cycle involves the release of an egg (ovulation) which moves into the uterus through the fallopian tubes. Tissue and blood start to line the walls of the uterus for fertilisation.**
- **If the egg is not fertilised, the lining of the uterus is shed through the vagina along with blood.**
- **The bleeding generally lasts between two and seven days, with some lighter flow and some heavier flow days.**
- **The cycle is often irregular for the first year or two after menstruation begins.**



Medical term	Definition or main symptom
Menstruation	The shedding of the uterine lining occurring on a regular basis in reproductive-aged females in monthly menstrual cycles.
Pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS)	Consistent and severe pattern of emotional and physical symptoms, such as pain, bloating and mood changes that occur in the latter part of the menstrual cycle.
irregular cycles	Unpredictable long and short cycles with varying degrees of blood loss. Also known as menstrual irregularities. Can include some of the symptoms listed above.
Menorrhagia	Excessive, very heavy and prolonged bleeding (this can lead to anaemia and be fatal if untreated).
Polymenorrhea	Frequent periods or short cycles (less than 21 days).
Amenorrhea	No bleeding for three or more months.
Oligomenorrhea	Light or infrequent periods (menstrual cycles of 35-90 days).
Dysmenorrhea	Pain, backaches, abdominal pain or cramps during menstruation.

first experience

- Fear
- Shame
- Embarrassment

TABOOS

I do not attend school:
Afganistan

29%

West Bengal

1

I can't attend a religious function:
Nepal 67%
West Bengal 71%

I have to sleep separately from other

members

of my family:

Nepal 2

I can't eat certain

foods

I am not allowed to cook:

Nepal 46%

I do not wash my body/shower/bathe :

Afganistan 70%

Gujarat (India)

98%

Iran 52%

I do not have any restrictions placed on me:

Nepal 11%

West Bengal 15%

Afganistan 15%

I do not play/ play sports:

Nepal 10%

West

Bengal 43

Afganistan

70%

The absence of periods (amenorrhea) is normal in...

- **During pregnancy.**
- **During frequent breastfeeding (lactational amenorrhea).**
- **At the time of menarche (when menstruation first begins**
- **When food intake is severely limited.**
- **Following the menopause when menstruation ceases.**



Potential risks to health of poor menstrual hygiene

1. Unclean sanitary pads/materials Bacteria may cause local infections or travel up the vagina and enter the uterine cavity
1. Changing pads infrequently Wet pads can cause skin irritation which can then become infected if the skin becomes broken.
2. Insertion of unclean material into vagina Bacteria potentially have easier access to the cervix and the uterine cavity.

•Using highly absorbent tampons during a Toxic Shock Syndrome

•Use of tampons when not menstruating Can lead to vaginal irritation and delay the seeking of medical advice (eg to absorb vaginal secretions) for the cause of unusual vaginal discharge³⁰

•Wiping from back to front following urination or defecation (or urethra) more likely. Makes the introduction of bacteria from the bowel into the vagina more likely.

•Unprotected sex Possible increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (see below) or the transmission of HIV or Hepatitis B during menstruation. the body

•Unsafe disposal of used sanitary materials Risk of infecting others, especially with Hepatitis B (HIV and other blood Hepatitis viruses do not survive for long outside the body and pose a minimal risk except where there is direct contact with blood just leaving

Frequent douching (forcing liquid into the vagina) Can facilitate the introduction of bacteria into the uterine cavity

Lack of hand-washing after changing a condom Can lead to the spread of infections such as Hepatitis B or Thrush

How to manage your first period?

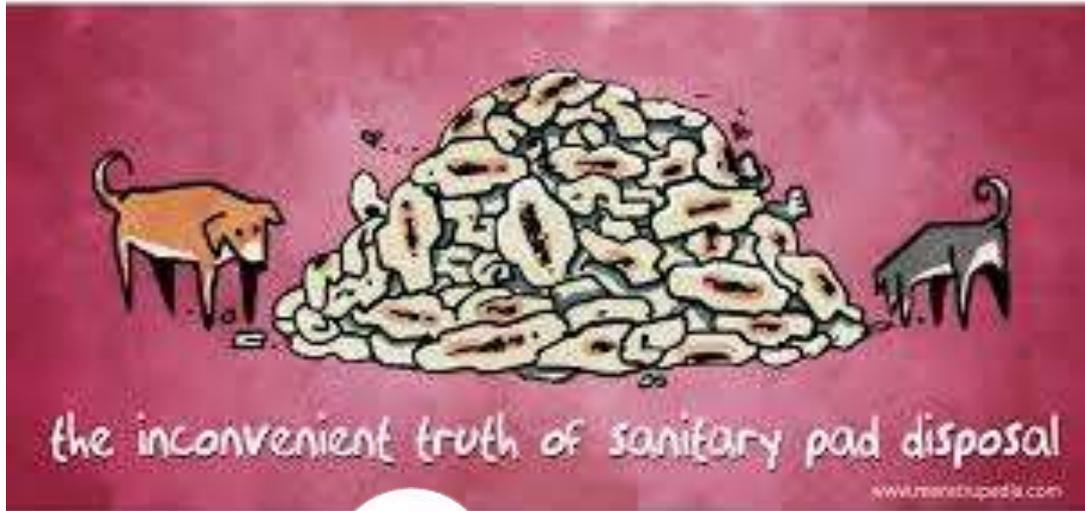
- Talk to other girls and women, such as your mother, sister, aunt, grandmother, female friend or an older woman in your community.
- Don't be afraid. It can be scary to see the blood on your underwear, but it is normal and natural.
- If you are at school, tell the matron, a female teacher or a fellow student.
- Feel proud! Your body is developing into that of a young woman.

How to capture the blood?

- Place a cloth, pad, cotton or tissue on your underwear.
- Never insert the material inside your vagina.
- Change the cloth, pad, cotton or tissue every two to six hours or more frequently if you think that the blood flow is getting heavy.

How to dispose of the cloth, pad, cotton or tissue?

- If you are re-using a cloth, put it into a plastic bag until you can wash it with hot water and soap and then dry it in the sunshine or iron it.
- If you are using a pad, tissue or cotton, or want to dispose of your cloth, wrap it in paper to make a clean package and put it in the bin so it can be burned later.
- If there is no other option, drop it straight in the latrine pit as long as it is not a water seal pour flush pan as this could easily become blocked.



How to keep yourself clean during your period?

- **Every day (morning and evening if possible) wash your genitals with soap and water.**
- **Keep unused cloths and pads clean (wrapped in tissue or plastic bag) for further use.**
- **Pat the area dry with a cloth, and put a fresh cloth (such as a langa, sari or other local cloth), pad, cotton or tissue on your underwear.**
- **Always wipe from front to back after defecation.**
- **Never douche (washing out the vagina with water).**

How to manage the stomach pain from your period?

- **You can put a bottle with hot water on your stomach area when you are resting.**
- **Try to do some exercises and keep your body active.**
- **You can take painkiller medicines every four to six hours on the most painful days.**

To manage menstruation hygienically,

- **it is essential that women and girls have access to water and sanitation.**
- **They need somewhere private to change sanitary cloths or pads;**
- **clean water for washing their hands and used cloths;**
- **And facilities for safely disposing of used materials or a place to dry them if reusable.**
- **There is also a need for both men and women to have a greater awareness of menstrual hygiene.**

The End