

WASH & Health Practitioners

MHM Training Manual

v1.0



WSSCC
WATER SUPPLY & SANITATION
COLLABORATIVE COUNCIL

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I am happy to learn that the Key Resource Centre, Water and Sanitation, Centre for Good Governance, Uttarakhand Academy of Administration is conducting National Level Training of Trainers programme on Menstrual Hygiene Management and bringing out booklets on Menstrual Hygiene Management with support of Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council – (i) Lab Manual, (ii) Manual for Training of Practitioners and (iii) Manual for Training of Trainers.

Sanitation and hygiene are key issues for women, consistent with their need for privacy, dignity, safety and self-respect. The Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan places a special emphasis on addressing the sanitation needs of women recognising their role in building a Nirmal Bharat.







Menstruation is a key indicator of health and vitality for women and girls. Managing this hygienically and with dignity is an integral path of good sanitation and hygiene. Hygiene promotion campaigns are most effective, I believe, among younger populations and they can be targeted both as beneficiaries and as agents of behavioural change within their families and their communities. Youth are also quick to acknowledge alternatives, process and functioning dynamics of systems involved in achieving better results. Though there are few pioneering changes that have been created, what seem to be missing are actionable ideas for building an alternate paradigm, which will assure success. Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council and Uttarakhand Academy effort is a step forward in achieving the desired goals.

I wish the Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) and Uttarakhand Academy to achieve the desired results and strengthen and enlighten the community, especially women and the youth about the benefits of Safe, Healthy Environment and Improved Menstrual Hygiene and Sanitation facilities.

Pankaj Jain

Secretary, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation,
Government of India.

Building on more than a decade of the Total Sanitation Campaign, the Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan was launched in 2012 to “transform rural India into ‘Nirmal Bharat’ by adopting ‘community-led’ and ‘people-centred’ strategies and a community saturation approach” – with a focus on creating awareness and generating demand for sanitary facilities and their use. The main objectives of the NBA are to:

-  Bring about an improvement in the general quality of life in the rural areas;
-  Accelerate sanitation coverage in rural areas to achieve the vision of Nirmal Bharat by 2022 with all gram Panchayats in the country attaining Nirmal status;
-  Motivate communities and Panchayati Raj Institutions promoting sustainable sanitation facilities through awareness creation and health education;
-  To cover the remaining schools not covered under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) and Anganwadi Centres in the rural areas with proper sanitation facilities and undertake proactive promotion of hygiene education and sanitary habits among students;
-  Encourage cost effective and appropriate technologies for ecologically safe and sustainable sanitation;
-  Develop community managed environmental sanitation systems focusing on solid & liquid waste management for overall cleanliness in the rural areas.

The NBA refers to the importance of engaging women’s self-help groups to achieve its aims and the need to ensure that services reach vulnerable groups including women-headed households. The initiative calls for a demand driven approach that links to effective demand creation and infrastructure that people want, will use and will maintain. It stops short of explicitly mentioning menstrual hygiene management as an issue that affects women – half the target population of the NBA – for 35 to 40 years of their lives, with significant implications for their health. Although not explicitly stated, the provisions in the training, awareness raising, behaviour change and financial incentives available, leave it to the state and its instruments at the local level to interpret and use the NBA. Meanwhile, experiences on the ground, research and policy shows that women’s participation, management and decision making is essential for the success and sustainability of any water and sanitation service delivery in India.

The demand for facilities and services that respond to women and girls biological needs was further corroborated by primary research conducted with over 12,000 women and girls in schools and in a Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) Lab designed and conducted by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC) across five states in 2012. The MHM Lab was a part of a bigger platform, the Nirmal Bharat Yatra, which was organised by WASH United and Quicksand in partnership with the Government of India. The Yatra sought to raise awareness on stopping open defecation, washing hands with soap and improving menstrual hygiene management – three key dimensions of a Nirmal Bharat.

WSSCC's MHM Lab reached thousands of women and girls and was supported by a range of small and medium-sized partners including Arghyam, Goonj and Digital Empowerment Foundation. At home, in school, at work and play, the voices and demands from thousands of women and girls completely supported by the hundreds of men and boys who also engaged with the MHM Lab, were loud and clear: *let's talk about it, let's do something about it – so that we can manage our menstruation with pride and dignity and dispose used menstrual material safely without further endangering the environment.* The advocacy work of the government, coupled with its resources and ambition, provides the ideal platform for taking this message and related services to every woman and girl in rural India. WSSCC engaged with local and state government, extension workers, teachers, trainers, and practitioners in health, education and WASH from Wardha to Bettiah, as part of the push for improved understanding, information sharing, counselling, training and support on menstrual hygiene. Trainers were clear that although the topic was not new – the connection with people was missing. Girls and grown women in every state said that their discussions in the MHM Lab represented the first time ever that they had been able to ask questions, understand the menstrual cycle and learn about safe hygiene practices, reuse and disposal.

The materials in this publication were developed, tested and commented upon across five states through one-on-one interviews with people in different age groups, focus groups, and discussions held in various settings including schools. A writer's workshop was organised by WSSCC in February 2013 in Mumbai bringing together MHM Lab facilitators, designers, trainers and experts to develop the range of manuals and tools. Disability experts were a key part of the process of addressing this vital topic within the context of MHM and in developing this publication. See the Acknowledgements section of this publication for the names of the various experts that were involved in this process.

This publication is designed to be easy to read and use. It is meant to be used by service providers, extension and community workers, teachers, parents and peers in their efforts to reach out to large numbers of women and girls in an efficient and effective way without compromising on quality and message. It is not confined to sanitation, water and hygiene, rather it seeks to build comfort, pride, dignity, confidence and related demand so that women and girls can be full members of society at all times without shame and fear.

Women and girls menstruate and thereby produce the next generation. This publication and the accompanying materials are intended to deepen our understanding of the biological nature of this phenomenon in order to reclaim and restore the pride and confidence that should naturally be a part of it. Managing menstruation hygienically with linked sanitary facilities is an important aspect of life – the practical dimensions of which this publication also aims to facilitate – resulting in clean, convenient facilities that offer privacy and dignity for women at any time of the month. Policymakers, trainers, development partners, civil society, academics, the media and community leaders are invited to use these publications to intensify and amplify the transformation already underway in the country with regard to menstrual hygiene management. We hope these materials will help you to break the silence, take and spread the pledge inside and outside your own home and wider with women and men young and old, to install pride where there was shame and to make menstrual hygiene management a central part of the design and construction of every school, health clinic, workspace, transport centre and home.



Archana Patkar

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USING THIS MANUAL

This manual was developed to sensitise WASH and health practitioners to the various issues associated with menstrual hygiene management. It equips professionals with important information, skills and tools for communicating with a variety of stakeholders, which can help them to promote menstrual management practices in their communities.

By guiding participants through the step-by-step learning process in this manual, they will develop a thorough understanding of: current practices, myths and taboos around menstruation; the biological process of menstruation; hygienic management of menstruation; safe disposal practices.

The following eight sessions, which are covered in detail throughout the manual, provide the roadmap for structuring, organizing and delivering a comprehensive menstrual hygiene workshop:

- 1) Breaking the Silence**
- 2) The Biology of Menstruation**
- 3) Menstrual Hygiene Management**
- 4) Menstrual Hygiene Management During Emergencies**
- 5) Menstrual Hygiene Management for the Disabled**
- 6) Environmentally Friendly Disposal Options**
- 7) Essential Soft Skills**
- 8) FAQs**

Acknowledgments

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Disclaimer

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This report and other WSSCC publications are also available at www.wsscc.org

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1

INTRODUCTION

Women menstruate for a total of 40 years in their lifetime. But a vast majority who live in the developing world do not have access to clean water, safe and private spaces for washing and cleaning, materials for absorbing menstrual blood, or facilities for proper and safe disposal of used menstrual hygiene materials.

In India, it is estimated that 200 million women have a poor understanding of menstrual hygiene practices. Moreover, only 12 per cent of Indian women and girls use commercial sanitary products.

Historically, myths, taboos and stigma around the female body and menstruation have overshadowed progressive initiatives aimed at improving menstrual hygiene in India. Many communities associate menstruation with impurity and pollution of the sacred. This belief is coupled with restrictions and sometimes bizarre regulations on women's everyday lives and activities. For instance, some of the most common practices include restrictions on entering one's own home or kitchen, touching food, water and plants or participating in religious activities.

Such beliefs and practices not only violate women's dignity, they have serious implications for their health and wellbeing. To make matters worse, a lack of resources and knowledge means that many women do not have access to basic hygiene materials and facilities. In some cases, women are forced to resort to unhygienic options, such as using ash, newspapers, hay, sand or old rags to absorb menstrual blood. Consequently, every period is loaded with mental, emotional and physical trauma, which affects the day to day lives of women across India.

Twenty-three per cent of girls in India drop out of school soon after reaching puberty. Schools are not equipped with the basic amenities for menstrual management, with non-availability of menstruation materials, places for changing menstruation materials, running water in toilets and the absence of disposal facilities all impacting on a girl's education. As a result of stigma and taboos, communication between girls and teachers about healthy menstrual practices is non-existent.

Neelam's Story

Neelam is 14 and comes from a village in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. Her mother died when she was just five-years-old, which left her father to raise Neelam and her three siblings single-handedly. She has two elder sisters – who used to do all the cooking when she was growing up – and a brother. Her elder sisters used to do all the cooking and cleaning for the entire household when she was growing up.

“I had no idea about menstruation till I actually had my period!” Neelam says, explaining there was no one at home to look after her or give her personal care and information, not just on menstruation, but on anything else like safety, how to deal with friends, school and so on. **“My sisters were kids themselves, so that explains my situation.”**

One night she woke up with abdominal pain, and feared it was a bowel problem. But then she saw blood on her panties. **“I was devastated. I thought I had some big ailment and would now die!”**

Neelam suffers from cramps, and her menstruation lasts eight days. She uses cotton cloth for absorption of menstrual fluid, but her family often faces a shortage of material. When she finishes with a cloth she disposes of it by throwing it out in an open field. She never washes or reuses the same cloth twice.

Occasionally, Neelam has boils and rashes in her private parts and discomfort from the wetness of the cloth she wears. But she had no idea these problems related to menstruation or bad hygiene. A sense of shame means she has never discussed these issues – even with her sisters – and has never considered buying sanitary pads from the market. **“I feel too shy to ask for it,”** she says. Family elders have barred Neelam from talking to boys in her village; and she is also barred from most physical contact during her periods.

Neelam is a strong and articulate girl who shared all of this personal information after a brief conversation about menstrual hygiene management with the Nirmal Bharat Yatra team.




TRAINING SESSIONS - ONE

SESSION ONE: BREAKING THE SILENCE

DURATION: 45 MINUTES



Material Required:

-  Flip chart or white board
-  Copies of case studies in local language
-  Marker pen

1






Step 1: Ice Breaker

After welcoming the participants and thanking them for their willingness to participate in such a sensitive workshop, initiate a discussion on menstruation using a set of leading questions. While seemingly unrelated to the topic, the questions are aimed at engaging the audience in conversation about menstruation.

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Step 2: Question and Answer (Q&A)

If your audience has both male and female participants it is advisable to divide them into gender specific groups. Some examples of leading questions are:

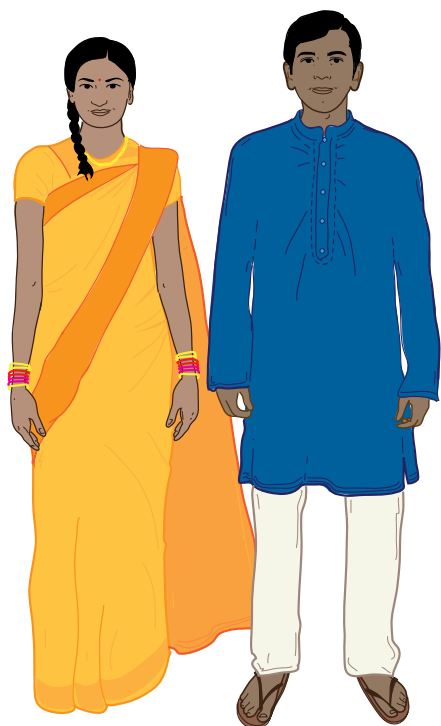
-  What is the basic difference between male and female bodies?
-  What changes occur in boys and girls as they grow?
-  (Directed to male participants) Have you seen the girl or woman in your house secluded from the rest of the house or refrained from usual activities on any particular day(s)?
-  (Directed to female participants) Are you subject to seclusion from the rest of the house or refrained from your usual activities on any particular day(s)?
-  What do you think are the reasons for these seclusions, restrictions and customs?

Step 3: Additional information

During the course of the ice breaker, write down all relevant responses on the flip chart or white board for use in further discussion.

Once the participants are warmed-up and comfortable, be ready with case studies to sensitize them. You can also use the Introduction and Neelam's story at this stage of training, for statistics and as a case study.

Finally, ask participants to share their stories, in brief.



Key Messages:

- Menstruation is part of growing up.
- Menstruation is normal for every woman, including the differently abled.
- Menstruation is not a women's issue but a universal issue – men need to know about it too!
- There are many myths and misconceptions around menstruation.

TRAINING SESSIONS - TWO

SESSION TWO: THE BIOLOGY OF MENSTRUATION

DURATION: 1 HOUR



Materials required:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  KAAVAD flipbook |  Paper chits |
|  Menstruation wheel |  Marker pens |
|  Apron |  Chart paper and drop box |

1

Step 1: Group Activity

Having arranged a drop box for their responses, divide the participants into four groups, give each participant a paper chit and pen, and pose one of the following four sets of questions to each of group:

Group 1: Why do women menstruate?

Group 2: What do women use to manage menstruation; what different kinds of materials have you seen used for managing menstruation?

Group 3: At what age does a girl begin menstruation; how many times do woman menstruate in a month; how many times will she menstruate in the whole year; and how many times will she menstruate in her lifetime?

Group 4: What is the relationship between menstruation and motherhood?

2

Step 2: Response Compilation

Once you've collected the responses from the drop box, sort them into their respective groups and display them on four separate charts to share knowledge.

3

Step 3: Fact sharing

Following the group activity, share the facts about menstruation and clarify any conflicting answers or ideas that may have been generated by the participants.

Next, use the KAAVAD flipbook to explain the difference in biological and physical changes that occur in the male and female body. The Flipbook will help to shift the discussion from external to internal changes in males and females.

Finally, use the illustrated menstruation wheel to support learning around the menstrual and reproductive process.

Step 4: Additional instruction

The point of putting questions to the participants is to ascertain their level of awareness – so make sure that they write down their individual responses with NO influence from others in the group!

When demonstrating the menstruation wheel and flipbook - make use of available reference material to these visuals.



The **double-sided KAAVAD Flipbook** is based on the ancient Kaavad, a portable, painted, wooden shrine made by the Kaavad makers (Basayati Suthars) of Bassi, Chittor, for the storytellers (Kaavadiya Bhats or Ravs) of Marwar. The storytellers unfold the multiple panels of the Kaavad as they recite stories and genealogies of their patrons (jajmans) spread across Rajasthan and adjoining states in India.



The **interactive MHM wheel** explains the stages and process of menstruation through four key stages. The bottom ring rotates with appropriate text and graphics appearing in the windows above – the key one being a simplified illustration of the uterus. The menstruation wheel is available in Hindi and in English.

To make compiling the answers easier, try using different coloured chits to identify each separate group.





TRAINING SESSIONS - THREE

SESSION THREE: MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT

DURATION: 1 HOUR 30 MINUTES



Materials required:

-  Range of sanitary napkins available from the local market, including cotton, wooden pulp, gel and polymer / petroleum-based products
-  Cloth pads including cotton, terry cotton, synthetics, thick cotton, woolen fabric and old rags
-  Cloth pad with ash filling, sand and dried leaves
-  A repeatedly used / stained cloth

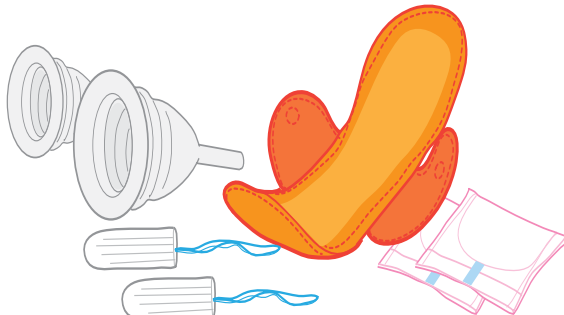
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Step 1: Group Discussion

Following on from what was learnt in Session Two, introduce the materials used for MHM and ask the participants about their opinions on these materials. Focus on what they believe is the most appropriate material to use.

Make sure you have on display a range of menstruation materials, as these are useful for facilitating a discussion around preferred menstrual management methods. The display also gives participants the opportunity to talk about their own (product) preferences.

Explain the advantages and disadvantages of each material on display and highlight the safety and hygiene aspect of each one. Use the chart to illustrate the advantages and disadvantages of different materials and products.



A range of menstruation materials



Type of material	Advantages	Disadvantages
Cotton Cloth pad (muslin)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easily available 2. Low / no cost 3. Washable / Reusable 4. Wearable without underpants 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gets soaked fast 2. Difficulty in changing 3. Repeatedly use causes abrasions in the thigh 4. Improper washing, drying and storage causes infections 5. Chances of the pad falling under weight or its snapping
Cloth pad filled with ash / sand / dried leaves	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Easily available 2. Low / No cost 3. Washable / reusable 4. More soaking capacity 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased risk of infection 2. Chances of the pad falling under weight or its snapping 3. Heavy and inconvenient when used with sand filling
Sanitary napkin (a) Polymer (b) Wood pulp (c) Cotton (d) Gel Instruction: The trainer can inform the participants of the kind of sanitary napkin from the packet cover	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safe and hygienic 2. High Soaking capacity 3. Comfortable 4. Convenient to change 5. Convenient to carry 6. Easily available (except in some remote rural areas) 7. Light weight 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Costly 2. Not biodegradable, making disposal difficult 3. Prolonged use of a single napkin causes infection and diseases 4. Not reusable 5. Latrines / toilets / drains can get choked if napkins are disposed there 6. Can cause environmental pollution

2

Step 2: Explain how to use and maintain sanitary materials

Safety and hygiene in using these materials

1. Cloth pad:

- A set of cloth is advised to be used for just 2-3 months of menstruation cycle or until the cloth starts to become hard to wash.
- Before changing and after changing, wash your hands with soap.
- Do not hesitate to carry menstrual waste for safe disposal (by wrapping in newspaper).
- Female family members or friends should not interchange their menstrual cloth.

2. Sanitary napkins:

- Do not throw sanitary napkins in toilets.
- Do not use one napkin for more than 6 hours.

Hygienic practices

1. Handling menstrual blood:

- Wash hands with water and soap after contact with menstrual blood.
- Clean up spills with phenyl.
- Set aside soiled clothing and bed sheets from other clothes before washing and drying separately.

2. Cleaning blood stained rags, clothes, bed sheets and cloth for reuse:

- Soak the soiled material in soapy water for 20 minutes. To ensure there is enough soap in the water, make sure there are plenty of bubbles when you shake the water with your hand.
- Wash the soiled material as you would normally with soap and water.
- Allow the cleaned materials to air dry in the sun. Discard the dirty soaking water in the toilet.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.

3. Washing and cleaning the body:

- During menstruation wash the body including the genital area daily with warm, clean water and mild soap.
- Always pat the area dry after cleaning it.

Step 3: Instruction

With the aid of targeted group discussions point out the MHM problems women and adolescent girls face in the workplace, school and home using a combination of bullet points on the flipchart / whiteboard, visual aids and Q&A with participants. Given the number of points to get through it's worth keeping group discussions to a minimum.

1. In the workplace

Women and girls face numerous challenges with managing their menstruation in workplace. These include:

- Inadequate toilet facilities.
- Lack of facilities for washing and drying menstrual cloth.
- Lack of disposal for sanitary pads or menstrual cloths.
- Difficulty discussing menstrual issues with male managers. Managers often do not understand the need for women and girls to be able to take additional time in the toilet or the washroom to manage menstruation.
- Difficulty with concentrating on work due to menstrual cramps.
- Lack of sanitary materials or medicines.
- Lack of opportunities or facilities to change, wash or clean sanitary clothes while travelling for work.

2. At school

Female teachers and adolescent schoolgirls face challenges in managing their menstruation at school. These include:

- Lack of sanitary menstrual materials.
- Less concentration and participation, including not being able to stand up to answer questions.
- Lack of private facilities and water supply for washing and drying of soiled clothing, cloths and hands.
- Absenteeism from school during menstruation because of lack of facilities.
- Fear of using the latrine in case others discover menstrual blood.
- Lack of information about the menstrual process, leaving them scared and embarrassed.
- Exclusion from sports.

3. At home

Women and adolescent girls face challenges in managing their menstruation in their homes as well. These include:

- In some cultures girls and women are not allowed to bathe or wash themselves during menstruation. This causes discomfort and stress.
- Many women and girls have to manage their menstruation in the open air due to non-availability of toilets and running water.
- They can suffer from stress and anxiety due to the shame associated with menstruation.
- Moreover, they are unable to discuss these matters with family members due to taboos.

4

Step 4: Good hygiene practice (can be supplemented with a visual aid, e.g. slide or handout)

As a counterpoint to the above problems, move the session onto good hygiene practices for workplace, school and household, using the chart below as a guide.

Good practice for menstrual hygiene in the workplace	Good menstrual hygiene in school for girls and female teachers	Good practice for menstrual hygiene in the household
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide separate water and sanitation facilities for women and men. • Provide facilities for disposal. • Have discrete supply of sanitary pads and clean cloths available in an emergency for women or girls at work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of sanitary protection material. • Clean and separate toilets for girls and boys. • Space for washing and drying. • disposal facilities and supportive teachers / staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of toilet with running water. • Clean washing and drying spaces for cloth. • Safe and clean bathing space. • Facilities for disposal. • Open environment to discuss issues.

Key messages to deliver:

- 1.** Cotton cloth pads should be washed with soap or detergent after every use and dried in direct sunlight.
- 2.** Cotton pads should be stored in a clean, dry environment protected from insects and rodents.
- 3.** The use of other materials such as ash and sand increases risk of infection and can be seriously harmful.
- 4.** Sanitary napkins should be changed at least 3-4 times in a day irrespective of the volume of blood flow because:
 - Bacteria grows faster in excreted blood, resulting in bad odor and infection.
 - Prolonged pad use and exposure to dried blood leads to rashes.





TRAINING SESSIONS - FOUR

SESSION FOUR: MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT DURING EMERGENCIES

DURATION: 45 MINUTES



Materials required:

-  Menstruation Management materials during emergency or photos of the materials (or MHM kit where available)
-  Graphic design of toilets that includes menstruation management facilities and accessibility for differently abled women and adolescent girls
-  Flip chart
-  Marker pen

Emergencies can be man-made, such as riots, conflicts, curfews or war; or natural, such as earthquakes, floods, fires, droughts, famine or tsunamis. This session looks at different MHM factors to take into consideration depending on the type of emergency at hand.

1

Step 1: Group Discussion

The need for Menstrual Hygiene Management in rescue operations

Discuss with participants any past history of emergencies in their districts, to gauge their knowledge of rescue operations. To do this, raise some leading questions, such as:

- What kind of immediate shelters do people use during emergencies?
- Within how many hours of the event were people evacuated from affected areas?
- Did women get any private space in temporary shelters?
- What kind of challenges did women and adolescent girls face with respect to availability of water, bathing space, toilets and availability of menstruation materials?

After analyzing the above information, talk about the key priorities during rescue operations. Discuss emergency preparedness for the self, as well as how to mobilize help for others, by using the following pointers:

1. Self help

- Have your own emergency kit on menstrual hygiene management, which should include cloth pad / sanitary napkin, pills (for cramps), soap, newspaper for wrapping the menstrual waste and a plastic bag (for Tsunami / flood). See below.

2. Mobilising help for others

- Consult with organizations or individuals, who extend support for rescue operations.
- Share details of menstrual hygiene management kit based on local needs. For example, during a tsunami or flood, provide dry clean cloth as a priority to affected women or adolescent girls (use old dhoti, sarees, towels and bed sheets).
- Separate sets of cloth should be given to individual women or adolescent girls.



Menstrual Hygiene Kit for Emergencies



2

Step 2: Group Discussion

The need for Menstrual Hygiene Management in relief camps

Discuss the history of emergencies in the area or district to understand what kind of relief camps have been set up in the past. For a richer discussion, raise some leading questions, such as:

- Were there separate male and female toilet and bath arrangements?
- Was running water available in the toilets?
- Was there washing and drying space for menstrual materials in the toilet?
- Regarding sanitary napkins, what were the disposal methods available; were there dustbins, pits or incinerators in the rescue camp?
- What storage arrangement was available for sanitary napkins and cloth pads?
- Was every woman or adolescent girl given a set of menstrual cloth separately or did they have to share?

i

Analysis of the answers provided will lead to a discussion around the following key messages:

- Use clean and dry cloth during menstruation.
- Wash menstrual cloth after every use, and make sure to dry it under the sun.
- No women or girls should share menstrual cloth with anyone else as it spreads infection.
- Organizations providing relief support should make provisions for separate toilets, bathing, washing and drying spaces, and provide sanitary disposal facilities for women.
- Toilet, bathing and washing spaces should have access to water.
- These areas **MUST** be spacious, and accessible to differently abled women and adolescent girls.

SESSION FIVE: MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT FOR THE DISABLED

DURATION: 45 MINUTES

Trainers must be aware of different types of disabilities, and their specific MHM needs. Regardless of their abilities, disabled people experience the same biological and physical changes as anyone else, so their menstrual management needs are identical. However, understanding differences in physical and mental abilities is essential when it comes to providing effective support to disabled people.

For instance, a woman or adolescent girl who is differently abled is subject to social, physical, cultural and economic barriers that stop her from getting information on health care, education, vocational training and employment. As a result, she is excluded from vital support programmes, making her situation worse.

Step 1: Group Discussion

To help tackle the problem of exclusion and lack of equity for disabled people, introduce the following examples as discussion points:

1. If someone is blind or visually impaired

It may be difficult for a blind adolescent girl to identify her period initially as she will be unable to see the menstrual blood. However, over the course of few months, she will understand her menstrual cycle, how it feels and sense its timing. Useful advice would therefore be:

- Emphasize the hormone-triggered emotional changes that occur during the menstrual cycle, to create awareness on menstruation.
- Motivate her to take support from family members or someone she trusts to check if there is any blood on her clothing.

2. If someone is deaf or has difficulty hearing

Use visual aids to explain menstruation and hygiene management practices to those who are hearing impaired.

1

3. If someone has a physical disability

Talk to the person to understand and assess the kind of facilities they require for managing menstruation. Guide them on how they can work with their family and support group to make provisions for these facilities, which include:

- A toilet and bathing space equipped with railings.
- Doors that open outward rather than inward.
- Water taps that are within their reach.
- Storage of cloth and sanitary napkins in a place within their reach.

4. If someone is mentally challenged

Ask participants if they have family, friends or neighbours that are mentally challenged. Discuss how and what kind of support is needed to help them with menstrual hygiene management.

2

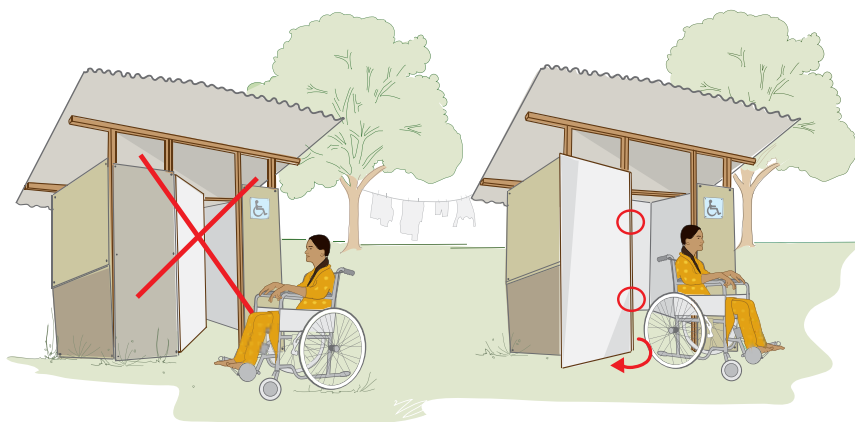
Step 2: Instruction

Trainers should share key points to care givers of mentally challenged women and adolescent girls so that they can help them manage their menstruation independently. Key points include:

- Identify the kind of cloth or pads she has access to and use the same for demonstration.
- Show her where the supply of cloth or pad is kept.
- Show her where the pads or cloth are thrown out or how they are washed if they are to be reused.
- Put a pad or cloth inside her underwear so she can practice, and get used to wearing it.
- Explain that she may want to wear dark clothing during her period, so there will be less chance of any blood stains showing.



Hand rails in relief camps. Roped pathways and smooth road surfaces with textured edges make areas around relief camps easier to use for visually impaired women.



Often you can change the hinges on a door so it opens the other way.



Tips:

1. A woman who is blind or has difficulty in seeing:

- Unless it is an emergency, do not touch the woman before telling her who you are.
- Do not assume that she cannot see you at all.
- Speak in your normal voice.
- If she has a stick, do not take it away from her at any time.
- Say 'goodbye' before walking away or leaving.

2. A woman whose hearing is impaired:

- Make sure you have her attention before speaking to her. If she is not facing you, touch her gently on the shoulder.
- Do not shout or exaggerate your speech.
- Look directly at her and do not cover your mouth with anything.
- Ask her about her preferred way of communicating.

3. A woman with a physical disability:

- Do not assume she is mentally slow.
- If possible, sit so that you are at eye level with her.
- Do not move crutches, sticks, walkers or wheelchairs without her permission, or without arranging their return.
- If she is a wheelchair user, do not lean on or touch her wheelchair without her permission.

4. A woman who does not speak clearly:

- Even though her speech may be slow or difficult to understand this does not mean she has any difficulties in learning and understanding.
- Ask her to repeat anything you do not understand.
- Ask questions she can answer by yes / no.
- Let her take as much time as she needs to explain her problem.
Be patient.

5. A woman who has a learning disability or difficulty understanding you:

- Use simple words and short sentences.
- Be polite and patient, and do not treat her like a child.

SESSION SIX: ENVIRONMENTALLY FRIENDLY DISPOSAL OPTIONS

DURATION: 30 MINUTES

1

Step 1: Methods for Reuse and Disposal of Used Cloths or Sanitary Napkins

Talk the participants through the various options of disposal using visual aids to help clarify and technical issues.

Reuse

To clean blood-stained rags, clothes, bed sheets and cloth used as sanitary napkin, do the following:

- Soak the soiled material in soapy water for 20 minutes. To ensure there is enough soap in the water, make sure there are a lot of bubbles when you stir and shake the water with your hand.
- Wash the soiled material as you would normally with soap and water.
- Allow the cleaned materials to air dry in the sun. Throw the soaking water in the toilet.
- Wash your hands thoroughly with water and soap.

Disposal

Blood stained materials can contaminate the environment and spread diseases if not properly disposed of, so it is critical to emphasize the need for proper disposal of menstrual waste. Reiterate that women and girls should not throw soiled cloths or napkins in latrines or toilets, open drains, water bodies (streams, rivers, ponds, and wells) and so on.

Following are some of the best available methods of safe waste disposal.

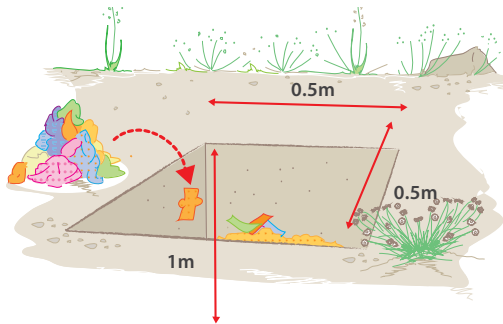


Household Level

1. Deep Burial

Used cloth and/or sanitary napkins could be buried in a simple pit.

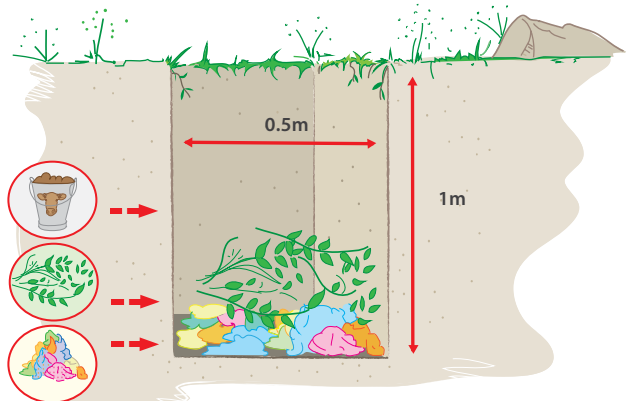
- Dig a pit 0.5m wide x 0.5m in breadth x 1m deep.
- A pit this size can last for two years. Once filled, another pit can be dug and used.
- Such pits should be dug a minimum of seven meters from water sources, including hand pumps, tube wells, open wells, ponds, reservoirs and rivers.



2. Composting: This is an improvement over the deep burial method

Used cloth and/or sanitary napkins could be buried in a simple pit.

- In a pit 0.5m wide x 0.5m in breadth x 1m deep, deposit the waste cloth and sanitary napkins along with leaves, other wet biomass and dung slurry.
- The additional material needs to be added every time cloths or napkins are disposed.
- Cover the material with a layer of soil.

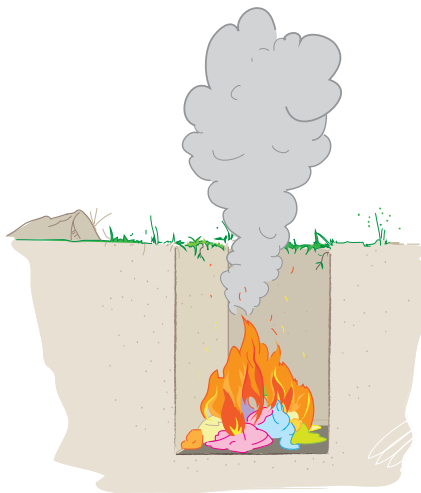




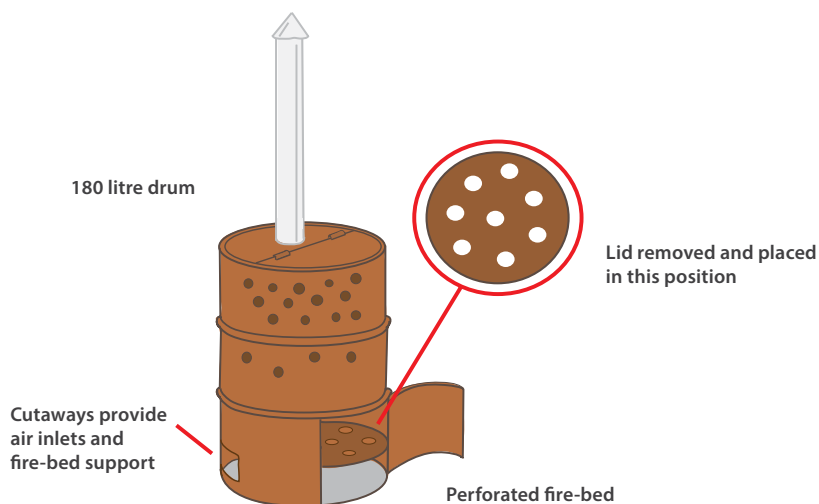
3. Incineration

Burning of used cloth and napkins is not recommended as the process emits toxic compounds, so it should only be practiced when there are no other feasible options. Depending on available resources there are two options for burning waste, as shown in the illustrations below:

- **Burning the waste in a pit.**



- **Burning the waste in a customised drum.**



Referenced from: 'Menstrual Hygiene Matters: A resource for improving menstrual hygiene around the world.' - WaterAid



At Schools and Colleges

It is not possible to accurately estimate the volumes of menstrual waste in schools due to several factors, including:

- Varying numbers of students.
- Absenteeism among girls who are menstruating.
- Very few students change their napkins during school hours due to the absence of proper facilities for changing and washing.

Privacy is a key factor in determining the location of menstrual waste disposal and collection facilities on school premises. Therefore, the location of these facilities should be decided after input from female students and teachers.

The following methods are suggested for the collection and disposal of used cloth and napkins in schools:

1. Collection of Used Cloths and Sanitary Napkins

- Schools need a separate private collection and disposal system for used menstrual cloth and sanitary napkins, in addition to conventional systems for solid waste disposal.
- This collection system should ideally be administered by a group of girls or a staff appointed by the school.
- Collection bins should be placed in locations identified by girls and female teachers.
- Collection bins should have lids on top to keep the waste protected from flies and animals. (See below for examples of collection bins.)
- Once collected, menstrual waste can be buried, composted or incinerated depending on available resources in school.



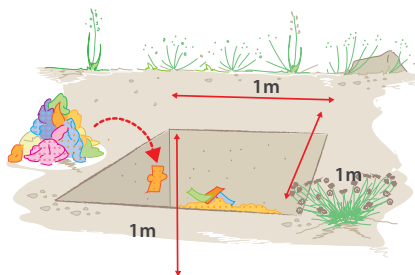
Referenced from: 'Menstrual Hygiene Matters: A resource for improving menstrual hygiene around the world.' - WaterAid



2. Deep Burial

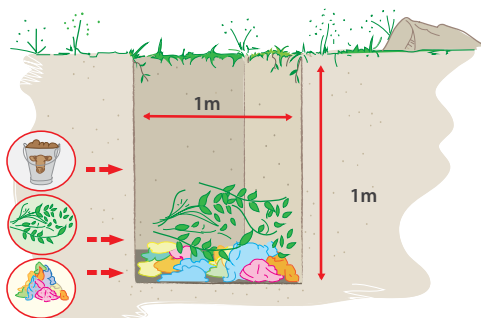
Used cloths or sanitary napkins, or a combination of both can be buried in a simple pit of 1m wide x 1m in breadth x 1m deep.

The pit should be located in an open space in the school premises in a location selected by the girls. Once it is filled, another pit can be dug and used.



3. Composting: This is an improvement over the deep burial method

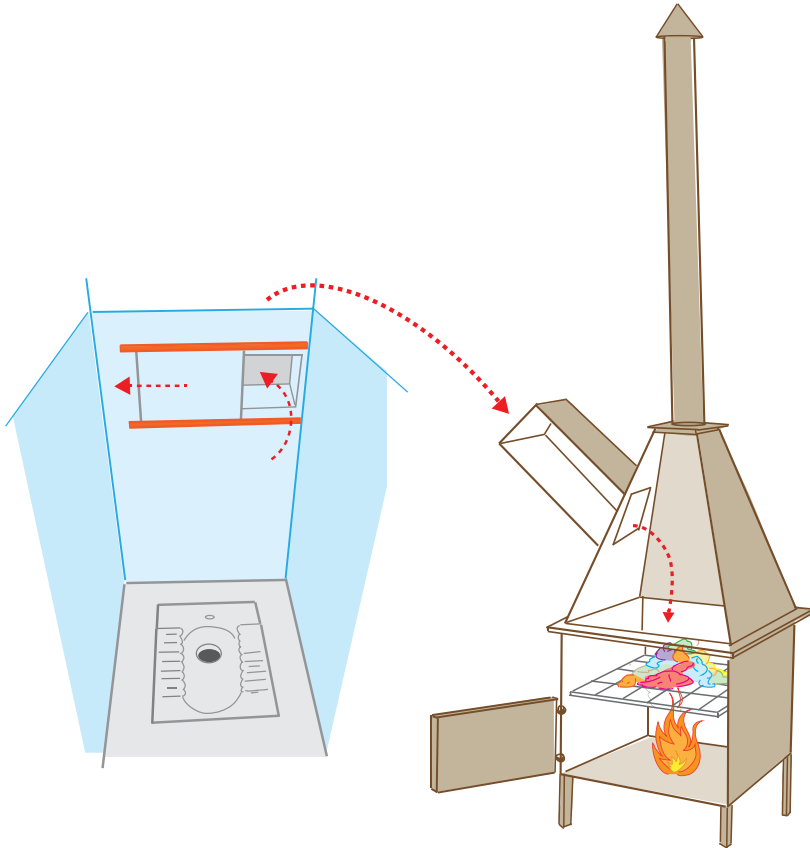
- In a pit of 1m wide x 1m in breadth x 1m deep, deposit used cloth and sanitary napkins with leaves and other wet biomass along with dung slurry to make the compost.
- The additional material needs to be added every time the cloths or napkins are disposed.
- Cover material with a layer of soil.
- A teacher or member of staff from the school should help with adding these materials and preparing the compost.
- Compost can be used by the community or for a kitchen garden around the school.





4. Burning/incineration

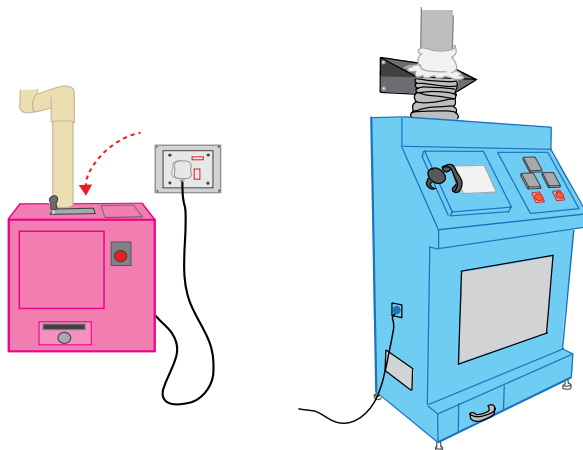
Used cloths/napkins could be burnt in an open pit similar to a deep burial pit. However, burning is not recommended and should be used only when there are no other viable options. An example of an incinerator installed in a school is shown below.





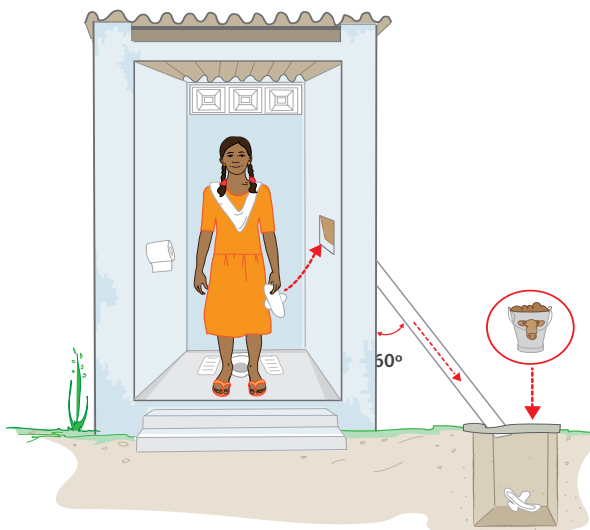
Electric incinerator

These can be adapted for girls' hostels, training centres and women's associations based on the number of women and girls residing or working in the location.



Disposal Chute and Composting Pit for School Toilets

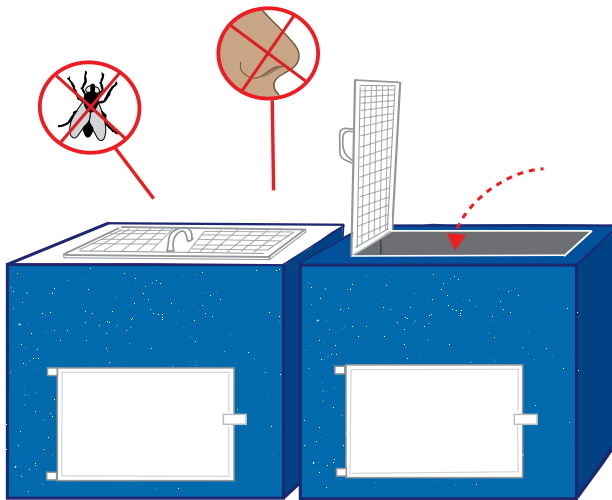
This design uses a steep 60° chute made from a six inch PVC pipe, which leads from a hole in the cubicle wall to a simple unlined pit in the ground outside, separated from the septic tank and covered with a stone slab. Used menstrual cloths are dropped down the chute; adding a mug of cow dung slurry water once a week aids decomposition of all the organic waste and controls smell (Almitra Patel, Bangalore).



Bio-sanitizers

The Biosanitizer is a new and innovative method of composting, which uses bioconversion to dispose of sanitary napkins. Developed by Dr Nimala Ganla from Prasuti Gruha and Dr Renu Bharadwaj from BJ Medical College in Pune, India, the process involves two bins of 1m wide x 0.6m wide x 1m deep filled with a bed of coconut fibre, vegetable peels and a catalyst (which hastens decomposition) called Sujala Powder (developed by Dr. Bhawalkar, Pune).

In one study, after 20 days, sanitary napkins were added to the Biosanitizer along with placenta and dressing materials from approximately 700 surgeries from a local hospital. The process converted approximately 300kgs of waste into half a kilo of rich manure after three years. The Biosanitizer is odour free and does not attract flies.



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Key messages to deliver:

1. Burying and composting are better methods than incineration.
2. Menstrual waste should be discarded at a minimum distance of seven meters from a water body.

SESSION SEVEN: ESSENTIAL SOFT SKILLS

While MHM training involves communicating plenty of hard facts, remember to make use of those essential soft skills we often take for granted. Here are a few points to bear in mind:

- Act as a facilitator and encourage learning through sharing and effective engagement from the participants.
- Identify the participants' different qualities and personalities, e.g. passive, active, aggressive or arrogant. Learn how to deal with each personality trait, making the passive more interactive and the aggressive more tempered.
- Always maintain eye contact with participants.
- Ensure that the trainer and participants sit at the same level (to avoid the trainer 'talking down' to the audience). If the participants are sitting on the floor, so should the trainer.
- Participants should sit in a circle or a semi-circle as opposed to a classroom style arrangement. This seating style will make the interaction less formal and encourage participants to contribute to discussions.
- Use soft language in the training. If any participant begins to argue, do not react but explain yourself clearly with supporting examples and case studies.
- If you do not have an answer to a question or are unsure how to respond, thank the participant for their question and take the time to come back with the right information.
- Always invest time in preparing yourself before the workshop. A trainer should be well-versed with the tools and exercises used during training. Be ready with all the materials needed for sharing and distribution during the workshop.
- Do not use heavy jargon. As much as possible use local language and local examples to aid better understanding.
- Follow the schedules and times allocated for each module. However, if participants appear to be low in energy, use energizer games and exercises to make sure they are alert and engaged.

- Make yourself available before and after breaks (i.e. tea / coffee / lunch) for queries from participants.
- Take the time to study and understand issues around menstrual hygiene and health, and sexual health.
- Ensure there are enough sets of visual materials available for the training and that all participants get to use them.
- Do not be discriminatory about caste, gender, abilities, economic, or social status.
- Do not laugh at queries or answers.
- Avoid making personal comments.



SESSION EIGHT: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: At what age does a girl start menstruating?

A: Some girls begin to menstruate as early as age nine or 10 and some may not get their first period until a few years later.

Q: How much flow is there normally?

A: Menstrual flow can vary from person to person. Usually, an entire period consists of a few to several spoonfuls of blood.

Q: How long should a girl's period last?

A: The duration of a menstrual period can vary from girl to girl but is typically 3-7 days long. One girl might have three-day periods while another might have six-day periods. In some cases, the length of the period can vary from month to month. For example, in the first month, a girl's period might last four days, and then the next month it could be six days.

Q: What kinds of foods should be avoided during periods?

A: Eat regular foods such as vegetables, roti, rice and pulses, lots of fibre, and drink plenty of water to avoid constipation, as it can lead to an increase in pain from menstrual cramps. Cutting down on salty foods will prevent the water retention in the body.

Q: How does the body feel during menstruation?

A: Sometimes a girl may experience physical or emotional changes around the time of her period, while others may not feel any change in moods or body. Physical changes include: cramps, pain, bloating, weight gain, food cravings, painful breasts, headache, dizziness or irritability. Emotional changes include: short temper, aggression, anger, anxiety or panic, confusion, lack of concentration, nervousness, tension, fatigue or depression.

Q: Is it risky and dangerous to engage in sports and games during menstruation?

A: No, but if you feel tired or weak and feel the need to rest then rest is advised.

Q: Are girls unclean and impure during periods?

A: There is no impurity in the blood associated with menstruation. Cleanliness and hygiene are important to the menstrual flow, to keep away any odor or infection.

Q: Should girls use only sanitary napkins?

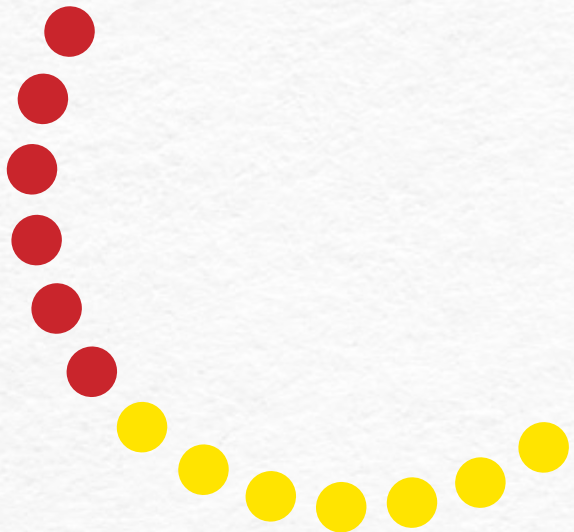
A: No. Clean and dry cotton cloth can be made into a pad for absorbing menstrual blood.

Q: What can be done to relieve menstrual cramps?

A: Place a hot water bottle on the abdomen or on the back, depending on the cramps' location. Take a warm bath. Drink a hot beverage, such as tea. Take a walk. Rub or massage the abdomen. Get on your elbows and knees so that the uterus is hanging down, which helps it to relax. Lie on your back with knees up and move them in small circles.

Q: What if a girl's period stops but she is sure she is not pregnant?

A: The absence of menstruation is called amenorrhea. This is not usually a concern unless it occurs for several months, in which case they should consult a medical professional.



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