

Training Manual on Menstrual Health

Participants' Handbook

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MH-NoW
Care. Confidence. Change

Training Manual on Menstrual Health Participants' Handbook

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Acknowledgement

The development of this Menstrual Health (MH) Training Manual was made possible through a collaborative partnership with the Federal Government of Nigeria, working through relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Women Affairs, Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Water Resources, among other key departments and agencies.

The contributions of various members of the technical working groups at both national and state levels were instrumental in the success of this manual's development. We express our profound gratitude and highest regard to the leadership of the Ministry of Women Affairs, particularly the Honorable Minister, Hon. Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, FSI, as well as the Permanent Secretary, Dr. Maryam Ismaila Keshinro, for their invaluable support of this initiative.

Special recognition is also extended to the Director of the Child Development Department, Mr. Ali Andrew Madugu, and the Deputy Director of Child Development, Mrs. Mariam Shaibu, for their insightful contributions and unwavering commitment throughout the development process.

This training manual was made possible through the generous financial support of our group of Anonymous Donors, whose dedication to advancing menstrual health and hygiene has been invaluable.

We remain grateful for the collective efforts that have brought this resource to fruition and hope it serves as a vital tool in empowering Menstrual Health Champions across the country and beyond.

Foreword

Menstrual Health and Hygiene are integral to the well-being, dignity and empowerment of women and girls. Yet, the subject of menstruation has been shrouded in silence, stigma, and misinformation particularly in Nigeria, where many girls and women face challenges in managing their menstrual health safely and with dignity.

These challenges include inadequate access to menstrual sanitary products, lack of proper water, sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) facilities and limited menstrual health education.

These issues directly impact girls and women, and translate into poor school attendance, and outcomes, poor health, loss of confidence and sometimes social isolation.

As the Honourable Minister of Women Affairs, I am delighted to present this Training Manual on Menstrual Health and Hygiene which serves as a comprehensive guide designed to equip educators, social welfare workers, health workers, community leaders, and other key stakeholders with the knowledge and skills needed to promote menstrual health and hygiene across our communities. The manual also provides practical information on the biological, social, and emotional aspects of menstruation, as well as guidelines for creating supportive environments where every adolescent girl and women of reproductive age can manage their menstruation with confidence and respect.

Foreword (continued)

It is on this note that I am proud to endorse this vital resource, which aligns with the Federal Ministry of Women Affair's commitment to advancing gender equality and improving the lives of women and girls in Nigeria. The manual's emphasis on education, advocacy, and community involvement is crucial in breaking the silence and addressing the harmful traditional practices, social norms and myths surrounding menstruation. This manual will empower trainers and facilitators to become agents of change - fostering safe, informed, and supportive spaces where menstruation is recognized as a right, not a privilege.

I extend my commendation to Population Services International (PSI) for the support towards the development of this Resource Manual and for all stakeholders and individuals who contributed to its development including the Permanent Secretary, Dr Maryam Keshinro, my team in the Department of Child Development headed by Ali Andrew Madugu, the Special Assistant on Child Protection and Development, Aishatu Digil and other members of our team. Your dedication reflects our shared vision of a future where no girl or woman is held back by her period.

Imaan Sulaiman-Ibrahim, fsi
Honourable Minister of Women Affairs

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Introduction

Menstrual Health (MH) is essential for the physical, emotional and social well-being of girls and women. Access to accurate information, hygienic sanitary facilities, and supportive social environments ensures that menstruation does not become a barrier to education, dignity or participation in community life.

Understanding and supporting Menstrual Health encourages the destigmatization of menstruation and empowers communities to address related barriers and cultural beliefs. Proper education and resources enable girls and women to manage menstruation safely, confidently, and with dignity, contributing to stronger, more inclusive communities.

Overview of the Training Manual

This manual is designed for implementers of menstrual health (MH) programmes and champions who have the responsibility of providing MH education and services to adolescent girls and young women.

The manual consists of six modules namely; introduction to adolescent health and development, understanding menstruation, practical menstrual health and hygiene management (MHHM) strategies, effective communication about menstruation, and solutions to common challenges faced by girls and women, and safeguarding girls for safe, inclusive environments that promote trust and respect within communities.

Through this training, participants will be empowered with comprehensive knowledge and skills about menstrual health and hygiene management as well as explore and address cultural beliefs and misconceptions around menstruation that serve as barriers to promoting menstrual health for adolescent girls and women.

Getting Started

Using this manual

This training manual is a resource designed to guide Menstrual Health Champions in delivering effective, culturally sensitive, and empowering education on menstrual health and hygiene management. The manual is structured to allow flexibility: trainers can adapt the content to suit different audiences, whether facilitating discussions with young women or adolescent girls, in and out of school.

Throughout the modules, interactive activities, case studies, quizzes and practical exercises reinforce learning, promoting a hands-on approach that champions can replicate in their communities.

This manual is a tool not only for education but for cultivating a supportive, inclusive, and empowering environment around menstrual health and hygiene.



Getting Started

Training Objectives:

1. Equip MH Champions with comprehensive knowledge on menstrual health and hygiene management, enabling them to effectively educate and support young people.

2. Enhance MH Champion's communication skills to facilitate open, respectful conversations about menstruation, break stigmas, address challenges and promote inclusivity.

3. Emphasize the importance of safeguarding principles to ensure the well-being and safety of girls and young women, fostering an environment of trust and protection.

4. Empower MH Champions to act as educators and advocates, building community awareness around MH and contributing to long-term change in MH perceptions.



Key terms

Adolescent - A person between the ages of 10 and 19 years. This person is no longer a child but not yet an adult.

Adolescence - The period of being an adolescent.

Hormones - The chemicals that are responsible for controlling and regulating the activities of certain cells and organs.

Hygiene - Conditions and practices that help to maintain health and prevent the spread of diseases.

Menarche - The first menstrual bleeding in a female human.

Menopause – The time when the menstrual period ends permanently in a woman.

Menses, Menstruation, Period - The periodic discharge of blood and other materials from the lining of the uterus, lasting for a few days.

Menstrual cycle - The menstrual cycle is a regular sequence of hormonal and physiological changes in the female reproductive system varying between 21 to 35 days.

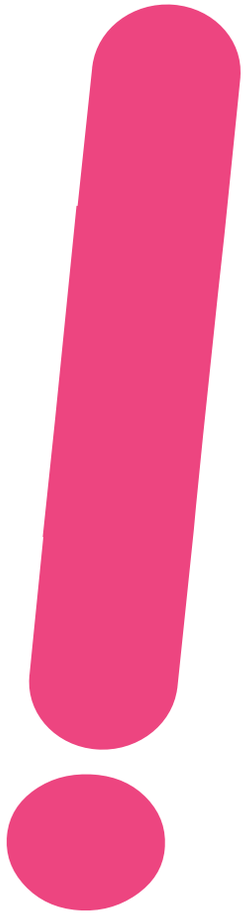
Puberty - The period during which adolescents reach sexual maturity and become capable of reproduction.

Module 1

Adolescent Health and Development

Module Outline

- Adolescent Development Stages
- Puberty Changes in Boys & Girls
- Exercises



Learning Objectives

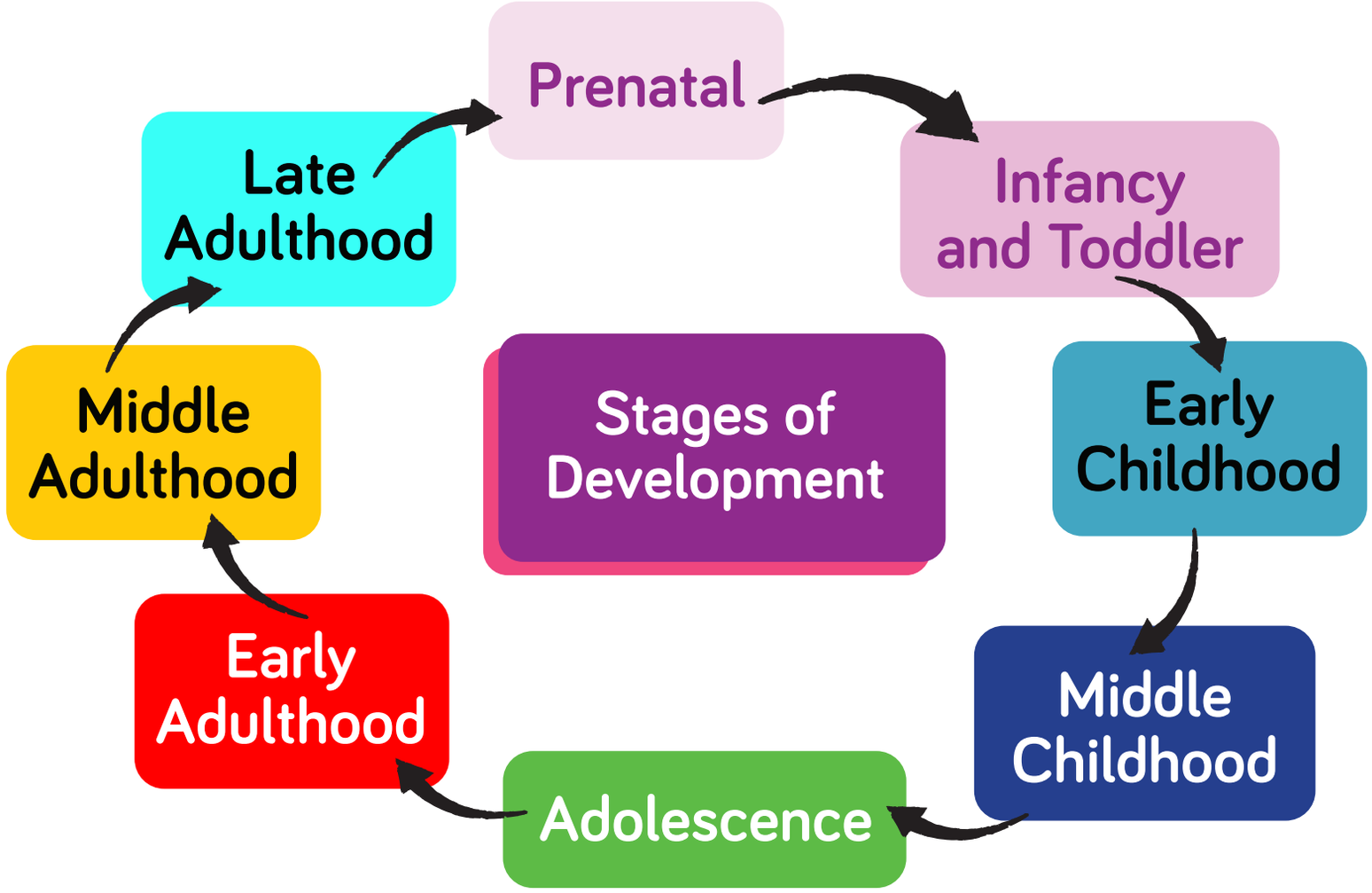
By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Define puberty.
2. Generate empathy and understanding of each others' unique experiences
3. Identify and understand the changes that occur during puberty for both boys and girls.

Stages of Life



Stages of human development



Events at each stage of life

Stage	Life events
Prenatal & Birth	The prenatal stage is the period of development from conception until birth. The start of the human life begins when the baby is born by its mother to the world.
Infancy	Is categorized as lasting from birth through the first year of life. The infant is completely dependent upon its parents or caregivers for survival.
Childhood	Considered as between ages 1 to 10. In the first 2 years, the child is referred to as a toddler. During this time, the child learns to walk, talk and be more self-sufficient. The child is susceptible during this time to learned habits and behaviors.
Adolescence	Takes place between ages 10 to 19 years. Puberty changes occur during this stage. Adolescents experiment with and develop identity and roles. As such, they begin to separate more from the parents and become more independent.
Adulthood	Lasts from age 18 throughout old age. At early adulthood, adults establish intimacy and relationship with others. They keep contributing to the society and family and begin to assess and make sense of life at old age. Adulthood is when Human beings are fully grown and must provide entirely for themselves.

Who is an adolescent?

Brainstorm

What comes to your mind when you hear or think of the word ‘adolescent’?
What are the general experiences?

Who is an adolescent?

A person who is no longer a child but not yet an adult.
Adolescence is the period between childhood and adulthood.
It is the period when puberty is experienced in both boys and girls.
It spans ages 10 -19 years (WHO, UN).

Based on your understanding, define the following:
Adolescent, Youth and Young Adult

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Who is an adolescent?

	Early Adolescence (10- 14 years)	Middle Adolescence (15- 17 years)	Late Adolescence (18-19 years)
Physical Changes	• Puberty begins with rapid physical changes • Girls generally begin puberty earlier than boys • Adolescents may feel conscious about their changing bodies	• Continued growth & sexual maturation • Presence of acne • Menstruation stabilizes & becomes regular • Voice deepens in boys & thins out in females	• Brain maturation continues • Physical growth completes (21 years)
Emotional Changes	• Desire for independence • Developing self-awareness & identity • Heightened emotions • Heightened sensitivity to body image & appearance	• Heightened self-awareness & reflection • Interest in developing personal beliefs & values • Identity formation	• Increased independence • Stronger, stable sense of self & identity • Development of emotional stability
Social Changes	• Increase in social activities • Shift towards peer relationships	• Form close friendships • Strong peer influence • Desire for independence & autonomy • Interest in romantic & sexual relationships	• Development of mature and more intimate relationships • Move towards independence
Cognitive Changes	• Develop abstract thinking ability • Short-term focus on immediate experiences	• Increased capacity for abstract thinking & problem solving • Greater ability to think critically & question authority & societal norms	• Advanced abstract & critical thinking, & decision-making skills • Greater ability to consider future consequences

Puberty

- Puberty is a period where boys and girls attain maturity, when sexual organs mature and become physically able to reproduce.
- It is usually characterized by physical, emotional, behavioral and social changes.
- Girls reach puberty earlier than boys.
- Girls attain puberty between 8-12 years while boys attain puberty between 10-14 years.
- The male sex hormone is called testosterone, while the female sex hormones are estrogen and progesterone.
- Puberty signifies a change from childhood to adulthood.

Puberty is initiated by hormonal signals from the brain to the ovaries & testes to produce sex hormones.

The male sex hormone is called testosterone, and the female hormones are estrogen & progesterone.

Key adolescent development tasks

- Develop autonomy
- Establish satisfying relationships
- Develop identity
- Develop moral reasoning

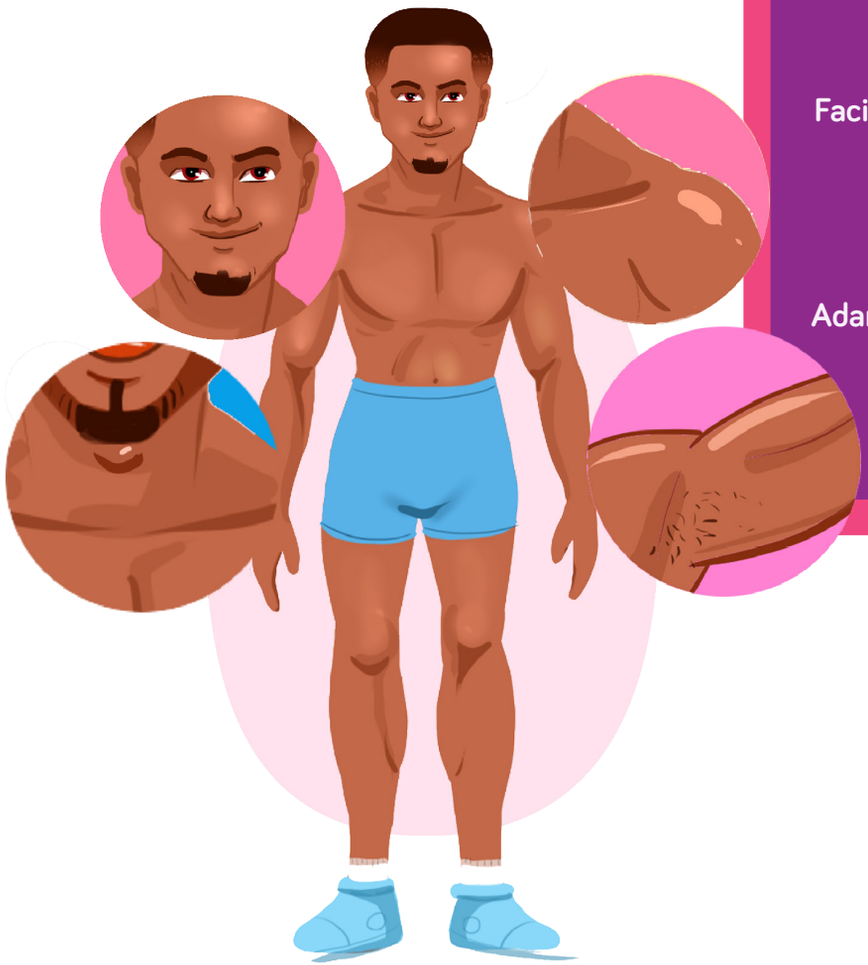
Brainstorm- 5mins

Ask the participants

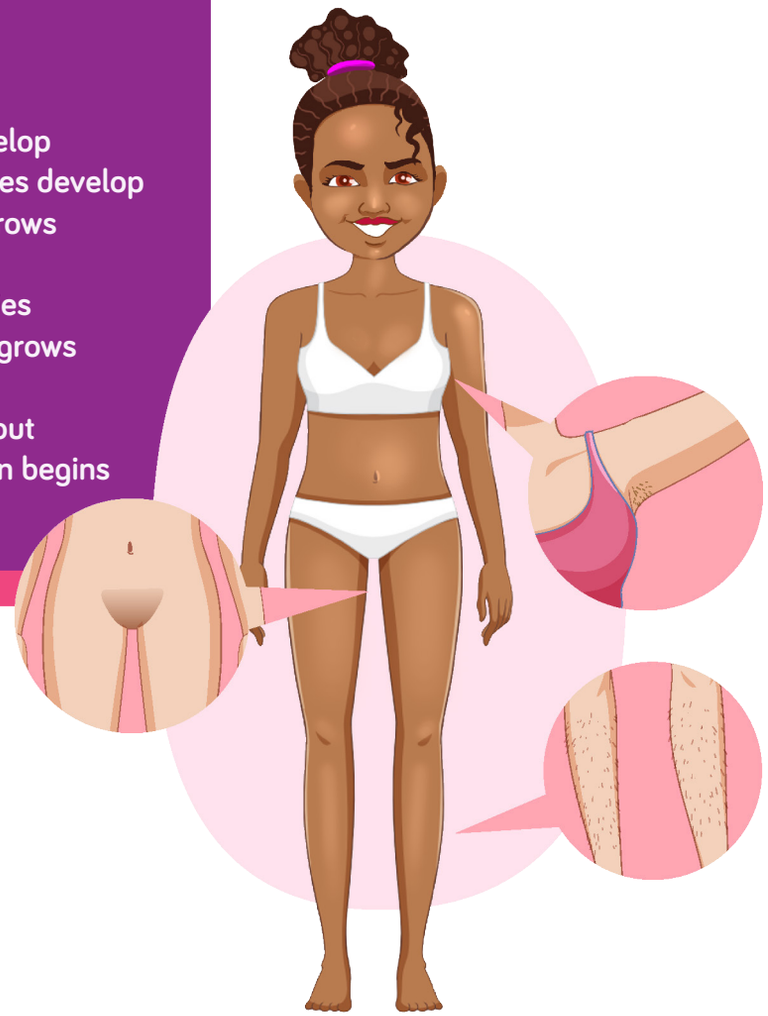
What are the changes that occur in girls and boys during puberty and how do the changes affect them?

The brainstorming session and discussions are to allow the participants critically think about the pubertal changes they experience, and the impacts on their well-being.

Physical changes in boys & girls



Boys	Girls
Beards develop	Breasts develop
Facial pimples develop	Facial pimples develop
Pubic hair grows	Pubic hair grows
Chest broadens	Hips widen
Shoulder broadens	Curvier bodies
Armpit hair grows	Armpit hair grows
Adam's apple develops & Voice deepens	Voice thins out
Wet dreams begin	Menstruation begins



Quiz

1 Define the following:
(a) Adolescent
(b) Youth
(c) Young adult

2 Mention three physical changes that girls experience during puberty.

3 Mention the hormones that are responsible for the pubertal changes in boys and in girls.

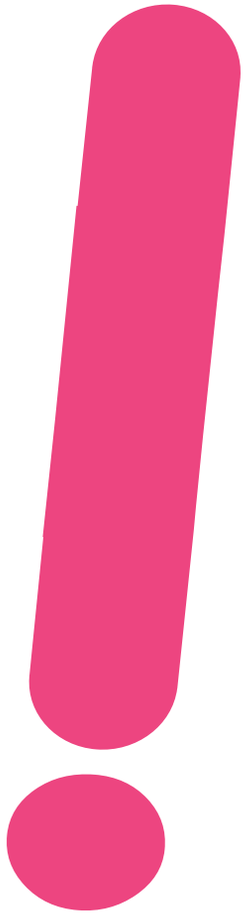


Module 2

Understanding Menstruation

Module Outline

- The female reproductive system
- The Menstrual cycle
- What is menstruation?
- How does it happen?
- How to track menstrual cycle
- What girls and women may experience during period
- Managing menstrual discomfort
- Exercise & Quiz



Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will

1. Understand the basics of the female reproductive system.
2. Familiarize themselves with the stages of the menstrual cycle and gain the ability to track their cycle.
3. Understand what menstruation is and how it occurs.
4. Gain the ability to recognize the changes that happen when they are about menstruating and how to prepare for it.
5. Know what to do when they experience discomfort during their menstrual period.

An Overview of the Female Reproductive System

- The female reproductive system is a network of organs responsible for producing eggs (ova), fertilization, and supporting pregnancy.

- The system consists of both internal and external structures that work together to ensure reproductive health and function.

Overview of the Female Reproductive System- External Organs

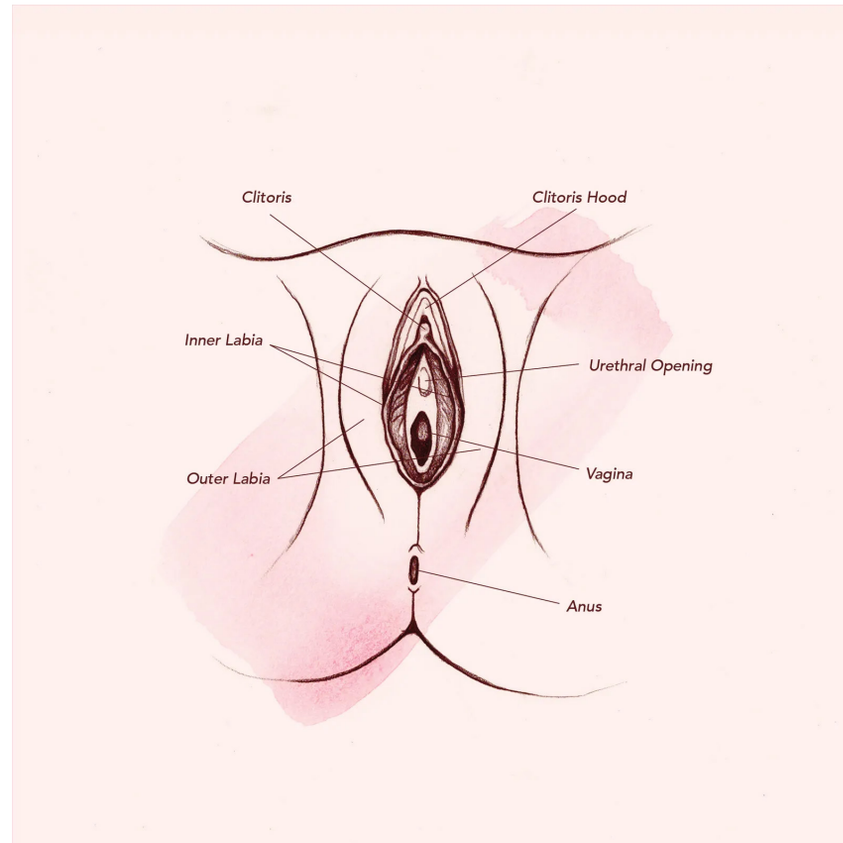
- External Reproductive Organs: The external structures are collectively known as the vulva consisting of labia majora, labia minora, clitoris, vaginal orifice, vestibular gland, and hymen. These organs play a key role in sexual activity, protecting the internal reproductive organs, and helping with the passing of urine.

- Labia majora: They are also referred to as big lips. They are a noticeable pair of skin folds that protect the clitoris, labia minora, urethra opening, vaginal opening and other glands.

- Labia minora: They are also referred to as smaller lips. They are a pair of tiny folds that extend from the clitoris downwards situated beneath the labia majora. The surface is covered in sweat glands, sebaceous glands, erectile tissue, and various nerve endings.

- Clitoris: An erectile female genital organ that is small, sensitive and located at the anterior end of the vagina. It contains numerous sensory nerve endings and the primary source of female sexual pleasure.

- Vagina orifice: Opening into the vagina which is covered by a thin mucosal membrane called hymen.



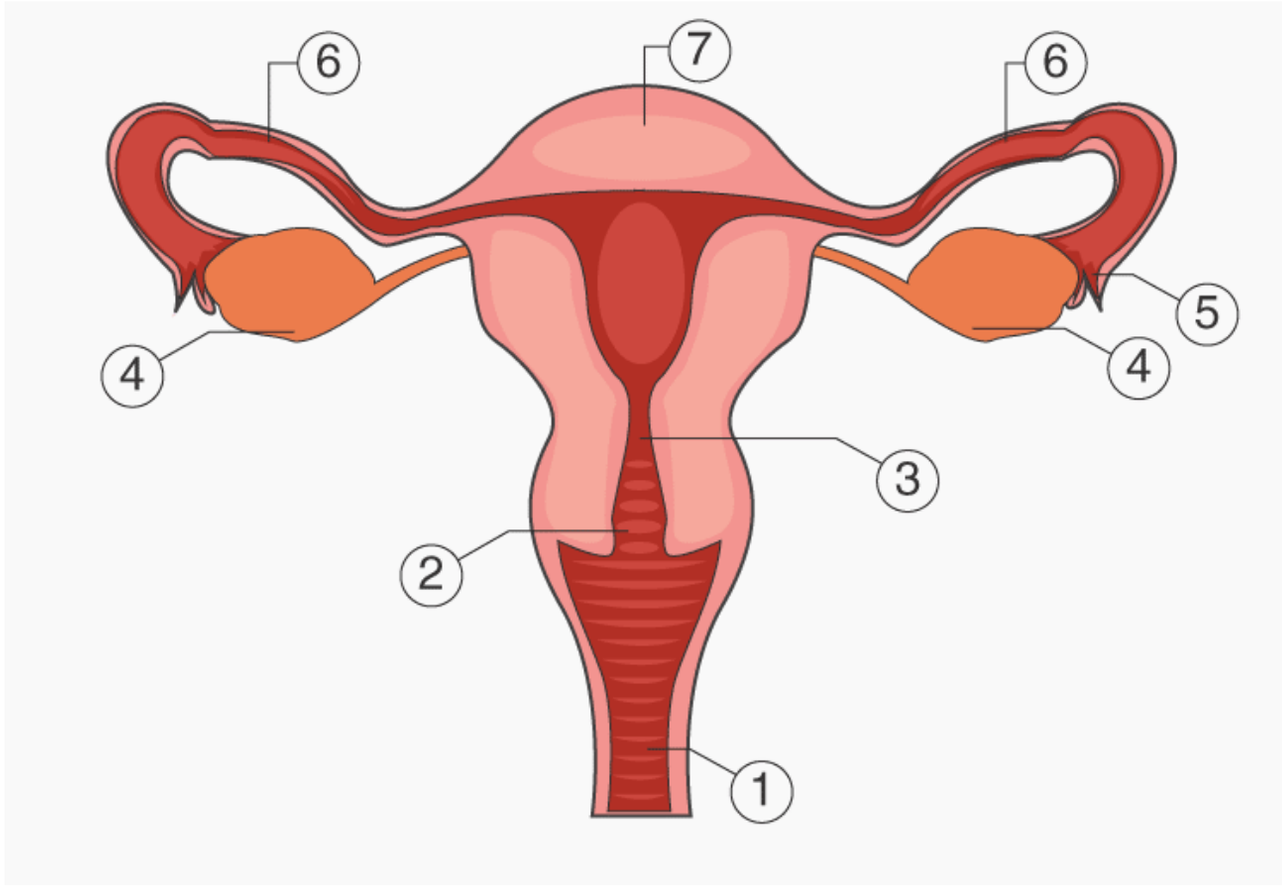
Overview of the Female Reproductive System- External Organs

Accessory Organ

- **Breasts: They are accessory glands of the female reproductive system, which develop during puberty because of estrogen and other hormones. They contain mammary glands, involved in the production of milk to feed a baby.**

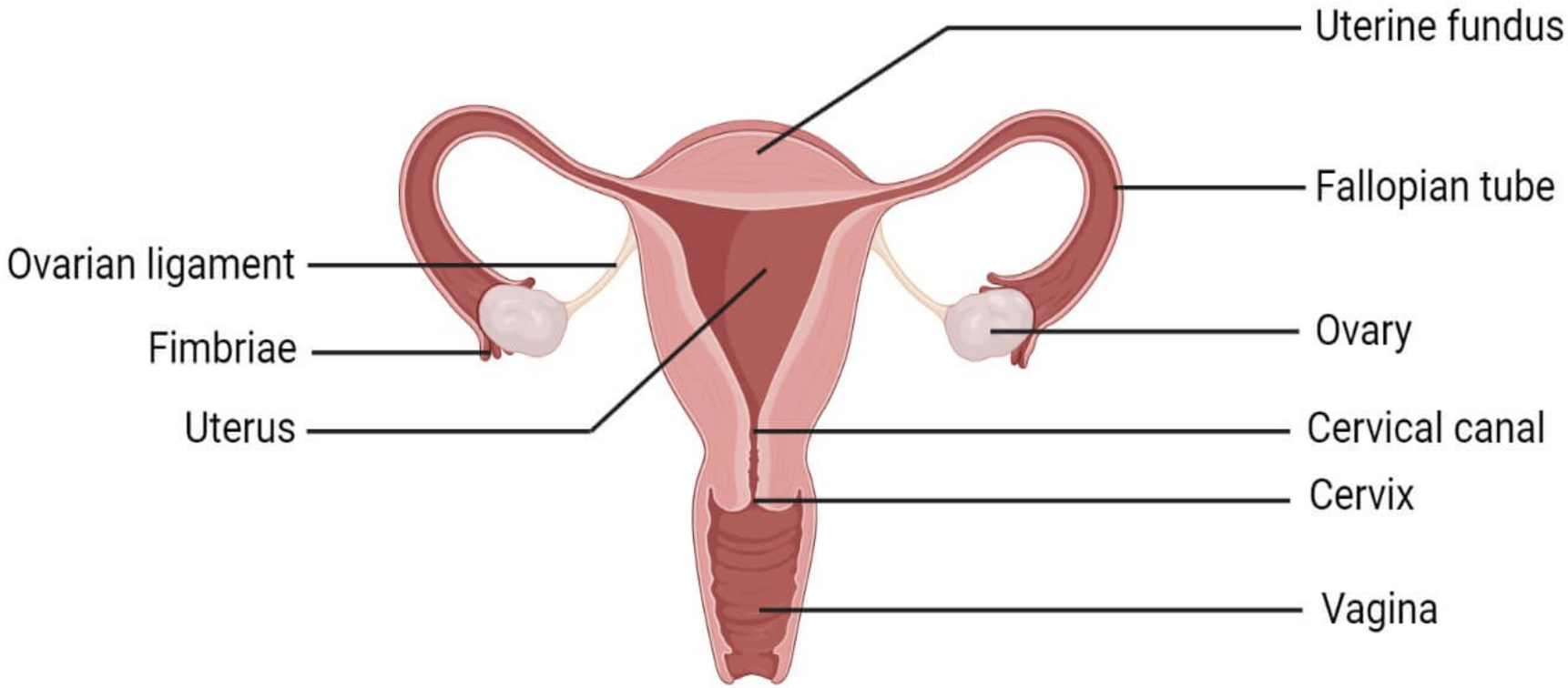


The internal female reproductive organs- Label the parts



Picture credit: BYJU'S The Learning App

The internal female reproductive organs



Picture credit: Sagal Aryal

Overview of the Female Reproductive System- Internal Organs

- Uterus: This is a thick-walled, muscular, pear-shaped organ. It is also known as the womb. This is where a fertilized egg implants and grows into a fetus during pregnancy. The lining of the uterus, known as the endometrium, thickens during the menstrual cycle to prepare for possible pregnancy.

- Vagina: A soft, stretchable tube of muscle tissue about 4 to 5 inches long in an adult woman. It connects the external genital organs to the uterus and serves as the passageway for menstrual bleeding, the transport of sperm to the egg through the uterus and fallopian tubes, and the delivery of a baby.

- Ovaries: They are usually pearl-colored, oblong, and about the size of a walnut. They are attached to the uterus by ligaments. They produce female sex hormones (estrogen and progesterone) and some male sex hormones. The ovaries produce and release eggs.

- Cervix: This is the lower part of the uterus, which protrudes into the upper part of the vagina. Usually called the 'neck of the uterus', the cervix is the entrance into the womb.

- Fallopian tubes: The tubes extend out of the upper edges of the womb to the left and right sides, towards the ovaries. They play a crucial role in enabling sperm to reach the egg and transporting a fertilized egg to the uterus. Fertilization usually occurs here.

DID YOU KNOW?

In females, approximately 1-2 million immature eggs (primary oocytes) are present at birth but only around 400 of these will mature and be released during a woman's reproductive years from puberty to menopause.

Each month, hormones stimulate these eggs but only one matures fully to be released during ovulation.

The Female Sex Hormones - How Do They Work?

The primary female sex hormones-estrogen and progesterone are stimulated by other hormones called Follicle Stimulating Hormone (FSH) and Luteinizing Hormone (FH).

FSH and LH support the maturation of the eggs in the ovary.

Progesterone

Regulates the inner lining (endometrium) of the uterus.

It helps in the release of the egg during ovulation.

Estrogen

Helps in the development and maintenance of female characteristics in the human body.

Supports the proliferation of egg follicles.

Maintains the proper uterine cycle.

The influence of hormones on emotions and mental well-being

- The female sex hormones significantly influence emotions, mood and mental well-being of girls and women. Estrogen is often referred to as the 'feel good' hormone contributing to mood stability, energy level and a sense of well-being.
- During the menstrual cycle, there are changes in the level of estrogen, and this can lead to mood swings or irritability.
- Progesterone is generally known for its calming effects but its fluctuating level may also contribute to mood swings and irritability.
- Understanding these hormonal influences is essential for managing the emotional health of girls and women.



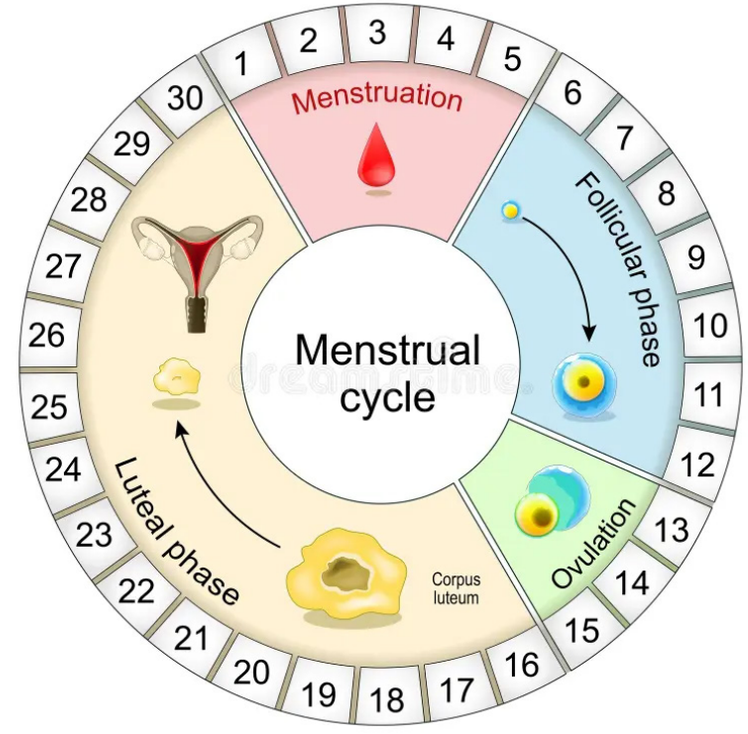
The Menstrual Cycle

The Menstrual Cycle is described as the process a woman's body goes through each month in preparation for a potential pregnancy. It starts on the first day of a new blood flow (period) and runs until the day before the next period. It is a regular sequence of hormonal and physiological changes in the female reproductive system, spanning between 21 to 35 days with an average being 28 days.

Phases of the Menstrual Cycle:

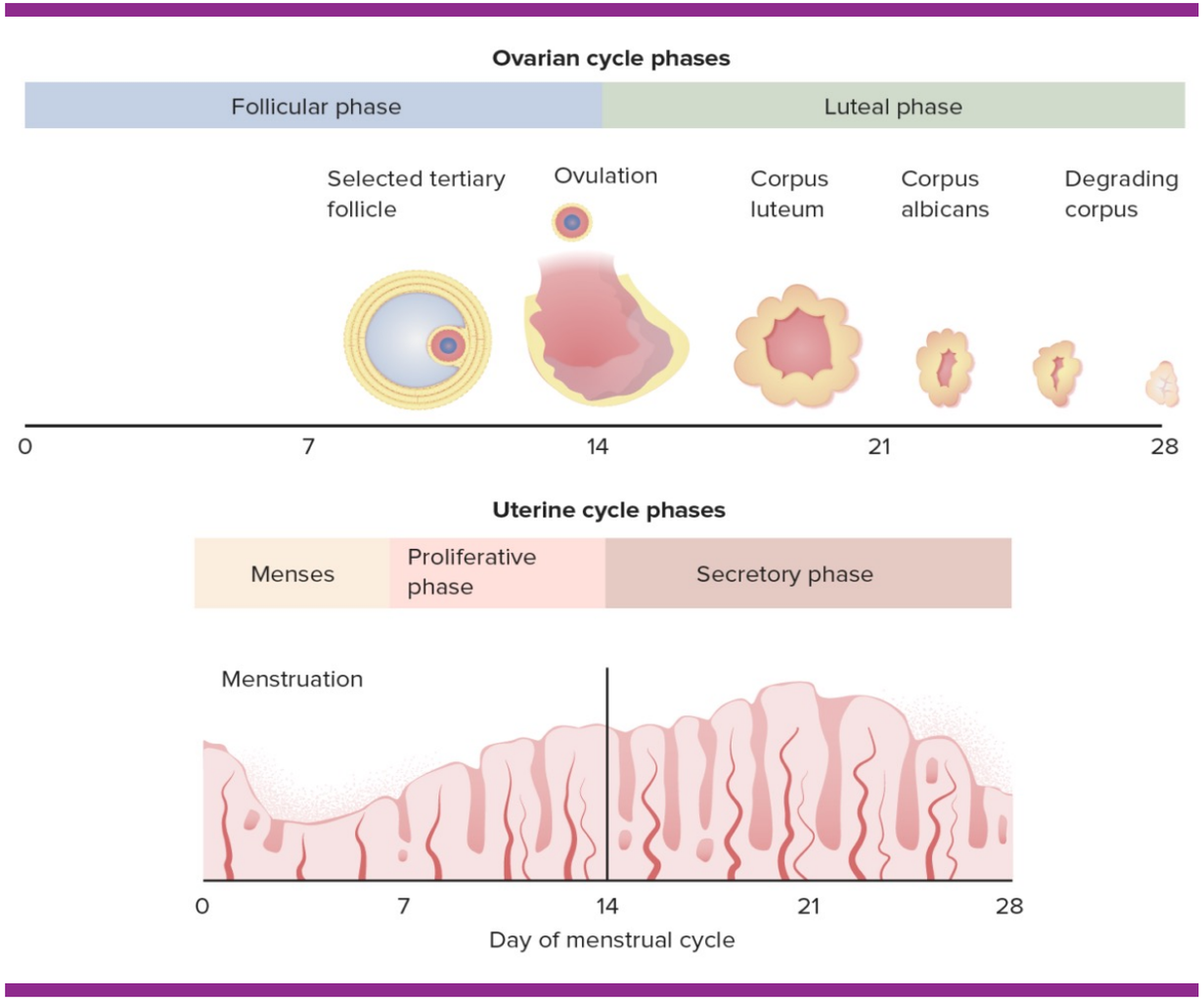
The menstrual cycle is divided into two events - uterine and ovarian which occur in five phases, namely:

- Follicular phase
- Luteal phase
- Ovulatory phase
- Menstrual phase
- Proliferation phase



The Menstrual Cycle

Uterine and Ovarian Events and their Phases



Lecturio Medical

Ovarian Events: Activities that occur in the ovary during menstrual cycle

Follicular phase:

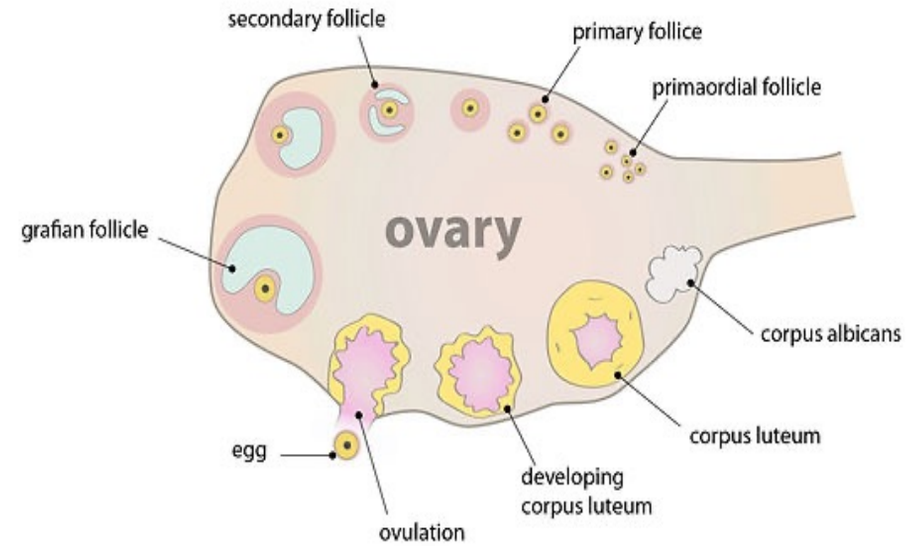
- Occurs between day 1 and 14.
- The primary follicle starts developing into a mature Graffian follicle.
- It represents the time preceding ovulation.

Luteal phase:

- It is the post-ovulation phase .
- Occurs between day 15 and 28 when the ovary produces hormones to support a potential pregnancy and maintain a healthy endometrium.
- If fertilization occurs, pregnancy starts; if it doesn't occur, it marks the onset of another cycle.

Ovulatory phase:

- Mid-cycle phase, this is the phase in which ovulation takes place.
- Occurs between day 13 and 17.
- The end of the follicular phase along with the ovulation period defines the fertilization period.



Lecturio Medical

Uterine Events: Activities that occur in the uterus/womb during menstrual cycle

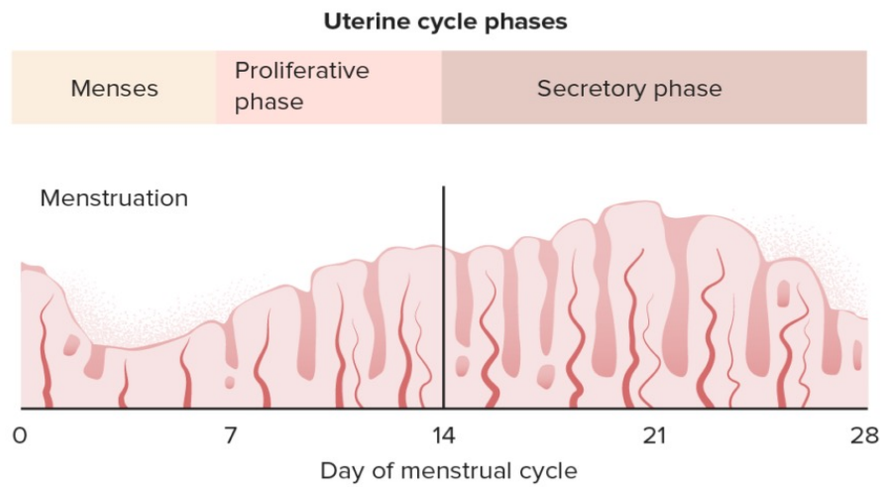
Menstrual phase:

During day 1 - 5, the wall of the uterus which is prepared to receive the fertilized egg starts to shed.

Proliferation phase:

Occurring from day 6-14, the uterus starts preparation for another pregnancy.

During this phase, the wall of the uterus (endometrium) also starts multiplying, a process called proliferation.

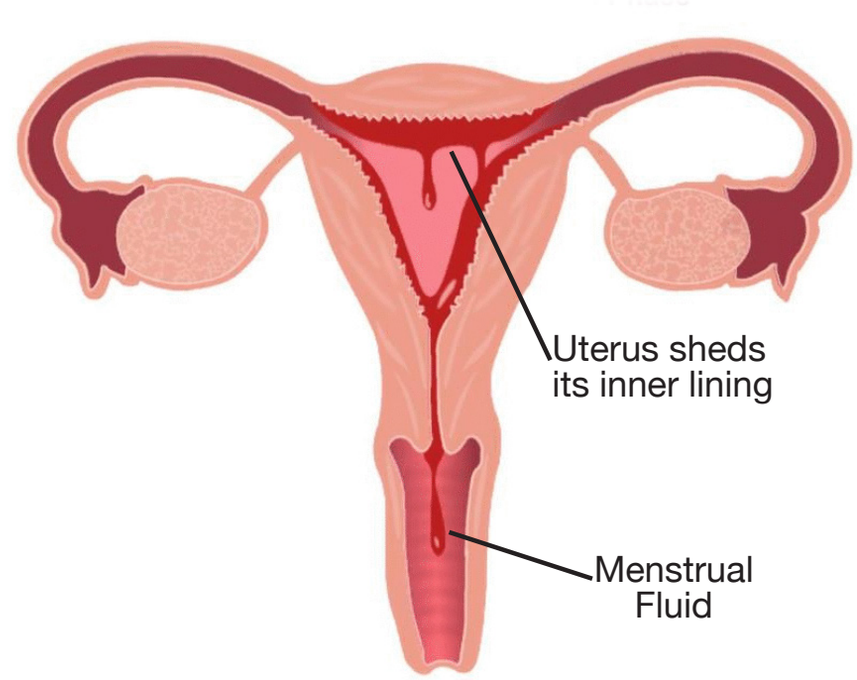


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Menstruation- What I need to know

What is Menstruation?

- Menstruation, commonly referred to as a "period" or "menses" is the monthly discharge of blood (the inner wall of the uterus) and unfertilized egg through the vagina.
- Menstruation occurs when there is no pregnancy.
- It is a natural process that occurs in the female reproductive system of girls and women.
- It starts at puberty and ends at menopause, influenced by hormonal changes.
- The actual bleeding part of menstruation lasts between 2 to 7 days.

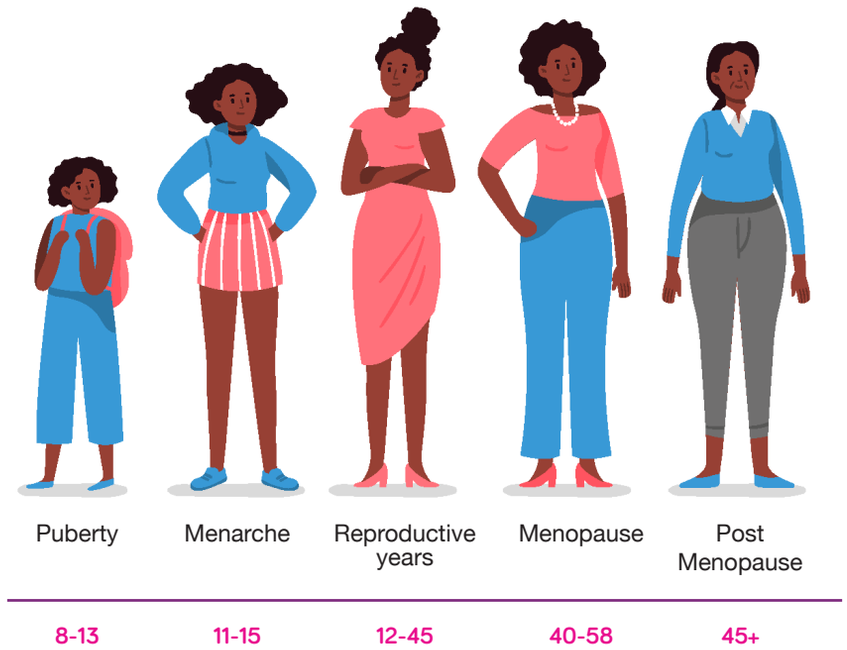


Menstruation- What I need to know

What age does menstruation start and end?

- Girls begin menstruating during puberty, which usually occurs between the ages of 9 and 14 (earlier or later for some).
- The onset of menstruation is called menarche.
- The onset of menstruation also involves emotional changes due to hormones.
- Women continue to menstruate till between the ages of 45- 55 years.
- The end of menstruation is called menopause.

A woman's menstrual cycle journey



Menstruation- What to expect.

Why Does Menstruation Happen?

Each month, the body prepares for a potential pregnancy by thickening the wall of the uterus (called the endometrium) to house the fertilized egg.

If no pregnancy occurs: no egg is fertilized, the lining is not needed, so it breaks down and flows out of the body as menstrual blood.

Why can a cycle be irregular?

Many things can cause irregular periods such as hormonal imbalance especially when an adolescent girl first begins puberty, but they generally become more regular over time.

Irregular periods can also be experienced when a woman is approaching menopause.

What to Expect During Menstruation.

Menstrual Flow: This is the blood and tissue that comes out of the vagina during a period.

The amount can vary from light to heavy.

Some girls and women may experience lighter flow while some experience heavier flow days.

Why do I miss my period? Or Why is my period late?

There are several reasons why a girl's period might be late. She may miss a period because of:

- medication
- stress
- changes in diet
- exercise habits
- serious medical conditions

A probable reason for missed period is pregnancy. See a healthcare professional.

Menstruation and Health

Menstruation is a natural, healthy part of life for girls and women and it signifies a transition into reproductive maturity.

Menstruation is an integral part of the female reproductive cycle which starts during puberty. It is a sign that a girl is maturing and growing up.

It is not a sickness but an essential biological process that occurs in response to hormonal changes in the body.

It is important to manage menstruation with proper hygiene practices to ensure comfort, and health. There are health risks associated with poor menstrual hygiene.

Activity 1:

Let's talk about your first experience of menstruation!

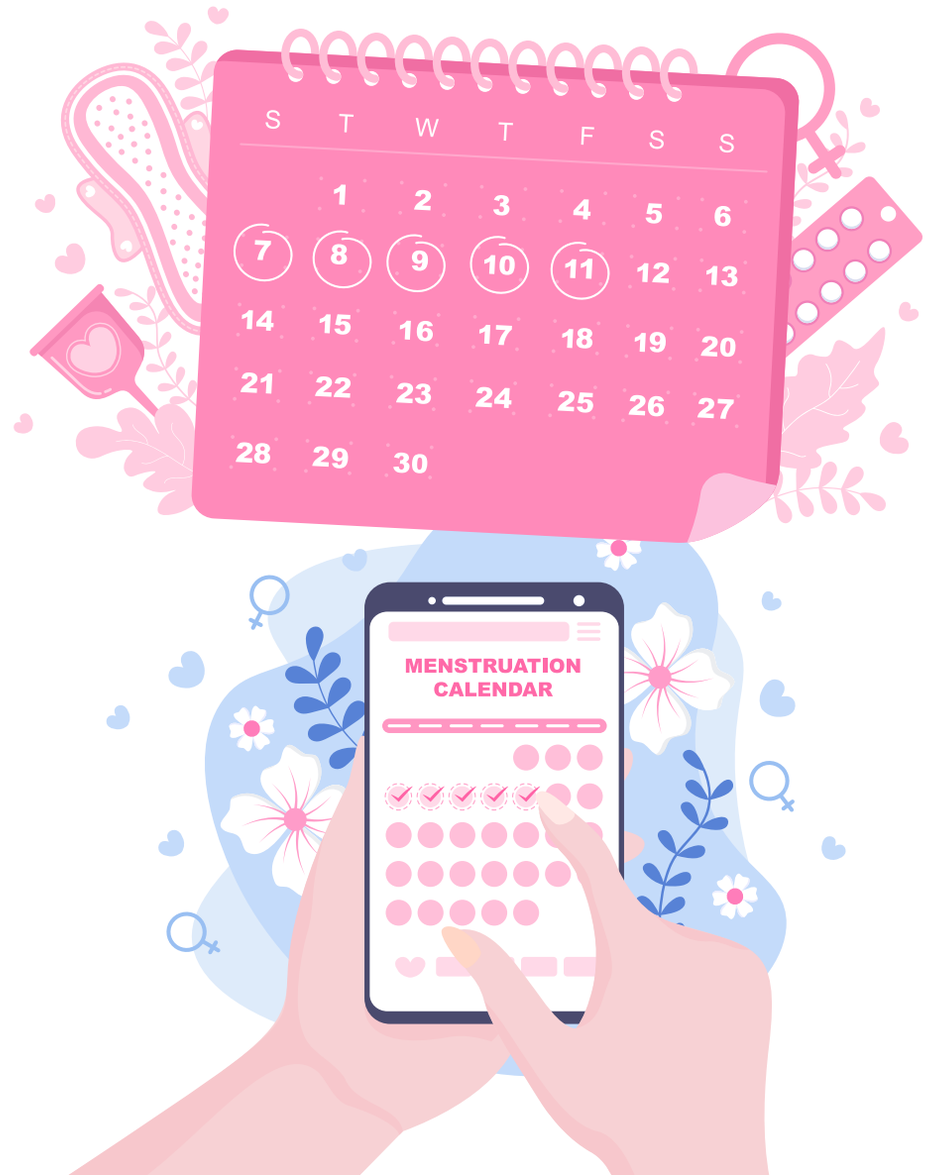


How to track my menstrual cycle

Tracking the menstrual cycle and preparing for it is essential for girls and women to manage their periods more effectively. Fortunately, there are several methods to do that including the use of technology which has made this easier.

Calendar method or diary:

You can use this method to track your cycle by marking the start and end dates of each period on a calendar and determine your monthly cycle which will help you prepare for your next period.



How to track my menstrual cycle

Know your cycle:

Count the number of days between the first day of your period and the first day of the next period.

Get this number for 3 months at least. For example: 28 days in July, 29 days in August, and 28 days in September.

Add them together and calculate the average. 28 + 29 + 28= 85 days/3 = 28.3 days.

The menstrual cycle calculated here is 28 days.

This means that this girl or woman will most likely always see her menses every 28 days. It could vary from 21 to 35 days.

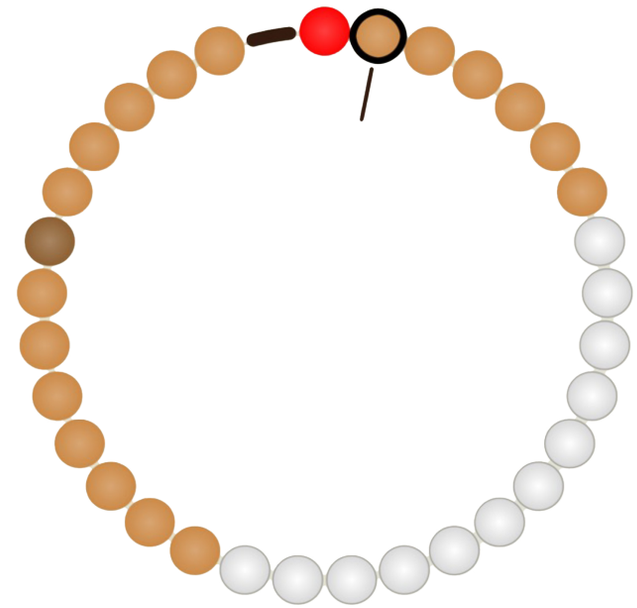
However, a girl or woman's menses may not come the same date on the calendar every month.

This method is useful and effective for girls with regular cycles to predict their next period.



How to track my menstrual cycle

Cycle beads: They are a tool for menstrual tracking based on the Standard Day Method (SDM).It is usually used with the calendar method and effective for girls and women with regular cycles. It consists of a marker, white and colored beads that represent the days of a woman's menstrual cycle with each bead representing a specific day. Women move the marker one bead per day starting from the first day of their period which helps to track their cycle length and identify their fertile period.



Menstrual cycle tracking mobile apps: Smartphone apps make it easy to track your period, symptoms and ovulation. They often provide reminders for when your next period is likely to begin and offer insights into the symptoms or experience you have and the infertile days/window. Examples are Clue, Flo, Period Tracker My Cycle, MeetYou, etc.

Symptoms-based tracking: This is based on the girl or woman's ability to monitor changes in her body. The skill includes studying your body overtime and being sensitive to the changes experienced. Changes include breast tenderness, bloating, lower abdominal pain. Tracking the basal body temperature can help predict ovulation useful for monitoring menstrual irregularities. Keeping a record of these changes will help anticipate the next period and make this method effective.

Useful tips:

- Understand the phases of the cycle.
- Note any irregularities.
- Wear medical devices like a fitness tracker to help monitor body temp. etc.
- Maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle.
- Stay hydrated.

How to prepare for Menstruation

Get your menstrual kit ready. You can put one together like this:

Be period ready !!!

Be your own Menstrual Health & Hygiene Champion



- Get a small purse, pencil bag or makeup bag.
- Choose and add your menstrual supplies e.g., sanitary pads or menstrual cups.
- Add extra underwear or panties.
- Add small leather bags for disposal etc.
- Include hand wipes, hand sanitizer or mild soap.
- Keep the purse in your bag at school or work once you know your period is approaching; so, you are always prepared.
- If you have not started menses, you can get your 'first preparatory kit' ready.



What girls and women may experience during period

There are over a hundred experiences that have been attributed to menstruation and these may change over time and from cycle to cycle. These experiences can significantly affect daily activities, including school, work and social life. It is normal for most girls and women to experience pain and other discomfort during menses.

Girls and women also experience emotional and psychological changes such as heightened feelings of sadness, irritability, anger, etc. due to hormone changes.

They include:

- Breast tenderness
- Bloating
- Fluid retention
- Muscle and Joint aches
- Headache
- Acne
- Tiredness
- Mood changes
- Diarrhea
- Lower abdominal pain/ cramps

Activity 2:

Brainstorming session

What are the local names of menses/ menstruation in your community?

Managing Menstrual Discomfort

Many girls and women experience varying degrees of discomfort during menstruation, ranging from mild discomfort to severe pain.

Learning effective ways to manage menstrual discomfort is crucial for improving well-being during the menstruation.

Ways to manage menstrual discomfort

- Apply a heating pad or hot water bottle to the lower abdomen, take warm baths to relieve cramps, aches.
- Engage in regular exercises to improve blood flow and release happy hormones that could help with the cramps.
- Drink lots of water to reduce bloating, eat foods like vegetables, fruits, and other items rich in omega-3 fatty acids (fish, flaxseeds).
- Engaging in relaxation exercises like meditation, breathing exercises, practicing mindfulness can help manage stress and mood swings and improve emotional well-being.
- Use comfortable and breathable menstrual products that are changed regularly to reduce discomfort and prevent infections.

In extreme cases such as endometriosis, doctors may prescribe medications or other treatments such as pain management and hormonal treatments including surgery.

Quiz

1. What is menstruation?

.....

.....

.....

2. Which part of the female reproductive system is responsible for releasing eggs during the menstrual cycle?

a. Uterus
b. Ovaries
c. Fallopian tubes
d. Cervix

3. Mention a method for tracking menstrual cycle?

.....

.....

4. Mention the hormone that helps in the development and maintenance of female secondary sex characteristics.

.....

.....

5. Which of the following is an appropriate way to manage menstrual discomfort?

a. Hot water bottle
b. Skipping meals
c. Wearing loose clothing
d. Reducing sleep hours

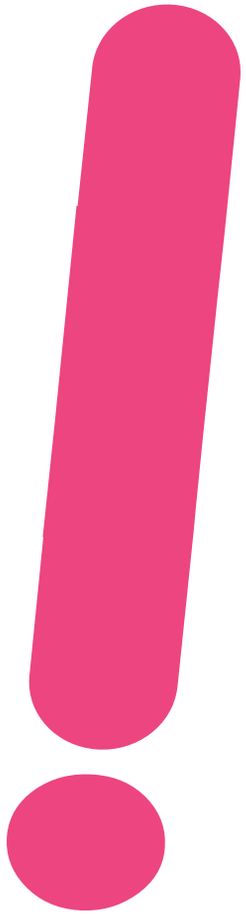


Module 3

Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management

Module Outline

- What is normal menstruation?
- What is abnormal menstruation?
- Causes of abnormal menstruation
- Menstrual hygiene management
- Hygienic & affordable sanitary products
- Maintaining hygiene
- What happens when we don't stay clean?
- Exercise & Quiz



Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will:

1. Be able to identify the differences between normal and abnormal menstruation.
2. Adopt the use of hygienic and affordable menstrual products.
3. Understand how to adopt and maintain menstrual hygiene practices.
4. Know what to do when they experience abnormal flow.

Normal Menstruation

- Remember that menstruation is a normal, natural process which comes with some discomfort or pain (mild or tolerable).
- Menstrual blood is usually bright red to dark brown in color (especially at the end of period).
- Duration of blood flow is usually 2 – 7 days.
- Average blood loss is 30-80 ml (2-3 tablespoons) during one period. Average of 60ml per period.
- Menstrual cycle is between 21-35 days.



When do I need to be worried?

Abnormal Menstruation (Menstrual Disorders)

- Severe menstrual cramps and painful menstruation (known as Dysmenorrhea).
- Cycle less than 21 days or more than 35 days (especially when it has been fully established). Polymenorrhea refers to menstrual cycles occurring at interval of 21 days or less. It can be caused by hormonal imbalances.
- Oligomenorrhea: This refers to infrequent menstrual cycle that happens more than 35 days apart. The bleeding is usually light and is common in adolescents and women approaching menopause.
- Very pale or greyish.
- Longer or shorter periods.
- Heavy menstrual bleeding (known as Menorrhagia)- soaks menstrual material within an hour or 2 or passes large blood clots. It can lead to anemia and interfere with daily activities.
- Too light bleeding (known as Hypomenorrhea)
- Missed or absent period (known as Amenorrhea) (not due to pregnancy). If a person has not had period by age of 16 or if the periods stop for three months or more after previously being regular.
- Bleeding in between periods (known as Metrorrhagia): Intermenstrual bleeding is also associated with certain medications and infections.
- Abnormal menstruation should be reported to a health worker for appropriate management

Some probable causes of menstrual disorders:

- Hormonal imbalance
- Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PcOS)
- Thyroid issues
- Endometriosis
- Fibroids
- Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID).

Colors of Menstrual Period and Meanings

Colors I should worry about:



Dark Red:
Older blood
Slow flow
Early pregnancy



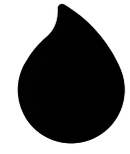
Brown:
Older blood
Slow flow
Postpartum
Early pregnancy



Green:
Infection



Grey:
Infection



Black:
Older blood
Slow flow
Vaginal blockage



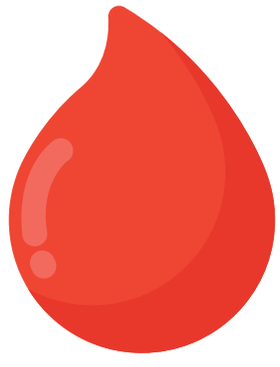
Orange:
Mixed with fluid
Implantation
Infection



Pink:
Mixed with mucus
Light bleeding
Nutritional problem

Colors of Menstrual Period and Meanings

Happy Color



Bright Red

- It's usually present at the beginning of menses
- Fresh blood
- Fast flow



Interactive Activity:

Match a color with its meaning



Older blood, slow flow, vaginal blockage

Mixed with mucus, light bleeding, nutritional problem

Older blood, slow flow, postpartum, early pregnancy

Infection

Fresh blood, fast flow

Older blood, slow flow, early pregnancy

Mixed with fluid, implantation Infection

Infection

Menstrual Hygiene

According to World Health Organization (WHO), hygiene refers to conditions and practices that help to maintain health and prevent the spread of diseases.

There are different aspect of hygiene ranging from personal hygiene, food hygiene, sleep hygiene, dental hygiene, menstrual hygiene and many more.



What is menstrual hygiene?

Menstrual hygiene refers to the practices and measures girls and women take during menstruation to ensure cleanliness, prevent infections and maintain overall health.
Hygiene involves routines like washing hands, bathing, cleaning etc.
It helps to minimize contact with harmful bacteria and viruses, protecting individuals from infections and promoting overall well-being.

Steps in maintaining menstrual hygiene

- Use breathable, comfortable and eco-friendly products.



- Use clean and dry materials.



- Bathe 2-3 times daily when on your period.



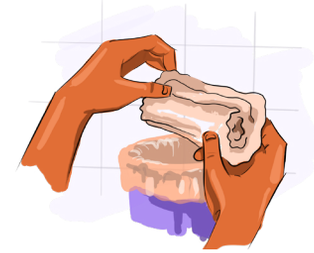
- Wash your hands with soap and water.



- Wash the genital area with water.



- Dispose used product properly.



- Change your used menstrual product regularly, at least 4 times per day especially on heavy flow days.



Why do I need to maintain proper hygiene during menstruation?

Girls and women need to maintain proper hygiene due to the following reasons:

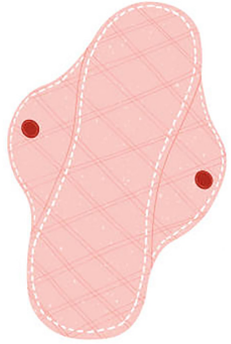
- Wearing menstrual products for too long can lead to infections or even infertility if left untreated.
- Tampons when used for too long can lead to Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS). This rare condition can be life-threatening.
- Prevent skin irritation and rashes because the moisture and bacteria can irritate the sensitive skin around the genitals causing discomfort and sores.
- To prevent or reduce unwanted odor caused by blood coming in contact with air and bacteria.
- Good menstrual hygiene helps to prevent leaks, and discomfort providing girls with confidence without the fear of embarrassment.
- Supports mental and emotional well-being.

Poor menstrual hygiene can lead to several health risks including infections, irritation, discomfort and can affect physical and emotional well-being.

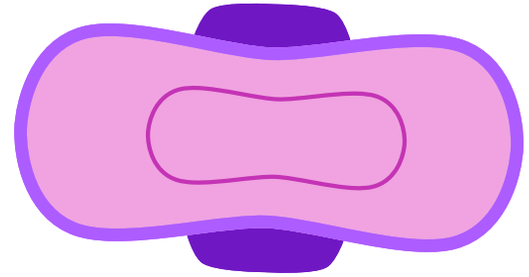


Safe and appropriate menstrual products to use

Reusable Pad



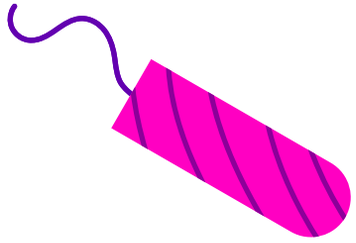
Disposable Pad



Menstrual Cup



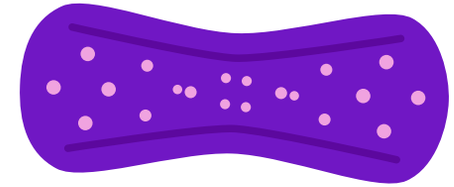
Tampon



Period Wear



Contoured Panty Liner



Disposing used menstrual materials

This table provides a clear guide on the 'do's' and 'don'ts' for disposing of various menstrual products. Proper disposal helps maintain hygiene and protect the environment.

Menstrual Product	DOs	DONT's
Menstrual Cup	• Rinse with water after use and sterilize as per manufacturer's guidelines. • Store in a breathable bag when not in use. • Follow local guidelines for recycling if disposing permanently.	• Do not dispose of in the trash. • Avoid boiling in a microwave. • Do not flush down the toilet.
Reusable Sanitary Pad & Period wear	• Wash thoroughly with cold water immediately after use to prevent staining. • Dry under direct sunlight or in a well-ventilated area to prevent bacteria buildup. • Store used pads in a washable, waterproof pouch until you can wash them.	• Don't wash with hot water, as it can set stains. • Do not flush or dispose of with regular trash if no longer usable. • Don't use fabric softeners as they reduce absorbency.
Disposable Sanitary Pad	• Wrap in toilet paper or a disposal bag before placing in the trash bin. • Dispose of in designated bins in public restrooms, if available.	• Do not flush down the toilet. • Avoid burning as it releases harmful chemicals into the air.
Tampons	• Wrap used tampons in toilet paper or a disposal bag before placing in the trash bin. • Use applicator disposal bags if available in public restrooms.	• Do not flush tampons, as they can clog plumbing. • Avoid burning tampons due to chemical emissions. • Do not use for more than 6 hours.
Towels/Cloth	• If reusable wash immediately in cold water and dry thoroughly. • If disposable, wrap and discard in designated sanitary bins.	• Do not throw in regular waste if heavily soiled; follow disposal instructions for bio-waste. • Avoid storing in closed containers when wet to prevent mold.

Quiz

- What are the characteristics of a normal menstrual flow?
- Name two abnormal menstruation that may require medical attention.
- What are three ways to maintain hygiene during menstruation?
- List two safe and affordable menstrual products and their benefits?

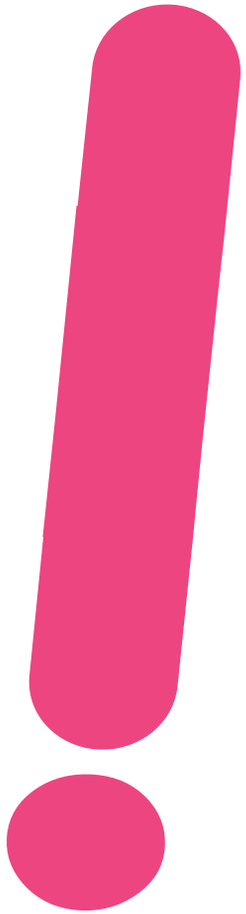


Module 4

Communicating about Menstruation

Module Outline

- Importance of open communication about menstruation
- Talking to girls about menstruation
- Engaging boys and men in menstrual health conversations & programming
- Linking girls to affordable menstrual products and support
- Activity: Demonstration



Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will

1. Understand the importance of open communication about menstruation.
2. Understand how to engage girls and boys in meaningful conversations about menstrual health
3. Gain the confidence to discuss menstruation with young girls and women to empower them with knowledge and support.
4. Know the available sources of affordable menstrual products and support and get links to these sources.

Importance of open communication about menstruation

Effective communication is central to improving menstrual health and hygiene by enhancing understanding, reducing stigma and ensuring access to comprehensive information and services. Open and clear communication about menstruation:

- Creates awareness and provides comprehensive education which can be integrated into school curriculum, community groups and healthcare settings.
- Enables the design of tailored messages for diverse audiences including boys, men, girls and women, thereby promoting a more inclusive approach to MH.
- Empowers girls to manage their menstruation with dignity, reducing school absenteeism and improving their participation in everyday activities.
- Informs girls about how to access menstrual products and services.
- Normalizes menstruation as a natural process. This reduces shame and secrecy often associated with menstruation.
- Addresses and dispels myths and misconceptions about menstruation.
- Engages communities and stakeholders including boys and men fostering collective responsibility for improving MH.
- Provides compelling and effective tool for advocacy and influencing policy for improved MH policies and services.
- Reduces emotional stress and improves mental health and overall well-being of women and girls.

It is important to talk about menstruation openly so everyone can learn and understand it better.

Communication in MH is key in empowering individuals, breaking cultural barriers, providing education, advocating for better resources, and promoting inclusive dialogue.

Guiding conversations about menstruation

- Some communities restrict open conversations about menstruation especially in the presence of boys and men. They consider it a cultural norm that such discussions are taboo.
- This has implications on girls and women's health.
- Restricting or limiting conversations about menstruation results in misconceptions, shame and embarrassment, that hinder girls from accessing education and menstrual products and services.
- To encourage open discussions about menstruation, it is important to use positive, factual and respectful language.



Positive statements

All girls and women experience menstruation as part of their reproductive health

There's no need to feel embarrassed or ashamed about menstruation

Menstruation is a normal and healthy part of life for girls and women

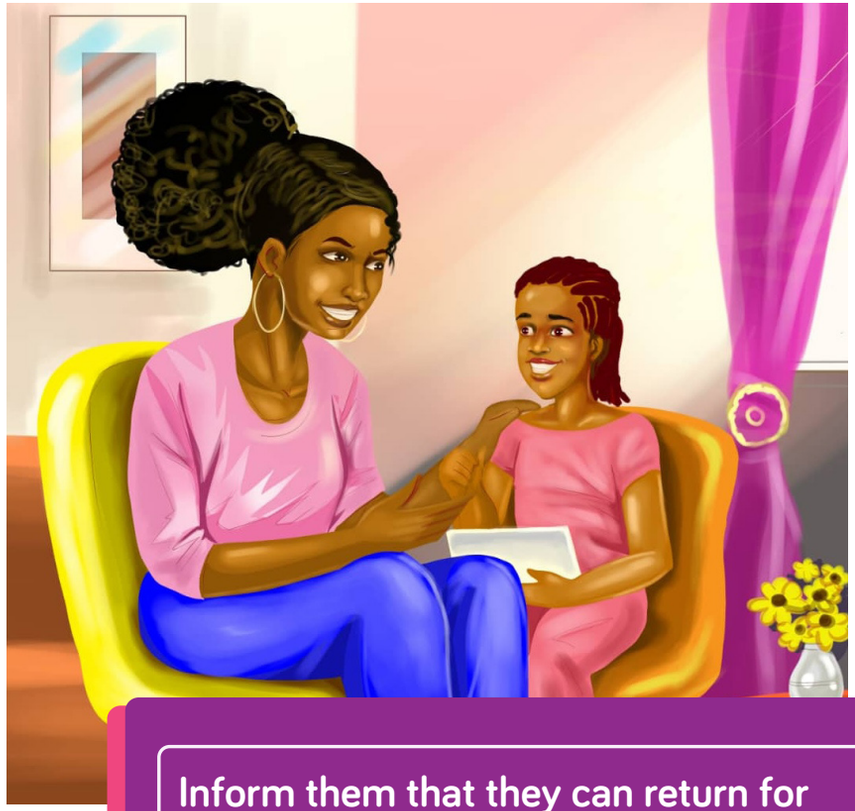
Men and boys should be part of the conversation about menstruation

Menstruation is a natural biological process, its not dirty

Periods are a sign that your body is working as it should

How to talk to girls about menstruation

- Create a safe and comfortable space that builds trust and encourages open conversation.
- Assure her of confidentiality.
- Provide age-appropriate and non-judgmental information.
- Encourage positivity .
- Dispel any misconception and debunk harmful myths .
- Share informative materials with them, including helplines where they can get safe menstrual products.
- If the opportunity presents itself, include boys and men in the conversation.



Inform them that they can return for more information and follow-up ensuring that they feel supported throughout their menstrual health journey.

Activity 1:

Role Play – 10 mins

Two participants are to volunteer: One to act as a MH educator and the other as an adolescent girl.

Scenario 1:

An adolescent girl aged 12 years approached the educator with a worried look. She mentioned that she started her menses 3 months ago and has only seen it twice. She is worried and concerned because those two times, she used tissue paper since her mother is not aware that she has started menstruating. She doesn't know how to tell her.

Scenario 2:

One evening, the MH educator in the community saw a girl hiding around the bend of her house. On approaching her, the girl said that she was stained with blood and a group of boys laughed at her on her way to the educator's house. Just before the girl finished narrating her story, the boys passed still giggling and pointing at the girl. What should the educator do and how will he/she approach the matter?

Engaging adolescent boys and young men

- Involving boys and men in MH programs can increase their reach and impact, leading to greater community support and improved access to MH products and services.
- Many boys and men struggle to discuss menstruation openly, limiting their engagement and hindering efforts to meet their needs of girls and women.
- Boys and men should be educated about girls' menstrual needs, enabling them to provide support, promote respect and uphold the dignity of girls and women.
- Including boys and men in MH conversations reduces stigma as their understanding can normalize menstruation and challenge associated beliefs.
- Age appropriate and respectful strategies can make MH discussions accessible ensuring cultural sensitivity and respect for all.



Roles and responsibilities of boys and men in promoting MH

Boys and Men promoting Menstrual Health

- Raise awareness and educate communities about menstruation through various platforms including schools, community events, and social media.
- Fathers, brothers and male partners should provide emotional and practical support for menstruators which helps create a supportive environment at home and in schools.
- Boys and men as allies help normalize menstruation and challenge cultural beliefs around menstruation.
- Involving men and boys in MH programs improves their sense of responsibility towards gender equality.
- Community leaders, policy makers and educators can leverage their influence to advocate for change and shape policies that support MH initiatives.

Boys and men can promote gender equality, empathy and improve health outcomes for girls and women and the general community.

Including men in MH programs not only promotes inclusion, it is also a strategy for long-term cultural and social change that benefits everyone.

Their roles encompass understanding menstrual heath, providing support, challenging stigma, advocating for policies and access to menstrual products and facilities.

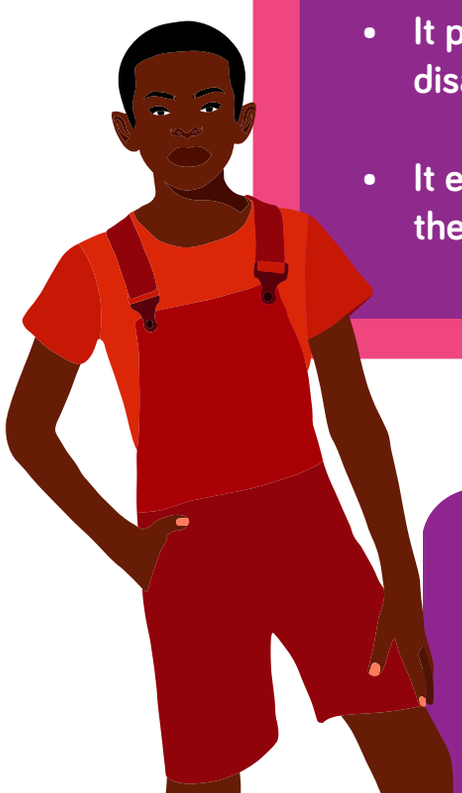
Activity 2:
10 mins

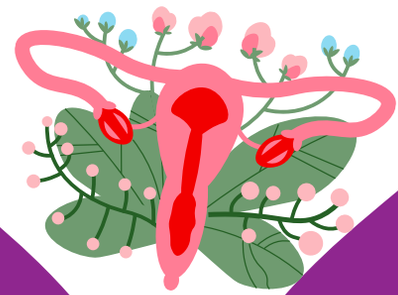
- Brainstorm additional ways boys and men can contribute to promoting menstrual health and hygiene.

- Explore their contributions and the benefits to the lives and health of girls and women.

Benefits of engaging boys and men in promoting Menstrual Health & Hygiene

- Stigma reduction: helps to break the silence around menstruation, encourages open dialogue for girls in their families and communities.
- Improved school attendance as girls and women are more likely to feel comfortable in school.
- It promotes gender equity ensuring that girls and women are not unfairly disadvantaged.
- It enhances healthier relationships with girls and women, respecting and supporting their needs during menstruation.







Linkage to affordable menstrual products and support:

Brainstorming session- 10mins

Ask the participants to recall the types of menstrual products that were discussed in previous sessions.

Ask the participants

- Which products do they use and are familiar with?
- Where are they likely to go to get the products?
- How do they get these products?

Linkage to affordable menstrual products and support:

Available affordable menstrual products within the community

- Re-usable sanitary pad
- Menstrual cup
- Disposable sanitary pad
- Period wear



Outlets where you can get menstrual products

- Local health facilities
- Pharmacies
- Patent Proprietary Medicine Vendors (PPMVs)
- Supermarkets
- Local market



Quiz

1. Why is it important to involve boys and men in conversations about MH?

a. To increase awareness and reduce stigma
b. To promote understanding and support for girls and women
c. Both A & B
d. Only girls and women should be involved in these conversations.

2. What is one effective strategy to create a supportive environment for open discussions about menstruation in schools and communities?

a. Restricting the conversation to girls and women only
b. Focusing solely on the biological aspects of menstruation
c. Encouraging both genders to learn about and discuss menstruation respectfully
d. Avoiding the topic altogether to prevent discomfort and embarrassment

3. Mention three benefits of boys and men understanding MH issues.

i .....
ii .....
iii .....

4. Effective communication about MH can break harmful cultural beliefs around menstruation and promote a supportive environment for girls and women. True or False?

5. Mention one way you would use to engage a girl who has concerns about her menses.

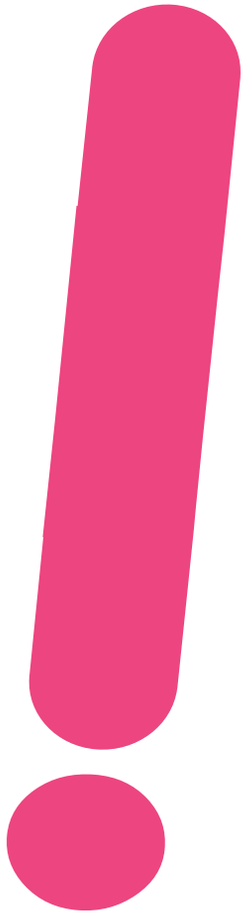


Module 5

Addressing challenges faced by girls and women during menstruation

Module Outline

- Common myths & misconceptions
- Cultural beliefs around menstruation
- Impact of myths & unhealthy beliefs on MHM
- Facts: addressing misconceptions
- Challenging myths & cultural barriers
- Exercises & Quizzes



Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will:

1. Identify and understand the common myths, misconceptions and cultural beliefs around menstruation.
2. Understand the impact of myths and misconceptions on menstrual health and overall well-being.
3. Understand the facts and gain confidence in debunking myths and challenging harmful cultural barriers around menstruation.

Misconceptions, myths and socio-cultural beliefs

Introduction

- It is important to understand how misinformation, cultural beliefs and social norms can shape people's understanding and behaviors around menstrual health and hygiene leading to barriers in accessing education, services and support.

- Girls and women face diverse challenges while menstruating. Many of these challenges are deeply rooted in social and cultural beliefs and norms that limit or prohibit certain behaviors or discussions around menstruation. This results in numerous negative impacts on the lives and health of girls and women.

- These myths and social norms make their daily lives difficult and limit their freedom and participation in societal activities.

- Understanding these misconceptions, myths and socio-cultural beliefs around menstruation, helps to proffer appropriate solutions, break barriers and address them.



Some myths and socio-cultural beliefs

- Girls should not wash their hair during menstruation because it will stop their period.
- Girls should not bathe during their menstruation, or they will become infertile.
- Using tampons can cause a girl to lose her virginity.
- Girls should get married once they start menstruating.
- Talking about menstruation in public or in front of men is not allowed.
- Girls and women when menstruating should not touch food and water sources because they are considered unclean.
- A menstruating woman should not cook as the food may not be done.



Know the facts about menstruation

False Beliefs & Misconceptions	Facts
Menstrual blood is dirty.	Menstruation is a normal physiological process. The blood is the shedding of the uterine wall and unfertilized egg.
Using tampons can cause loss of virginity.	Tampons do not affect virginity, they are safe menstrual product for managing periods. Virginity is lost due to sexual activities.
Menstrual pain is a punishment for sins.	Menstrual pain may be caused by natural uterine contractions, and it is not related to moral behaviour.
Women should not cook, enter the kitchen or touch food during their period.	Women can safely cook and handle food during menstruation with proper hygiene.
Bathing and washing hair during menstruation can stop the flow and causes illness.	It is perfectly safe and hygienic to wash hair and bathe regularly, as bathing or washing does not affect menstrual flow.

How can you help in addressing harmful beliefs?

- Identify the barriers.
- Clarify the barrier by probing further using open ended questions.
- Empathize with their concerns. Show respect.
- Analyze and discuss the impact while identifying potential solutions together.
- Address the barrier or belief with the identified fact and solution.
- Summarize and agree.

Activity 1:

Role Play

- Ask the participants to nominate two people for this exercise or request for volunteers.
- Set up a scenario by using one of the myths or cultural beliefs on menstruation and ask the volunteers to address the myths with the ‘steps in addressing beliefs’ and with factual information taught earlier.
- Ask the participants to switch roles and practice how they will address these issues in real life.

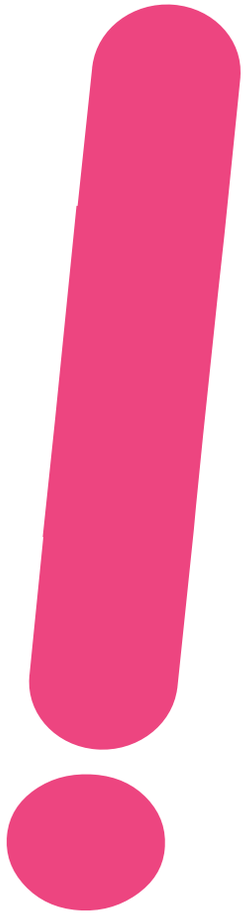
Reflection exercise

- Ask the participants to write down one myth or belief they had before the training or heard during the training about menstruation and state what the facts are.
- Summarize key points and conclude.
- Reflect on the insights, summarize the key points from the session by reiterating the importance of addressing myths and misconceptions surrounding menstruation.
- Encourage the participants to take back what they have learnt to their communities, promoting open and respectful conversations about menstruation.



Module 6

Safeguarding in Menstrual Health and Hygiene Management Programs



Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to:

1. Describe what child safeguarding is and why it is important.
2. Recognize child safeguarding responsibilities that apply to all individuals and professionals that interact with children.
3. Identify specific risks girls may face in MH projects and understand the protective measures required.
4. Report child safeguarding concerns safely and confidentially.

Safeguarding and Child Protection

- Every child has the right to be protected from harm. All individuals and organizations that work with or interact with children should understand what safeguarding is and adhere to its principles and procedures to help them keep children safe.

- Safeguarding is a way of working that promotes the safety and welfare of people involved in the delivery or receipt of humanitarian and development assistance, protecting them from harm, including all forms of exploitation, abuse and harassment.

- Safeguarding refers to measures and actions taken to protect the health, well-being, and human rights of individuals, particularly children to ensure they are safe from harm, abuse, neglect and exploitation.

- It involves creating a safe environment that prevents any risk of harm, promoting the welfare of children, and ensuring their rights are respected in all areas where they may be vulnerable.

- Safeguarding includes establishing policies, procedures, and practices that protect children and responding appropriately to concerns about abuse or exploitation.



Safeguarding and Child Protection- Your responsibility

- Keep girls safe. Everyone working on MH-NoW project has a responsibility to protect girls and young women and keep them safe from harm.
- Report any suspected or known cases of exploitation, abuse or harassment to school or community's safeguarding focal person and to MH-NoW project safeguarding focal person.
- Report any difficult circumstances during your work.
- MH Champions should take steps to protect themselves in the course of their work. This can be done by being discrete about their work and treating all information with confidentiality.

What is 'Do No Harm'?

Do no harm

- This means taking necessary care to avoid causing unintended negative effects when helping people. It ensures that any action or program intended to assist does not accidentally make a situation worse or create new problems.

- It involves being aware of local customs, vulnerabilities and potential risks, so that interventions are helpful and do not harm girls or communities, especially the most vulnerable.

What are the potential areas of harm?

- Stigmatization and discrimination
- Excluding vulnerable adolescent girls and young women
- Providing incorrect information or misinformation
- Misuse of data
- Inadequate confidentiality and privacy
- Negative backlash or reactions from the community
- Product safety and usability

Protecting adolescent girls

Everyone under the age of 18 years has special rights to protection.

General Principles:

- **Children need to be protected because they are still growing. It is the responsibility of adults to protect all children until they can do so on their own.**
- **On the MHNoW program, we are all committed to behaving ethically and respectfully towards all girls we interact with, and to always treating them with dignity and consideration.**
- **Always refer girls to the safeguarding focal person and hotline numbers.**
- **All women, regardless of their age have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.**

Why is it important?

Girls and young women need someone they can freely talk to and trust with their information. It is our collective responsibility to behave ethically towards girls and act when their rights have been violated. All actions should be in their best interest.

- **Reducing vulnerability to harm and abuse.** Safeguarding minimizes the risks of harm including exploitation, discrimination or stigmatization, creating a supportive space where girls can engage and learn freely.
- **Encouraging full participation and engagement.** Safeguarding builds trust and respect of girls and their communities leading to their active participation.
- **Promoting the dignity and rights of girls and women.** Every girl has the right to access MH education and services; safeguarding upholds these rights.
- **Enhancing program impact through safe communication, data and reporting.** Safe environments leads to successful learning outcomes.

Safeguarding tips

Things TO DO

- Create a safe environment.
- Stay calm, be patient and listen carefully.
- Acknowledge her confidence in speaking up or asking questions
- Avoid asking too many leading questions.
- Provide the girl with child protection numbers to call.
- Get her contact details for follow up.

Things NOT TO DO

- Do not share girls' personal information publicly.
- Do not promise total confidentiality (other team members may be involved in her care, protection & reporting).
- Avoid judgmental language.
- Do not make promises you cannot keep.
- Do not impose personal beliefs.

Reporting abuse

- Confidentiality must be a core principle, so educators should avoid discussing concerns with anyone beyond the program team.
- Ensure that girls have multiple channels to report abuse in school, communities and in families.
- Provide girls with safeguarding numbers, email address or hotlines to report any issues that may occur during the program.
- Girls can report concerns to the MH Champions who will escalate to the program Safeguarding focal person.

Case study on Safeguarding

You observed a fellow MH Champion talking to a girl aged 17 years during her session. She mentioned that the girl is developing and slightly fondled with her breasts while talking to the girl.

What would you do?



Understanding 'Do no Harm Map Exercise'

- **Provide participants with cards listing potential areas of harm in MHHM programs (e.g., stigmatization, misinformation, exclusion).**

- **Ask participants to map these on a chart divided into categories: Physical, Emotional, Social, Cultural.**

Quiz

1. What is safeguarding and why is it important in MH programs?
2. How will you report a case of abuse of an adolescent girl in your community?

Reflection question

Reflect on one new thing that you have learned about safeguarding and how you will apply it to your role as an MH champion?



Conclusion

- In conclusion, this Menstrual Health (MH) training manual serves as a foundational resource to empower champions with the knowledge and skills to create supportive environments for menstrual health education.

- By completing these modules, participants are equipped to lead impactful conversations, address misconceptions, and advocate for resources that improve menstrual health and hygiene practices.

- We hope this manual inspires continued learning and engagement, fostering a community where menstruation is understood, respected, and supported.

- Through this collective effort, we move closer to a future where all girls and women can experience safe, dignified menstrual health care.

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MH-NoW

Care. Confidence. Change