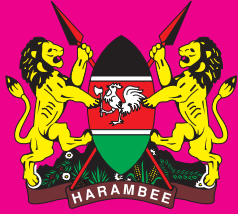
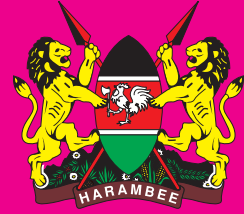


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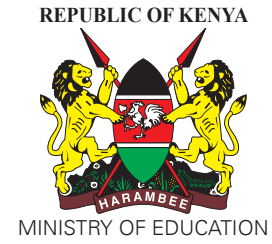


MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

# Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools A Handbook for Teachers







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2020



Girls have reported shock, confusion, shame, and fear during menarche due to lack of accessible and accurate information on menstruation.

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# Foreword

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Menstruation is shrouded in mystery and silence. Therefore, school girls suffer in silence in a bid to manage menstruation. Existing data shows a close relationship between poor menstruation management and irregular school attendance, poor performance or school drop outs for girls who have reached puberty.

Girls have reported shock, confusion, shame, and fear during menarche due to lack of accessible and accurate information on menstruation. Research has shown that girls have exchanged sex for sanitary pads thus being exposed to Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and unwanted pregnancies. Girls who reach menarche early have experienced diminished academic performance compared to girls with normal menarcheal age; knowledge of puberty among girls is poor, and boys lack factual, relevant and reliable information on menstruation. This perpetuates menstrual stigma and discrimination in school and the community at large.

This handbook will reinforce learning and also act as a reference guide for teachers. It will also remedy the various challenges that school girls face when menstruating and will work towards provision of factual information to break the myths, taboos, beliefs and misconceptions on menstruation. Boys also lack factual information on their growth and development during puberty.

This teachers' handbook is to empower the teacher through provision of factual information with the expectation that the teacher will relay the same information to the learners. The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education have worked closely with partners and stakeholders in the School sector to develop this handbook.



Susan N. Mochache, CBS  
**Principal Secretary**  
**Ministry of Health**



Dr. Belio R. Kipsang, CBS  
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# Acknowledgement

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Kenya has made tremendous strides in Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM). The development of this handbook comes at a time when the country has finalized the MHM Policy and Strategy that directs how to undertake interventions in support of improved MHM. The government adopted a three-prong approach to menstruation – Breaking the Silence, Safe and Hygienic Management and Safe Disposal. This manual has been modeled in the holistic, three-prong approach.

The Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education is grateful to UNICEF for providing financial and technical support towards this process. Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) was ably represented in this process by Olive Wambui. The efforts of the following Ministry of Health officials; Jackson Muriithi, Janet Mule, Ibrahim Basweti, Neville Okwaro and Lolem Lokolile in the development of this document is highly appreciated. Our gratitude also goes to Barnett Walema and Boniface Ouko (Ministry of Education), Tobias Omufwoko (WASH Alliance Kenya), Wanjiku Kuria (World Vision Kenya), Agnes Makanyi and John Obisa (UNICEF), Carol Kioi (Independent MHM Consultant), Adrian Dongus (AFRIpads), Victor Odhiambo (Garden of Hope Foundation), Triza Pkani (Garden of Hope Foundation), Irene Gai (KWAHO), Beverly Mademba (CARITAS Switzerland) Ruth Gacheri (Trace Health), Patricia Mulongo (Deaf Aid), Mercy Miriti (WASH Alliance Kenya), Rael Kerubo (Real Relief), Sheba Odondi (AMREF), Vincent Ouma (AMREF), Geoffrey Ikiara (AMREF), Laurine Jepkorir, Faith Masika, Joseph Wakaba, Anita Kamanda and Maurice Mando all from the WASH Hub, Penelope Phillips-Howard (Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine) Camilla Wirseen (The Cup Foundation) Amaia Arranz (Ruby Cup) for taking time to develop the content of this handbook. It is our hope that this document will bring about the desired behaviour change towards menstruation among school going children and the community as a whole.



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# Teaching Menstrual Hygiene Management

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Women and girls with better knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene and safe practices are less vulnerable to discomforts and illnesses associated with their reproductive organs. This knowledge should also be accessible to men and boys so that they can support the women and girls, while also learning about their own body changes. How then should teachers pass on this information?

A teaching method comprises the principles and methods used by teachers to enable student learning. The methods are determined by the subject matter to be taught, the nature of the learner as well as their learning styles.

Approaches to teaching are classified as either teacher centered or learner-centered. In a teacher centred approach the teacher is the main authority figure and learners are mostly viewed as “empty vessels” who are there just to receive information through lectures and direct instruction. Learner-centred approach views teachers and learners as active participants in the learning process. The teacher acts as a coach and facilitates the learning.

## Methods of Instructions Appropriate to Menstrual Hygiene Management

### 1. Lecture

The lecture method involves direct instruction by the teacher while the learner listens and tries to make sense of what is being taught. It is not a very good method for young learners but can be used with older students. However, this is not the most effective teaching method to reach all learners, especially younger ones, who often need a more engaging, hands-on strategy in order to learn effectively. The lecture method is convenient and cost-effective with large classroom sizes. The teacher using this method must make constant and conscious effort to become aware of learners’ problems and engage them so that they give feedback. It can be used to arouse interest in a certain topic or subject.

### 2. Demonstration

Demonstrating is the process of teaching through examples and illustrating the steps to follow in certain process. It can be a good method to teach certain topics such as how to use a sanitary pad or how to dispose the used sanitary pads and towels or clean a menstrual cup. Demonstration allows learners to personally relate to the presented information. Demonstration may raise a learners’ interest and reinforce memory retention as they provide connections between facts and real-world applications of those facts.

### **3. Collaboration**

Collaboration allows learners to actively participate in the learning process by working in groups and teams and therefore encourages them to talk to each other and listen to others opinions. The learners engage in discussions as well and are active participants in group projects.

### **4. Discussion**

A discussion taking place in a classroom can be either facilitated by a teacher or by a learner. It may follow after a lecture, presentation or demonstration. Class discussions can enhance learning by broadening a learner's perspective, highlighting opposing viewpoints and reinforcing what is learnt. The teacher could pick certain issues and ask the learners to discuss. This is a very good way of breaking the silence around menstruation. The teacher can provide probing question so as to allow the learners to engage in a more in-depth discussion for example, "How does this relate to your own or your peers' experience?"

### **5. Debriefing**

The term "debriefing" refers to a conversational session that involves the sharing and examination of information after a specific event has taken place. It helps in sharing experiences, reflecting and giving feedback. The intention is to allow the learners to judge their experiences and progress toward change or transformation. It also helps them to come to terms with their experience. As menstruation evokes different types of emotions in individuals, debriefing can assist learners to come to terms with issues they have to deal with during menstruation.

### **6. Inquiry Based Learning**

Inquiry-based learning is a teaching method where learners practice problem solving and critical thinking skills to arrive at conclusions. Using inquiry-based learning takes a lot of time, energy, and planning, but it is often very effective.

### **Conclusion**

Learners learn in different ways and teachers need to use different teaching methods in order to reach all learners effectively. Teachers need to be mindful that discussions about the body may cause some embarrassment to learners, and different techniques may be needed to ensure learners feel safe and comfortable.

# Theme 1:

## Breaking the Silence

### 1.1 Why Break the Silence?

Silence about menstruation is a problem all around the world contributing to stigma. The stigma against menstruation runs deep, having been rooted for years in the minds of men and women alike due to inaccurately held social beliefs about menstruation. Menstruating women and girls are wrongly considered to be 'contaminated, dirty and impure'. Such stigma can be found in dozens of cultures across the world.

In various communities, menstruation is considered a taboo and menstrual blood impure and looked upon as polluting any person who comes into contact with a menstruating adolescent girl or woman. This has further intensified the stigma around menstruation. The myths, taboos and stigma are as a result of lack of factual information on menstruation. This theme is set to equip the learners with knowledge on menstruation in a bid to demystify menstruation and break the taboos, myths and stigma around menstruation. The learner will view menstruation as a normal, biological process and not something to be ashamed of.

### 1.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this theme the teacher should be able:

1. To gain knowledge on menstruation to appreciate it as a normal biological process.
2. To advocate for change of attitude towards menstruation and view it as a normal biological process.
3. To gain knowledge on changes that occur during adolescence and to appreciate that both boys and girls go through body changes.
4. To describe to boys and girls' reproductive organs for the learner to appreciate the functional differences.
5. To dispel the myths, misconceptions and taboos around menstruation and be a change agent in the community.

### 1.3 Definition of Terms

- Vulnerability** Susceptible to being wounded or hurt.
- Puberty** Puberty is the process of physical changes by which adolescents reach sexual maturity.
- Adolescence** As the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19 years.
- Myths** Fictitious stories passed from one generation to another.
- Taboo** Forbidden practice or activity in a community.
- Stigma** A mark of disgrace or infamy; a stain or, as on one's reputation.
- Euphemism** Is a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to

something unpleasant or embarrassing.

**Menarche** The important stage of puberty for females is menarche, the onset of menstruation, which occurs between 9-17 years.

**Ejaculation** At the onset of puberty, thick white fluid called semen comes out of the penis. This major change in a boy's body is known as semenarche (first ejaculation)

## 1.4 Changes in Boys and Girls during Adolescence

### 1.4.1 Adolescence: Definition

World Health Organization (WHO) identifies adolescence as the period in human growth and development that occurs after childhood and before adulthood, from ages 10 to 19 years.

This stage is marked by growth, change, physical and emotional development for boys and girls.

### 1.4.2 Puberty: Definition

Puberty is the process of physical changes by which adolescents reach sexual maturity. A girl or a boy may notice these changes between the ages of 10 to 14 years although it may happen earlier or later. These changes occur due to secretions in the body called 'hormones' which are vital for growth and development.

### Activity

#### Puberty Scenarios

- Divide learners into small groups and provide each group one of the Puberty Scenarios.
- Instruct groups to read their scenario and answer the following questions together:
  - How does the main character feel about growing up?
  - What steps can you take to be a respectful friend to him or her?
- Have each group report out their answers, making sure to highlight changes in puberty as they come up:
  - Everyone experiences puberty differently
  - Be a respectful friend to everyone
  - Healthy practices that the individual could use to stay healthy
- Transition by telling students that we have reviewed many of the emotional and physical changes that occur during puberty. It is an exciting time with lots of change, but can often make us nervous or scared as these changes happen. Remember that the changes happening are normal.

**Scenario 1:** Mary is tall, heavy and has begun developing breasts. She has also begun speaking in a shrill voice. Others do not like to be around her due to the way she smells. She sweats a lot and classmates say she 'smells' bad.

**Scenario 2:** Anthony has increased in height since last year. As a result, he looks big for his uniform and is clumsy and also his voice keeps oscillating between shrill and bass. The classmates laugh whenever he passes by or speaks.

**Scenario 3:** Judy is the last person chosen for teams in physical education. She is not athletic and very short. Her nickname is “Shorty.”

**Scenario 4:** Tom is the smallest boy in the 4th grade/Class Four. His classmates keep enjoying him as the baby in the class always being sidelined in their activities. He feels helpless against them and this is affecting his school performance.

**Scenario 5:** Jane always wants to sit with Tom in class and is always around him at break time and is always angry whenever Tom speaks to another girl. She is always talking on how Tom is handsome to the others.

**Scenario 6:** Peter is very popular and has lots of friends. Recently girls have started texting him and sending him pictures. They are always asking Peter’s friends if he likes them. Peter loves sports and doesn’t think about girls in 4th grade.

## 1.4.3 Changes in Boys and Girls During Adolescence

### Changes in Boys

What physical, emotional and social changes occur in a boy’s life when he is growing up?

#### Physical

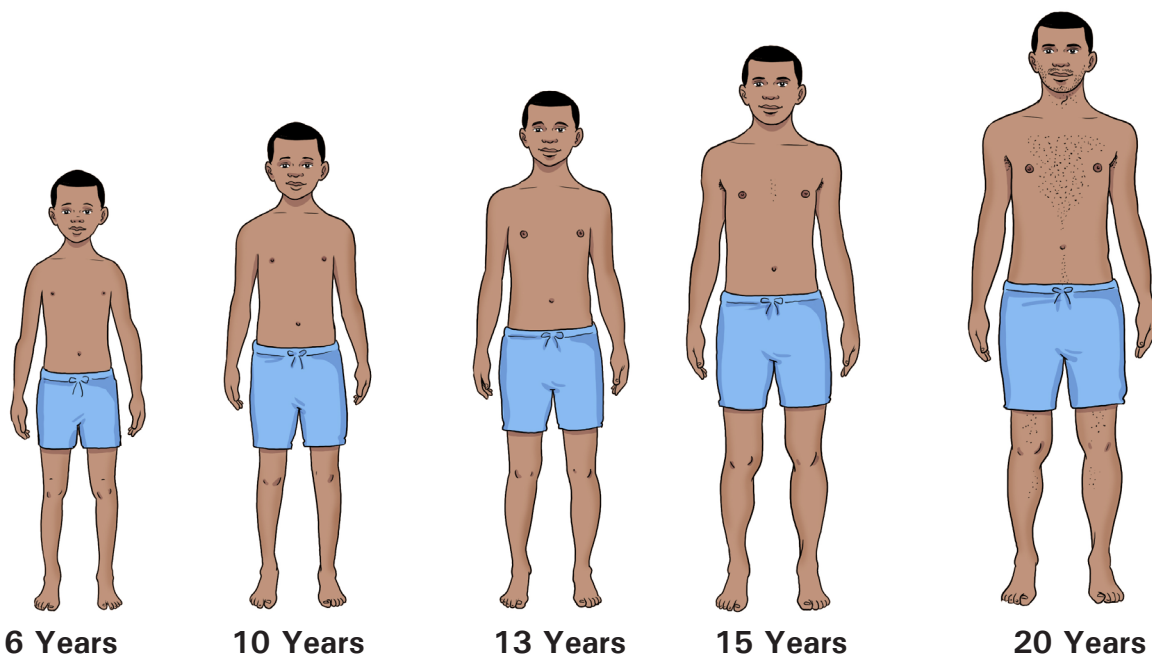
- Height gain
- Weight gain
- Acne
- Growth of hair on the body including a beard and moustache
- Breaking of the voice
- Penis development
- Semenarche
- Development of an Adam’s Apple (a bulge in the neck)

#### Emotional

- Ambition/Dreams
- Shyness
- Strong opinions

#### Social

- Responsibility
- Individual desire
- Seeking independence and testing boundaries



## Activity

### Walk Game

- Ask learners to move to one area of the room.
- Tell them that when you tap them on the shoulder, they should walk (not run) to a designated location on the opposite side of the room.

**Note:** If you have a large group or would like the activity to take less time, ask for a smaller group of volunteers.

- Tap learners on the shoulder, starting with one learner. Let the first student walk to the other side of the room, then tap another learner. Continue tapping learners, first slowly, then speed up and start tapping groups and individuals. Towards the end, slow down, again tapping individuals. Leave a few learners to walk across alone.
- When all learners have walked to the other side of the room, ask learners:
  - How did it feel to be the first one to walk?
  - How did it feel to be the last one

to walk?

- Did it feel better to walk alone or in a group? Why?
- Lead a discussion using the learners answers to make the transition that this walk is very much like puberty- Just like everyone eventually walked across the room, eventually everyone will go through puberty. Some people start earlier and will finish before their peers, others will start later. And just like everyone walked at a different pace across the room, everyone moves through puberty differently. Puberty changes are exciting and fun, but at other times can cause a young person to become confused and awkward. There are social and emotional changes as well as physical ones. Remember each person goes through puberty and adolescence at his/her own pace.
  - Transition by telling learners that we will now discuss the physical, social and emotional changes that happen during puberty.

## Changes in Girls

What physical, emotional and social changes occur in a girl's life when she is growing up?

### Physical changes

- Height gain
- Weight gain
- Acne
- Growth of hair on the armpits and genitalia
- Voice becomes high pitched

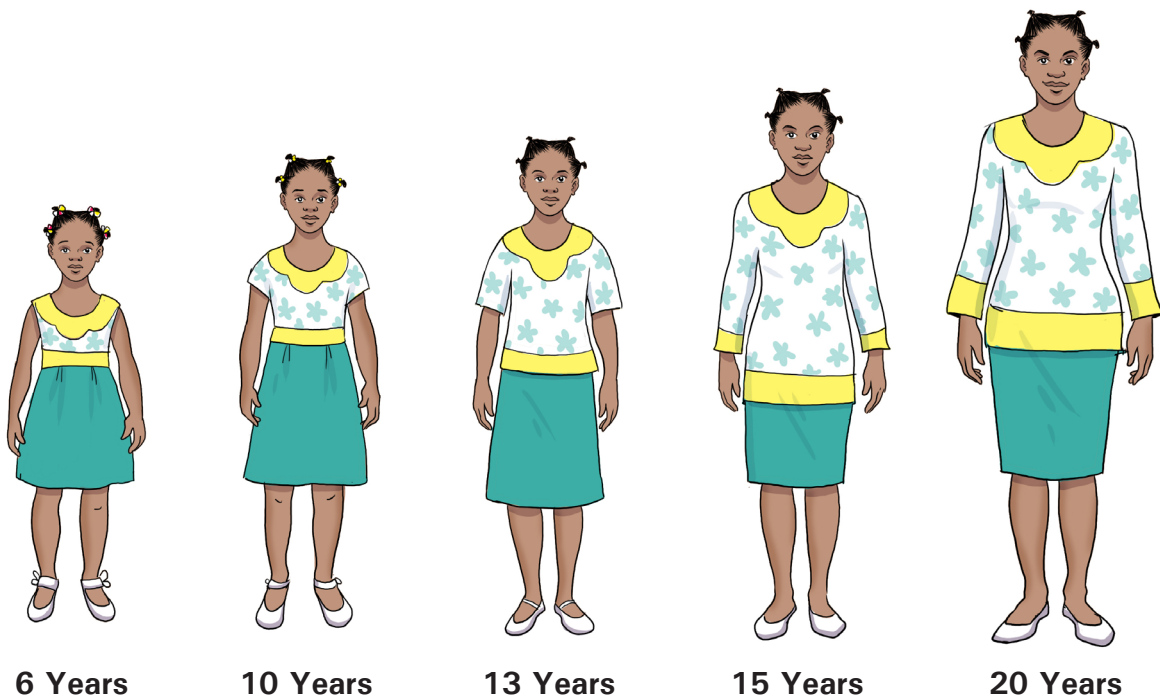
- Development of the vagina and breasts
- Menstruation

### Emotional

- Ambition/Desire/Dreams
- Shyness
- Strong opinions

### Social

- Responsibility
- Individual desire
- Seeking independence and testing boundaries



### Activity

Ask learners what changes occur in boys and girls during adolescence: Physical, Emotional and Social



## Trivia on adolescent and puberty

### Hair grows on genitals (pubic hair)

- A. Boys
- B. Girls
- C. Both

### Sweat glands develop

- A. Boys
- B. Girls
- C. Both

### Breasts develop

- A. Boys
- B. Girls
- C. Both

### Hips get broader

- A. Boys
- B. Girls
- C. Both

### Wet dreams

- A. Boys
- B. Girls
- C. Both

### Start releasing eggs (ovulation)

- A. Boys
- B. Girls
- C. Both

### Shoulders get wider

- A. Boys
- B. Girls
- C. Both

### Mood swings

- A. Boys
- B. Girls
- C. Both

### Activity

Activity discussion among learners on what they have experienced individually

- Curiosity
- Shyness
- Indecision
- Restlessness
- Stress
- Moodiness
- Vulnerability
- Sexual attraction
- Peer pressure

### Tip!

**Body functions for boys and girls are the same and they function in a similar way. The only difference is in the reproductive organs**

### Activity

**Body Mapping Exercise:** Draw a body of a boy and a girl and name the body parts as you know them

Name the reproductive organs in both boys and girls. Show the learners an illustration of the reproductive parts.

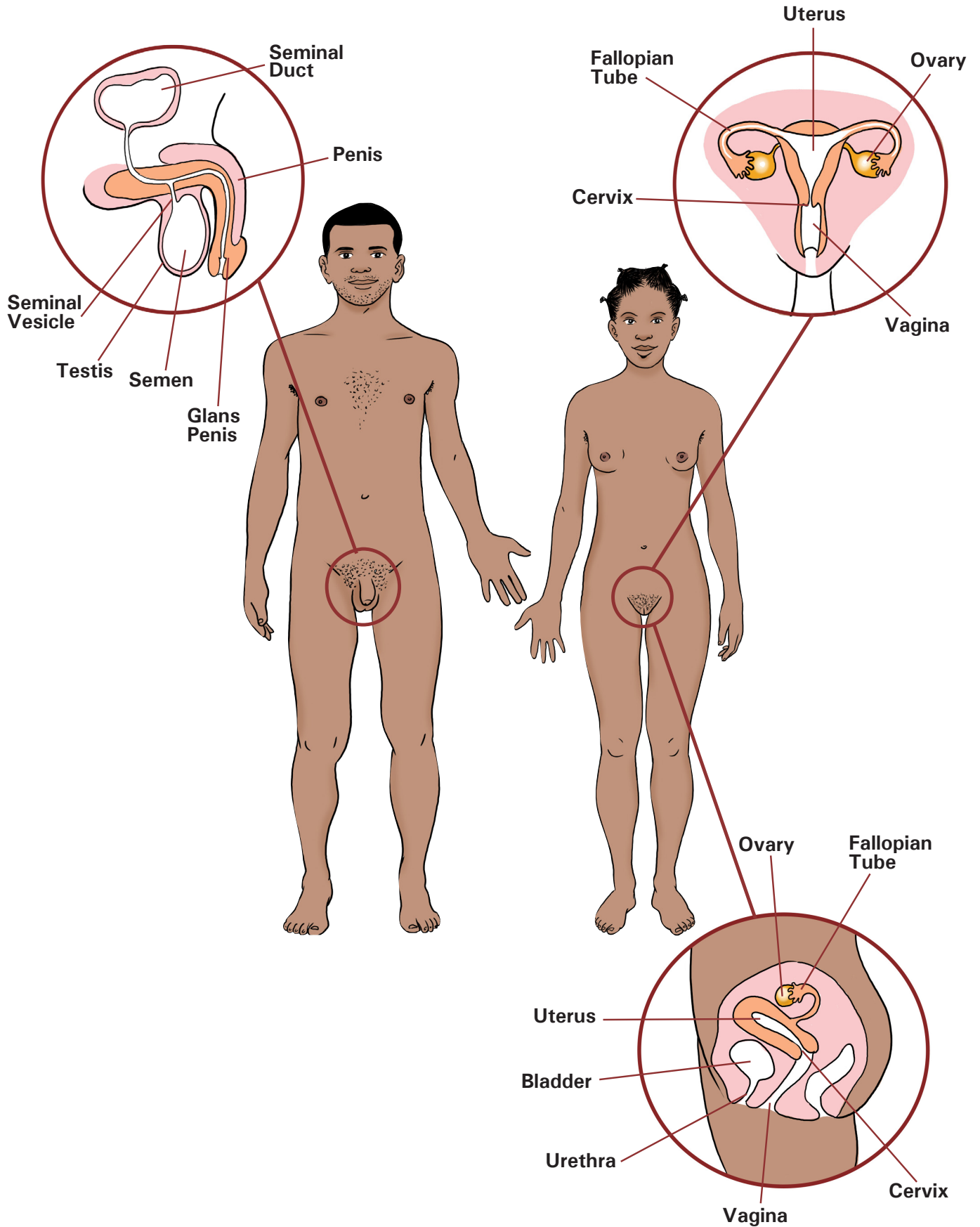
### Tip!

**During adolescence boys and girls go through similar emotional changes**



# 1.5 Reproductive Organs

Discuss male and female reproductive organs



## 1.5.1 Menstruation and Semenarche

### What is semenarche?

During adolescence and with the onset of puberty, important changes occur in a boy's body. At the onset of puberty, thick white fluid called semen comes out of the penis and this process is called ejaculation. This major change in a boy's body is known as semenarche (first ejaculation) which occurs on average between the ages of 11-15 commonly known as a wet dream. Boys should know that wet dreams are a normal part of the growing up process and that there is nothing to worry about.

### What is menarche?

This is the major change in puberty for girls which is the onset of menstruation, occurring between 9-17 years. This is the first occurrence of menstruation.

### Menstruation Cycle

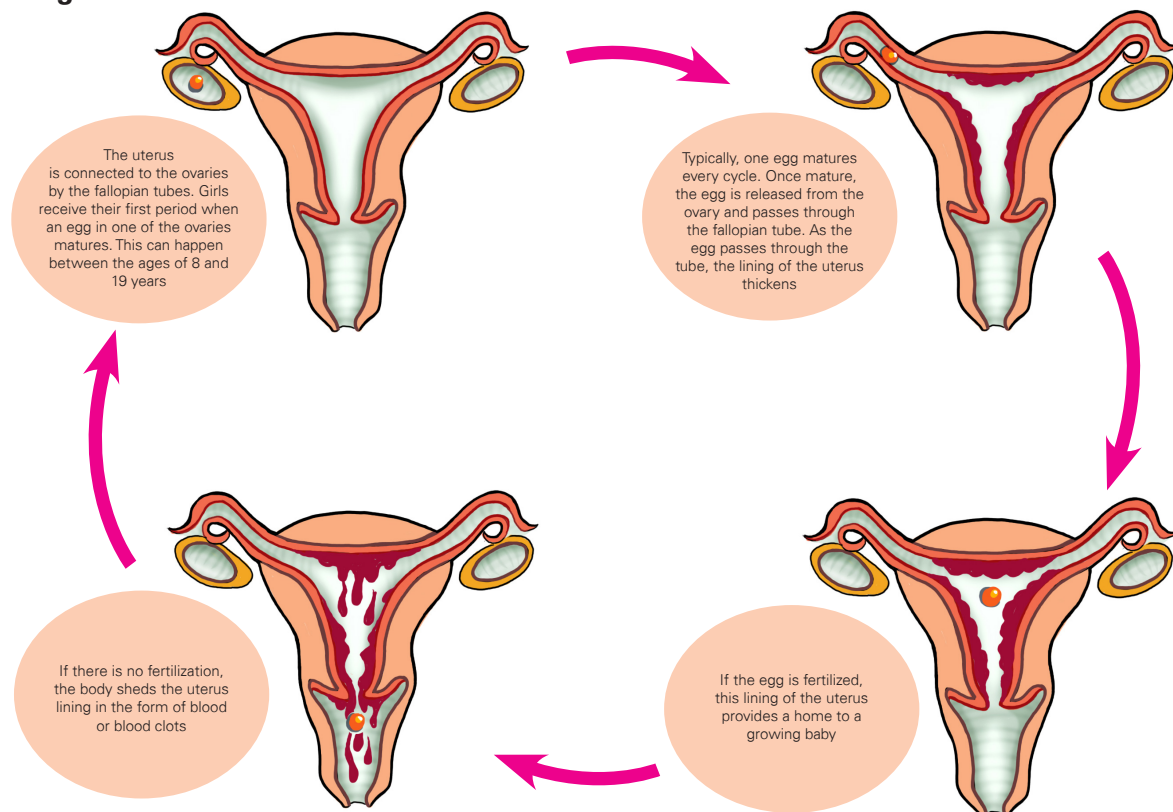
Menstruation is a regular discharge of blood and tissue from inner lining of the uterus through the vagina.

Discuss female parts of reproductive system and how they facilitate menstruation.

## 1.5.2 Tools for Teaching Menstruation

**Option 1:** Video on Menstrual cycle (where facilities allow) to complement the diagrammatic illustration

Diagram 1



- This is the menstrual period which lasts from 2 to 7 days.

## 1.6 Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) is a group of symptoms linked to the menstrual cycle. PMS symptoms occur 1 to 2 weeks before your menstruation or monthly bleeding starts. For some people, PMS is just a monthly bother. For others, it may be so severe that it makes it hard to even get through the day. PMS goes away when your monthly periods stop, such as when you get pregnant or go through menopause.

PMS often includes both physical and emotional symptoms, such as:

- Acne/pimples
- Swollen or tender breasts
- Feeling tired
- Trouble sleeping
- Upset stomach, bloating, nausea, vomiting, constipation or diarrhoea
- Headache or backache
- Appetite changes or food cravings
- Joint or muscle pain
- Trouble with concentration or memory
- Tension, irritability, mood swings, or crying spells
- Anxiety or depression

Symptoms of PMS vary from woman/girl to woman/girl.

## 1.7 Euphemisms: Code /indirect words

Euphemism is a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.

Menstruation is typically a taboo topic that is often talked about in silence. Because of the secrecy and mystery associated with menstruation, most girls have come up with code words that they use to refer to menstruation so that no one else will know what they are talking about when they speak about menstruation. This session will give the girls an opportunity to mention the code words they use. Note euphemisms used for bullying such as ‘...she is going to the moon’ etc.

The teacher is expected to show the relationship between use of euphemisms/code words with the silence and mystery associated with menstruation. The encouragement is for the learners to openly talk about menstruation.

## 1.8 Myths, Misconceptions and Taboos

### Define a Myth

A myth is a story or a belief that has been handed down from generation to generation and may be true or not true and it is widely held by the community.

### Define a Taboo

A taboo is an activity that is forbidden (not allowed) or sacred (set apart for worship or highly valued) based on beliefs e.g. social, cultural or religious. It is a social or religious custom prohibiting or restricting a particular practice or forbidding association with a particular person, place or thing.

## Activity

**Option 1:** Ask learners to say what they call menstruation within their peer circles or in their language.

Talk about menstruation without any fear/gain confidence in talking about menstruation.

Call Menstruation by its name and don't use other names.

**Option 2:** Exercise on Building a "word ladder".

### Option 3:

**Step 1:** Organize the learners into groups.

**Step 2:** Let them discuss in their groups what they have heard about menstruation and note each statement on a card (take note that the

statement can either be a myth or fact).

**Step 3:** Collect the cards from the different groups.

**Step 4:** Sort out the cards and group them into two i.e myths and facts.

**Step 5:** Tape the myths on a can / container.

**Step 6:** With a ball, knock the can / container with the myths.

**Step 7:** Now the facilitator can open up discussions around the myths and re-affirm the facts about menstruation, reinforcing that it is a normal biological process.

**Option 4:** Learners to mention beliefs, myths and taboos related to menstruation that exist within their communities.

## 1.9 Facts about Menstruation

### Menstruation is:

- An indication that a girl is approaching maturity.
- The shedding of tissue and blood from the lining of the uterus through a girl's vagina.
- A normal and natural part of biological maturity.
- An important development milestone for girls the same way wet dreams are for boys.
- The first menstrual cycle is called menarche.
- Menstrual cycle for the first few years is not regular for some girls.

- Some girls have their first menstruation as early as nine years of age.
- Some girls menstruate every 28 days while others have longer cycles of 35 days or shorter cycles of 21 days.
- Menstruation usually last from 2-7 days with 5 days being the average length of menstrual flow.
- Menstruation is also a sign that a girl can become pregnant.

### Menstruation is not:

Sickness, illness, disease, infection, harmful, a curse, dirty, shameful, or unclean.

## Activity

Each learner should write down the myths, taboos, beliefs and misconceptions that they have heard related to menstruation on a card or piece of paper. The teacher will ask the students to read out each myth one by one and the learners gauging the myths, taboos, beliefs or misconceptions against what they have learnt and the summarised facts about menstruation and decide whether they are true or not true.

## Learning Assessment

### The Adolescent Trivia.

Teachers to ask questions in order to assess the knowledge of the students

Student do specific activities to assess their skills on menstruation.

Questions and answers from the 5 sub-themes-plenary to guide.

### Other fun ways of assessment

**Time Capsule:** Put together a group of 5 things from the key learnings from the theme TIME CAPSULE

### OPTION 1: Reflecting on key learnings

**Step 1:** Ask the learners to reflect on the 5 key learnings from the theme.

**Step 2:** Each learner to write on a card the key learning.

**Step 3:** Each learner to stick on the chart board with different levels the key learning in order of the significance of the learning to them and their level of comfort.

### OPTION 2: Documenting lessons

Learners to document their learning transition in the following format.

**When I started this session I didn't know that:**

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

**Now I now know that...**

- 1.....
- 2.....
- 3.....
- 4.....
- 5.....

**My favorite Learning / session**

### OPTION 3:

**A: Animal Stuffing:** Learners can make a stuffed animal that matches the learning theme

**Step 1:** Cut out cards in different sizes and shapes.

**Step 2:** Give the learners to write down on each card important words / key learnings from the theme.

**Step 3:** Using a cardboard, make the shape of an animal and stick the key learnings on the shape.

### **B: Animal shape with a hollow centre**

**Step 1:** Using a cardboard or other alternative materials, make an animal shape with hollow center.

**Step 2:** Ask the learners to write down key learnings on rolled paper.

**Step 3:** Ask them to deposit the rolled papers with key learning at the hollow center.

### **OPTION 4: Wanted Poster:**

Learners can make a wanted poster for what they learnt that is bad" in the theme e.g. Stigma, Myths, Taboos; basically looking at the things they want to change with the skills they have gained.

**Step 1:** Ask the learners to reflect from the learning theme the antagonist (what they learnt that is bad) that they would want to change/speak to their peers to change.

**Step 2:** Ask each learner to draw an abstract image with the antagonist written; note, antagonist can be "Menstruation Myths"; "Taboos on Menstruation"; "Shame" etc.

**Step 3:** Each learner to put up their posters

**Step 4:** Class to reflect on the posters as part of collective effort on what they'll work on/teach others.



## Theme 2:

# Safe and Hygienic Management of Menstruation

## 2.1 Introduction

Girls and women need to practice good personal hygiene during menstruation.

Safe and Hygienic management of menstruation is aimed at equipping learners with knowledge and skills of good practices and dispel poor practices that are unhygienic. This includes;

- Knowledge of safe and hygienic menstrual products and materials to be used.
- Usage of menstrual products and materials.
- Disposal of menstrual products and materials.
- Awareness on hygienic practices.
- Keeping a balanced diet.
- Psychological wellness before, during and after the menses.

## 2.2 Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session the teacher should be able to:

- identify and explain the menstrual hygiene products and materials, their use and storage to safely and hygienically manage menstruation.
- describe the necessary WASH facilities required to safely and hygienically manage menstruation.
- discuss the naturally occurring discomforts (i.e PMS, cramps, acne) associated with menstruation to be able to manage them.

- discuss the illnesses and discomforts associated with unhygienic or improper management of menstruation so that they can apply the correct methods of menstrual hygiene management.

## 2.3 Definition of Terms

- **Hygiene** - A set of practices performed to preserve health and prevent diseases, which involves the maintenance of high standards of cleanliness of the body, clothes, bedding, utensils, houses, homes, schools and immediate environment.
- **Personal hygiene** - Involves the care of oneself from the head through main body parts, with emphasis on hand washing, the hair, eyes, mouth and teeth, fold of the skin and genitalia.
- **Safe** - Free from harm or risk.
- **Menses** - Blood and other natural matter discharged from the uterus during menstruation.
- **Genitalia** - External organs of reproduction.
- **Worn out** - Damaged or shabby to the point of being no longer usable.

## 2.4 Sub-themes

### 2.4.1 Types of Menstrual Products and Materials and Their Uses

During menstruation, girls and women need accessible and affordable menstrual products and materials. Education on safe and proper use of each menstrual product and material clarifies existing misperceptions, this ensures safer use of menstrual products and materials of choice.

There are a variety of menstrual products and materials in use today. These range from options available in the market to locally available materials. Existing products and materials include disposable and reusable sanitary pads, tampons, and reusable menstrual cups. These products are detailed below with their corresponding advantages and disadvantages.

The choice between reusable and disposable products depends predominantly on:

- One's choice.
- Availability of disposal and water facilities.
- The compatibility with girl's and women's preferred undergarments.

#### Tip!

**Menstrual products and materials should be stored in a clean, cool and dry place that is free from dust, smoke and chemicals**

The aim of exposing girls to the range of available menstrual products and materials is to empower them to make informed decisions regarding which product they wish to use.

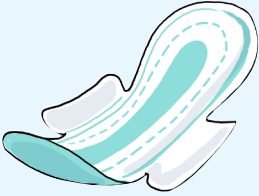
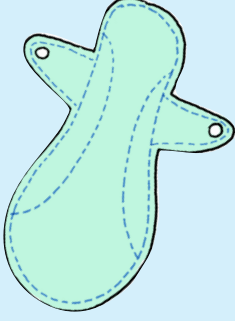
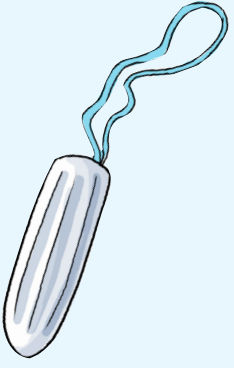
This requires their understanding of:

- Product and materials.
- Relative advantages and disadvantages.
- Storage and disposal of products.



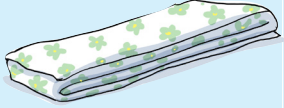
As menstrual products have a shelf life that varies from product to product, users should ensure they follow manufacturer's instructions and recommended guidelines. For those who prefer menstrual materials such as cloth, replace once these materials become damaged or worn out.



## Advantages, Disadvantages and Storage of Menstrual Products and Materials

Type	Advantages	Disadvantages	Storage
<p>Disposable sanitary pads (External use)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easy to use</li> <li>• Widely accepted</li> <li>• High absorbency if of good quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not easily available in rural areas</li> <li>• Relatively costly</li> <li>• Generates environmental waste</li> <li>• One time use</li> <li>• Some contain perfume and chemicals which may cause rashes and irritation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should remain in their package</li> <li>• Stored in an accessible, dry and well ventilated place</li> </ul>
<p>Reusable sanitary pads (external use)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Easily available</li> <li>• More affordable/ cost effective</li> <li>• Low environmental impacts</li> <li>• Re-usable solution</li> <li>• High absorbency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires access to water for washing the pad</li> <li>• More time consuming because of washing and drying</li> <li>• Some girls and women are not comfortable washing blood</li> <li>• Need for somewhere private to wash and dry</li> <li>• Inconvenience in storage and carrying used pad</li> <li>• If not hygienically cleaned it can predispose girls and women to genitalia infection including candidiasis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should remain in the package or an improvised package</li> <li>• Store in an accessible, dry and well ventilated place.</li> <li>• Important not to share usage of reusable sanitary pads</li> </ul>
<p>Tampons (Internal use)</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very compatible with physical activities (i.e. swimming, dancing and sports)</li> <li>• Does Not cause friction and irritation</li> <li>• High absorbency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some cultures and religions do not accept usage of tampons</li> <li>• Costly</li> <li>• Not widely available</li> <li>• Generates environmental waste</li> <li>• Requires instruction before use</li> <li>• If hygiene and frequent changing of tampons is not maintained can lead to Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Should remain in their package</li> <li>• Stored in an accessible, dry and well ventilated place</li> </ul>

## Other Safe Alternatives

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Menstrual cups (Internal use)</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very compatible with physical activities (i.e. swimming, dancing and sports)</li> <li>Cost effective</li> <li>Requires little water to clean</li> <li>Low impact on environment</li> <li>Long lasting</li> <li>Reusable solution (up to 10 years)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High upfront cost</li> <li>Requires instructions before use</li> <li>Not widely available</li> <li>Culturally and religiously not acceptable</li> <li>Fear of spillage</li> <li>May take a few cycles to become comfortable using it</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After use, clean it and store it as per the manufacturer's instructions</li> <li>Important not to share usage with other girls/women</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cotton wool (External use)</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Widely available</li> <li>Cheap</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can leak easily</li> <li>Can easily move/shift or drop</li> <li>Release Odour</li> <li>May cause irritation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should remain in their package</li> <li>Stored in an accessible, dry and well ventilated place</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clean pieces of cloth (External use)</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easily available at home</li> <li>Reusable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires water and a private place to wash and dry</li> <li>It may be cumbersome to wash and requires drying</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Store in an accessible, dry and well ventilated place.</li> <li>Discard when damaged or shabby to the point of being no longer usable</li> </ul>

## Unsafe and Unhygienic Menstrual Products and Materials

These are some of the menstrual products and materials that are being used but are strongly discouraged

- Cow dung.
- Mud.
- Leaves.
- Tissue paper.
- Dirty pieces of cloth.
- Animal skin and hide.
- Pieces of Mattresses and blankets.
- Chicken and bird feathers.
- Sitting on soil and sand during menses. (To leak off blood)

### Activity

1. **Debate** – Conduct a class debate with the theme “Menstrual Hygiene products and Materials” e.g Hygienic products and material VS unhygienic products and materials
2. **Display** – Showcase the range of menstrual products and materials so school girls can see, touch and explore them.
3. **Demonstrate** – The teacher explains how the different menstrual products and materials are used, what they are made of and how to take care of them.
4. **Discuss** – The teacher explains the advantages and disadvantages and storage methods of the various menstrual products and materials.

### Tip!

**Misuse of menstrual products and materials may:**

- **Produce odour**
- **Cause a burning sensation (chafing)**

## Learning Assessment

Children to list the various types of products and materials on a manilla paper then classify them as either disposable or reusable and pin them on the wall of the class.

	Re-usable	Disposable
1	.....	.....

**Note:** Insert illustrations of disposable pads, reusable pads, tampon and menstrual cup

## 2.4.2 Water and Sanitation Hygiene (WASH) facilities

Water and sanitation hygiene facilities sub-theme is aimed at enabling learners to gain better understanding of how to safely and hygienically manage menstruation using available WASH facilities. Learners will inspect WASH facilities in their schools and discuss:

- Key elements of WASH facilities.
- How to safely and hygienically manage menstruation using WASH facilities.
- Key challenges regarding WASH facilities in relation to safe and hygienic management of menstruation.

### Key Elements of WASH Facilities

- Separate WASH facility for both girls and boys.
- Physically challenged toilet facilities should have ramps and handrails to ensure that they are user friendly.
- Raised sitting pedestal.
- Portable washing facility.
- Inclusion of a mirror to enable a lady to be able to check if they have soiled themselves.



- Proper structures that are resistant to harsh weather.
- Doors that are lockable from the inside.
- Bins for the collection of menstrual waste with a lid on them.

### How to Safely and Hygienically Manage Menstruation Using WASH Facilities

The availability of WASH facilities in schools will enable girls and women to safely and hygienically manage menstruation by:

- Ensuring that girls and women are able to change menstrual products and materials in privacy and safely.
- Making sure that the ratio between the students and toilet facilities are up to recommended standard.
- Availability of clean running water and soap for washing of hands before and after changing menstrual products and materials.
- Availability of a sanitary disposal option in the WASH facility.

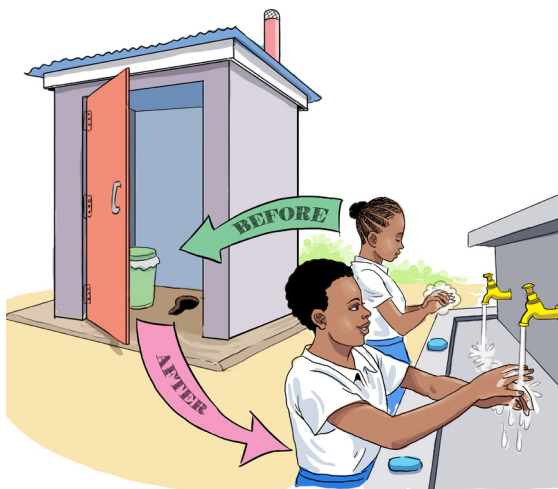
### Key Challenges Regarding WASH Facilities in Relation to Safe and Hygienic Management of Menstruation

There are many challenges regarding WASH facilities in schools. These include:

- Lack of privacy in the WASH facilities.
- Inadequate/ lack of water supply for washing soiled clothing, cloths and hands.
- Absenteeism from school during menstruation because of lack of WASH facilities, or inadequate materials for collecting the blood.
- Fear of using the latrine in case others discover menstrual blood on the floor.
- Poor maintenance of WASH facilities.
- Lack of separate WASH facilities for boys and girls.
- Poor siting of WASH facilities.

## Activity

1. Learners to take a walk to inspect the WASH facilities in the school.
  - Discuss the Key challenges regarding WASH facilities in relation to safe and hygienic handling of menstrual products and materials.
  - Discuss how to safely and hygienically manage menstruation using WASH facilities and the key elements of WASH facilities.
2. Divide the children into groups and let them demonstrate how to clean the WASH facility.
3. Demonstrate how to dispose the menstrual products and material and how to wash hands with soap and clean running water before and after changing the menstrual product and material.



## Learning Assessment

- Question and Answer e.g true and false questions can be used.

## 2.4.3 Management of PMS, Discomforts and Illnesses Resulting from Managing Menstruation

The following sub-theme will elaborate on the risks associated with unhygienic practices during menstruation, the naturally occurring discomforts associated with menstruation, how to manage them and the psycho-social wellbeing during menstruation.

### Potential Health Risks Due to Poor Hygiene During Menstruation

- Use of dirty menstrual products may cause bacterial growth leading to local infections or further infections of the vagina and urethra.
- Wet pads can cause skin irritation and encourage fungal infections like candidiasis.

### Tip!

**Some Signs and symptoms of Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) may include:**

- Sudden high fever
- Headache
- Nausea
- Rash
- Redness of eyes, mouth and throat
- Vomiting
- Muscle aches
- Confusion



- Using a tampon longer than the recommended time can cause Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS)
- Toxic shock syndrome is a rare but serious medical condition that is caused when a bacteria called staphylococcus aureus gets into the bloodstream.
- If the above symptoms occur it is a medical emergency, requiring immediate removal of materials inside the vagina, and emergency hospital admission
- Wiping of anal region from back to front can introduce bacteria from bowel to vagina. So always important to wipe from front to back.
- Infrequent change of menstrual products can cause urinary tract infections (UTIs) and reproductive tract infections (RTIs).
- Infrequent change of underwear or use of dirty underwear can contribute to infections of the genitalia.

### **Pain Management of Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)**

What to do to relieve lower abdominal pain?

- Place hot water in a bottle on the abdomen to relieve cramps.
- Physical exercises such as swimming, running, jogging, skipping, hula hoop.
- Eat healthy balanced diet all the time.
- Drink plenty of water.

#### **Tip!**

**Please visit a doctor if you are experiencing discomforts for a longer period of time.**

### **Psychological Well Being**

Girls and women should understand that menstruation is a normal biological process and it happens to girls when they get to puberty and ends at menopause. There is need for:

- Continuous empowerment of girls and women.
- Creating awareness to the boys to stop stigmatizing girls during menstruation.

**Self-awareness** – This includes recognition of one’s character, strengths and weakness, likes and dislikes. Developing self-awareness can help both boys and girls develop their identity and to deal with negative peer pressure.

### **Coping with Emotions**

- **Coping with stress** – stress occurs on a daily basis. At times stress can be overwhelming. Sometimes new changes in adolescent boys and girls may subject them to repeated stress that can lower self-esteem, decrease academic performance and result in self-doubt and self-blame.

During menstruation girls can undergo stress due to lack of MHM products or even not knowing what to do or from fear of a menstrual leak. Girls should talk about, take care of their bodies and identify a responsible adult who can guide them during this period.

- **Interpersonal Relationship skills** – This helps to relate in positive ways with people we interact with. Helps one make and keep friendships which can have great help to mental and social well-being. It may mean keeping good relationship with family members which are an important social support. It may also mean being able to end relationships constructively.

- **Effective Communication** – Is about how to express yourself verbally and non-verbally in ways that are appropriate to our culture and situation. It also means being able to express opinions and desires but also needs and fears. And it may mean being able to seek help in time of need.

### Activity

- Discussion and role play on PMS.
- Where available demonstrate how to use a hot water bottle, hot towel.
- Demonstrate different exercises that one can undertake to relieve the symptoms of PMS.
- Children to interview their peers and parents on how they manage PMS, then give feedback to the class.
- The teacher to organize a one on one session with children to discuss PMS and other illness and discomforts.

### Learning Assessment

- **Story with a Gap:** The teacher to start a story with regards to management of PMS and let the children complete the story.
- **Role Play:** Children to role play how to manage PMS.

## 2.4.4 Safe and Hygiene Practices During Menstruation

This sub-theme will address the key hygiene practices that are required to safely and hygienically handle menstrual products and materials. The sub-theme will provide the activities to equip the teachers with the knowledge and skills for safe hygiene practices during menstruation.

### Good hygiene practices during menstruation

These include but not limited to:

- Taking a bath or shower at least once a day.
- Using of a clean undergarment and changing them regularly, a minimum of every day or when soiled.
- Tampons and menstrual cups are inserted into the vagina, but other materials such as cloth, cotton, tissues not be inserted inside the vagina.
- Changing of menstrual product and material regularly during menstruation.
- Ensuring hand washing with soap and clean water before and after changing the product.
- Cleaning the external genitalia frequently to prevent chafing.
- Washing the vagina with water only! It is very important to remember that the vagina has its own self-cleaning mechanism. An external cleaning agent or deodorant should not be used and too much soap can cause itching.
- Wiping from front to back following urination or defecation to avoid infections.
- Avoiding douching (forcing liquid into vagina can introduce bacteria into uterine cavity).

### Activity

- Test knowledge in an interactive manner.
- Role play.
- Return demonstrations.
- Q and A.

## Learning Assessment

- Develop a puzzle with key illness and discomforts arising from unsafe and unhygienic management of menstruation, let the children identify key illness and discomforts that they are familiar with.

### Tip!

**A product can be safe yet unhygienic and vice versa**



## Theme 3:

# Safe Disposal of Used Menstrual Products

## 3.1 Introduction

Menstrual products used by girls and women need to be disposed off safely. This is necessary to avoid pollution of the environment. Menstrual waste could be defined as the end products of menstruation and menstrual management. These include items that are used both internally and externally by girls and women. For example, pads (reusable and disposable), tampons, cotton wool, pieces of fabric, product wrapping and tissue paper. Also included is the human bodily excretion that comes by during the menstruation period. Disposal of these products is majorly influenced by the type of products one uses and also social and cultural factors.

## 3.2 Learning Outcome

By the end of this theme the teachers will acquire the requisite knowledge, skills and attitude to induce behavior change on the safe and hygienic management of menstrual waste.

## 3.3 Definition of Terms

### Menstrual Waste:

**Hygienic Management** - It encompasses storage, collection, transportation, treatment and final disposal of the product.

**Waste segregation** - Is the practice of separating the menstrual waste component from the general solid waste.

**Storage** - Temporary placement of menstrual waste in a suitable location or facility where isolation, environmental and health protection and human control are provided to ensure that menstrual waste is subsequently retrieved for treatment and conditioning and/or disposal.

**Collection and Transportation** - Collection is transferring of menstrual waste from the point of use and disposal to the point of treatment while transportation is the movement of menstrual waste from a particular area by different means of transportation such as a road.

**Safe disposal** - Process of ultimate safe discharge of expired, used and soiled menstrual waste materials without the intention of retrieving or causing harm to both the environment and human beings.

**Biodegradable material** - A substance that can easily be broken down by microorganisms such as bacteria

**Incineration** - The controlled burning of menstrual wastes products which have been used. This includes worn out or reusable and disposable sanitary pads, tampons, cotton wool, pieces of fabric, product wrapping and tissue paper.

**General solid waste** - Waste from households, schools, commercial activities, administration and service companies that is disposed off through the public waste management system.

## 3.4 Information for the Teacher

### 3.4.1 Handling of Menstrual Waste

In Kenya today, there are tons of menstrual waste emanating from improper disposal of menstrual products. Disposal of soiled sanitary products has remained a challenge not only in Kenya but also globally. Menstrual waste is disposed off in different ways, some of which are not environmentally friendly and eventually end up causing harm to humans, animals and the environment.

In the absence of proper disposal facilities and mechanisms, girls and women dispose of the sanitary pads unscrupulously. For instance, in rural areas, women dispose the menstrual waste in the nearest garbage dumps, pit latrines or even in rivers. Instead, linking existing CHW structures to nearby health facilities with incinerators to help collect, transport and safely burn/treat menstrual waste product in rural set up would minimize poor waste disposal. This calls for leveraged resources and highly effective waste management framework.

People living in urban settings wrap used disposable sanitary pads with tissue or plastic bags, use reusable menstrual pads and cloths, tampons, and other menstrual waste products and then dispose of them together with other general solid waste.

Negative implications of improper menstrual waste disposal include:

- Clogging of drainage system.
- Accumulated non-biodegradable napkins cause environmental pollution.

- Water contamination from the used sanitary products.
- High cost of unclogging blocked drainages.
- Scavenging poses the risk of contracting diseases from infected menstrual waste.
- Attraction of rodents and disease-causing vectors.
- Loss of aesthetic value of the land.

Ideally, handling of menstrual waste should be done in a safe and hygienic manner. The following are processes involved in ensuring safe disposal of menstrual waste products.

#### Menstrual Waste Minimization

New technologies have led to production of bio-degradable sanitary products. Once used and safely disposed, the materials decompose over time thus not causing harm to human and the environment. The bio degradable materials used include banana fibers, water hyacinths and bamboo fiber. Menstrual products which allow for their re-use also help to minimize menstrual waste. Reusable products can be used for a number of cycles as prescribed by the manufacturer, without being discarded in its first use. Important point for such reusable products as earlier noted is their hygienic management.

#### Segregation

The first step in safely handling menstrual waste products is segregation. This step is very critical since it is easier to separate menstrual waste from the general waste in schools and at the household level. Most people throw menstrual waste products together with general waste. Girls and women should separate menstrual waste from the general waste by explicitly disposing of the menstrual waste in designated sanitary bins.

### Activity

- A demonstration on how to use the sanitary disposal bins.
- Illustration by use of pictures to show different sanitary bins that are available.
- Engagement and interaction of the pupils by asking simple questions like 'what is segregation'?

### Storage

Women and girls are faced with the problem of storage. This happens when there are no sanitary collection bins in the sanitary facilities. Lack of disposable bins poses a challenge and the girls store the used sanitary towels for a short duration before disposal. If not handled well this storage can be harmful to them. Therefore, it is of necessity to have disposal bins in latrines since it ensures hygienic on-site storage of the sanitary pads. In the absence of bins, awareness should be raised on how to safely and hygienically handle used disposable sanitary pads.

## Improper Ways of Disposing Menstrual Waste



Figure 1: Proper storage of menstrual waste.



### Activity

Ask the group which of the bins pictured they think are most suitable and why?

**Figure 2:** Pictures showing appropriate and inappropriate storage bins for menstrual waste products.



Containers for transporting the waste should be airtight and leak-proof. The vehicles utilized in transportation of menstrual waste from on-site storage facility to treatment plant must adhere to all stipulated regulatory requirements.

**Figure 3:** Picture showing a manufacturing process from banana tree (left) to a bio-degradable menstrual product (right).



### Tip!

The issues to look at when comparing containers or bins are:

- Are they washable?
- Do they have a lid to contain odors?
- Are they easy to carry to dispose of the materials?
- Are they available in the local area (where possible)?

### Activity

Display pictures of these bio-degradable products.

Ask the learners to explain proper ways of disposing menstrual waste.

## Collection and transportation

Collection of menstrual waste should be done using special vehicles before final disposal. In rural settings, simpler ways of collection are used such as wheelbarrows and push carts. Transportation of menstrual waste should be carried out in a manner that does not cause harm to humans and the environment. In schools, waste management facilities (e.g incinerators) should be near the girls' toilets to avoid embarrassment as they transport them.

## Treatment

There are several methods used in the treatment of menstrual waste products. These methods might be simple and/or sophisticated and are practiced locally. They include use of steel drums for burning, combustion chambers and incineration. It is important to note that some schools and homesteads practice open burning. Open burning is highly discouraged because of pollution.

The most viable available technology to treat menstrual waste products is Incineration. Treatment can be done either by use of electrical or physical fire-based incinerators. It is recommended that sanitary pads, tampons and other

plastic-based sanitary materials be incinerated immediately after they are used, without giving time for pathogens to grow on them.

Another best available technology to treat menstrual waste is the use of autoclaving or microwaving. In Kenya, this technology is relatively new. The process includes shredding and autoclaving or radio waves for

microwaving are used to sterilize the menstrual waste products. The final shredded menstrual waste product can then be disposed of through the normal waste stream or be utilized by companies to produce energy.

The following table shows the different methods, their advantages and disadvantages arranged from the least favorable to the most favorable.

Methods	Advantages	Disadvantages
Steel drums for burning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Easily available</li> <li>Waste minimization</li> <li>Not sustainable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Air pollution</li> </ul>
Combustion chambers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good thermal efficiency</li> <li>Volume reduction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relatively costly</li> <li>Premature failure</li> <li>Air pollution</li> </ul>
Incinerator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete combustion</li> <li>Minimizes land pollution</li> <li>Waste minimization</li> <li>Volume reduction of up to 90%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Costly to construct and maintain</li> <li>Requires space for construction</li> <li>Air pollution</li> <li>Completely destroy the waste to ash so do not allow for materials recycling.</li> </ul>
Autoclave and Microwave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sterilization</li> <li>Size reduction of up to 80%</li> <li>Shredded waste can be recycled</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Costly</li> </ul>

**Figure 4: Steel drum for burning**



**Figure 5: Incinerator**





### Activity

- Initiation of group discussion on different methods of disposal of menstrual waste.
- Displaying the different ways of treating menstrual waste.
- Field visit to an incineration site.

### Assessment

- Engage learners by asking questions about safe disposal of menstrual products.

### Disposal

Disposal of ash or other forms of non-valuable products resulting from treated menstrual waste products can be done in landfills and deep pits. Deep pits are mostly found in rural areas.

### Activity

- Discuss disposal methods learners have seen or are using.
- Hold a debate forum to discuss the rights of learners in accessing proper disposal methods at school and home.
- Participate in a clean-up activity on environmental day or any other selected day.

## 3.5 Learning Resources

- Different types of menstrual products
- Different types of menstrual waste disposal bins.
- Wrappers for the disposal of the sanitary products

## 3.6 Conclusion

Safe disposal of menstrual products is beneficial to individuals, community and the environment. To ensure the safe disposal it is important to have the right infrastructure in place in schools and at household level. It is important to sensitize school children and community members on safe disposal of menstrual waste.

Menstrual Hygiene Day, 28<sup>th</sup> May should be used at school level and beyond to increase awareness of proper menstrual management.

### Tips

- **None of the end disposal options are perfect, and the choice will depend on the context. Open burning and incomplete combustion of waste can result in toxic releases both to air and groundwater.**
- **Controlled incineration does have a polluting effect and high emissions (especially the low-cost incinerator), but less so than open burning. For small volumes, temporary situations, or in areas where there is sufficient space (such as outside of high-density areas), burning or incineration may still be the best option.**
- **Use of alternatives to disposable sanitary pads should be explored. By doing so, there will be reduction of menstrual waste products.**





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