



Health of Adolescent Girls

(In Special Context to Menstruation)

Some important changes start happening with girls from the age of 10 years – like development of breasts. Generally it is believed that menstruation starts for a girl in the age bracket of 10-13 years. This is a common process. At this age, ovaries start producing developed eggs and these eggs reach the uterus through a tube. When it reached, the uterus lining thickens with blood and liquid substance. Naturally this happens so that the uterus is ready to fertilise the egg and foetus could grow. This leads to the body of female getting ready for childbirth/pregnancy.

When the eggs are not fertilized by male sperms, the lining of the uterus and eggs get dissolved and come out of the body from the vagina. This is known as menstruation.

If the eggs are fertilized by male sperms, the woman gets pregnant and menstruation stops.

It is a normal and natural process that can start anytime after 10 years of age. This condition does not at all mean that impure or bad blood comes out of the body. Timely menstruation indicates health of the adolescent. However, the traditions and the taboos attached to it make the adolescent girls feel weak and of secondary status.



As mentioned earlier, menstruation starts normally in the age bracket of 10-13 years.

The duration could be between 2 and 7 days.

Before menstruation sets in, for six months there is discharge of egg white like liquid substance. This is also a normal process and not an illness. When eggs start forming in the body of girl, the white discharge occurs and this is indication of impending start of menstruation. This discharge has no smell and there is no infection. But if this discharge is frothy, yellowish in colour or smelly or with red spots, doctors should be immediately consulted.

It is noticed that as girls get into adolescent age, restrictions for her increase. This makes the girls feel that something wrong is happening with them. They keep quiet due to guilty feeling, but mental stress

keeps increasing. In such situation, the guidance and advises regarding precautions they should receive do not come. Not keeping proper hygiene of private parts, not getting correct underwear, loneliness and being ignored can lead to the girls getting sexual infections.

There should be proper cleaning of underwear during menstrual cycle. Chances of infection increase when cleanliness is not maintained.

- The menstrual cycle is of 21 to 24 days
- During the first two years after onset of menstruation, the periods are not regular. The periodicity could be of two or even five months
- The day periods start or a day before that, girls get stomach cramps/pain. As soon as menstruation starts, the cramps go away within one or two hours
- In such conditions, hot water bottle should be applied (fomentation) to lower abdomen
- If the pain persists for a long time or is severe, girl should be taken to health centre
- Sometimes during periods, the bleeding is in the form of clots rather than liquid. In such situation too, medical help should be sought
- Normally during periods, 50-80 ml blood is lost. If the loss is more than this, there are chances of the girl getting anaemic.

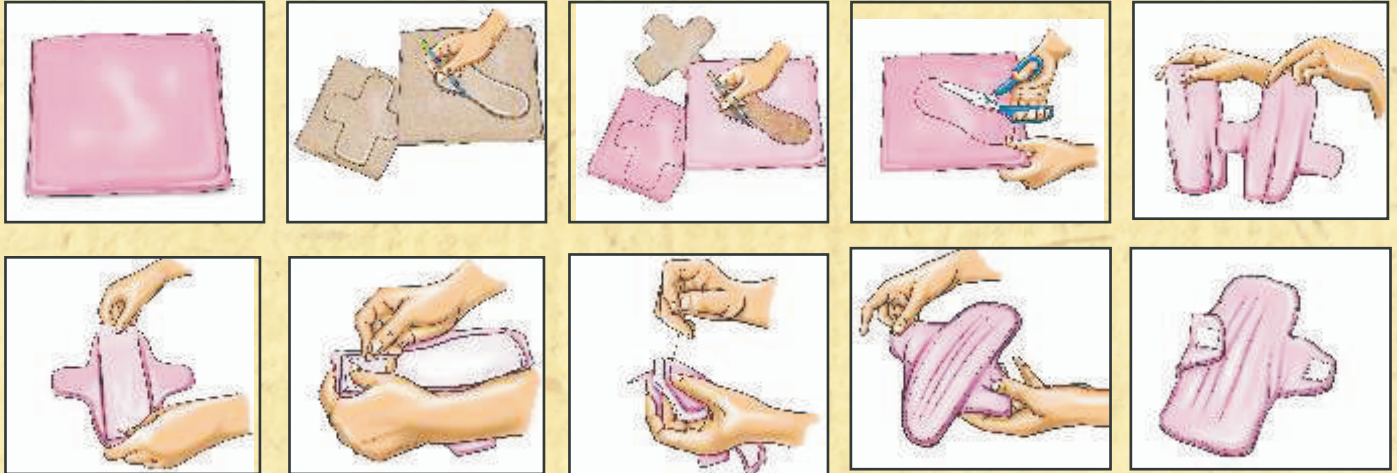


In Case of Painful Periods

- It is normal for adolescent girls to face pain when periods start. In such situation fomentation of lower abdomen could be done. Also hot water bath should be taken and hot liquids consumed
- Light self-massage of lower abdomen with fingers could be done. Regular walking can also help
- It is important to consume proper diet. During the periods, whole grains, vegetables, fruits and milk should be compulsorily consumed. The use of salt and sugar should be reduced.

White discharge (Leucorrhea) : If there is regular white smelly discharge from body of adolescent girls, proper services at health care centre should be sought.

Method of Making Sanitary Napkin



Some Important Points

- Adolescent girls should be treated in normal manner and with respect. Discrimination or untouchability with them is wrong
- Though a system of providing sanitary pads to adolescent girls under the adolescent health programme has been initiated, but till such system is fully in place, arrangements should be made at local level
- During menstruation only cotton sanitary pads should be used
- The pad should be changed three to four times a day
- The cloth should be washed with soap every time and dried in sunlight. The tradition is to wash the cloth with water and dry them in dark, this is wrong. Fresh cloth should be used every month
- Adolescent girls should consume Iron Folic Acid tablets during menstruation period. This will prevent anaemia
- **Keeping private parts clean during menstruation period. Else the chances of infection increases. It is important that during cleaning anal part after excretion, hand does not touch the vaginal part, else chances of infection increase**
- Sometimes adolescent girls start eating soil or hair due to anaemic conditions. Such abnormal behavior leads to worms in their stomach and these worms further lead to anaemia. Eating soil or hair is unhealthy behavior and bad for health
- It becomes necessary to give nutritious food and Iron Folic Acid tablets to the girls during menstruation periods. Also treating the worms is important
- Bad behavior with adolescent girls, insulting them or preventing them from doing activities of their choice is also a kind of violence. We should empower them to the level that they could ensure their own safety, they should feel normal and equal and become self dependent.

Right Behavior

- Continue with routine activities during menstruation. Do not consider it illness
- Maintain hygiene of private/reproductive organs
- Bathing is most important during periods
- During excretion, remember to clean the anal part and the cleaning should be front to back and not from back to front, as it may lead to infection
- Wear clean underclothes
- Menstruation is a natural process. It is best to use sanitary napkins of cotton. Do not hesitate to ask for, buy or make the napkins
- Never dry the underclothes or sanitary napkins in dark places. Dry them in sunlight

It is responsibility of family and society that they understand the sentiments of the adolescent girls. They should not feel that being girl is some kind of crime. Adolescence is just a natural phase of life and menstruation is not a result of some crime or mistake.



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