

A STUDY BASED ON MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT IN INDIAN SOCIETY

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ABSTRACT

Menstruation is a natural process, but it is still an unmentionable in Indian society as it is considered unclean and dirty. The wastes that are produced during menstruation are commonly known as menses, periods, or monthly bleeding cycle. Government of India has included MHM into national policies and programs as it is a part of initiatives for improving health, well-being, and nutritional status of adolescent girls and women. This paper highlights the incomplete knowledge about the menstruation which is a great barrier in the pathway of menstrual hygiene management.

KEYWORDS: Menstruation, Bleeding Cycle, Nutrition Cycle, Girls, Women, Barrier

Article History

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INTRODUCTION

Menstruation is a natural process but it is still an unmentionable in Indian society as it is considered unclean and dirty. Menstruation wastes are the wastes that are generated by a female in her reproductive years. These wastes are produced during menstruation commonly known as menses, periods, or monthly bleeding cycle. The menstrual cycle has three phases, that is, follicular phase, ovulation phase, and luteal phase. Menstruation sheds two-thirds of the endometrial lining. In addition to blood, menstrual fluid contains mucus and vaginal secretions. "The menstrual flow varies from female to female and may be more or less at the beginning of menses or may change throughout the cycle. The color of the menstrual fluid varies between red, bright red, and dark brown to black. Menstrual fluid may or may not have unpleasant odour especially when it comes in contact with air. Menstrual flow or duration also changes before menopause or during gynecological cancers. Under conditions of hormonal imbalance, fibroids, polyps, and endometriosis menstrual flow increase and excessive loss of blood through menstruation can lead to anemia. Most girls are unaware and unprepared for menarche as they are not informed or ill-informed about menstruation".

Basic Terms to Understand Menstrual Process

Table 1

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| Menstruation, Monthly Periods | It is a biological process in a woman where every month blood and other materials are discharged from the inside layer of the uterus. Menstruation occurs from the start of puberty until the menopause, except during pregnancy |
| Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM); menstrual hygiene | The awareness and information need spread to control menstruation hygiene with safety with using hygienic materials together with sufficient water and with safety agents in washing and bathing area. |
| Menstrual absorbent | "A sanitary cloth, napkin, towel or pad is an absorbent item worn by an adolescent girl or woman when she is menstruating or directly after birth while she is bleeding. The material absorbs the flow of blood from her vagina." |
| Menstrual waste | It includes as used sanitary cloths, napkins, towel or pad that contains heavy blood. |

Source: www.menstrupedia.com

Diagrammatic Representation of Menstrual Cycle

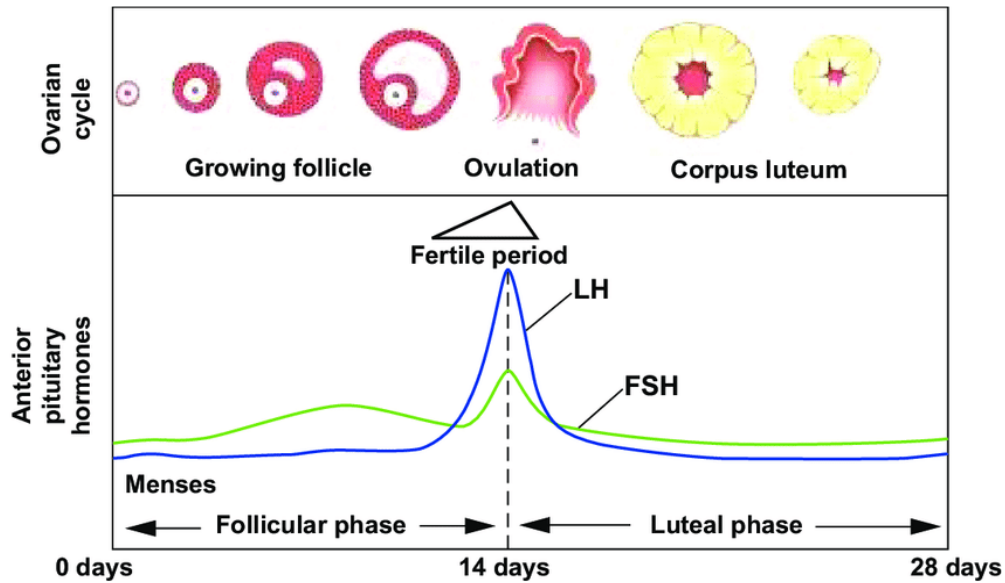


Figure 1

Source: www.menstrupedia.com

Menstrual Cycle is divided into Four Phases

- Menstrual phase: Menstrual phase begins on the first day of menstruation and lasts till the 5th day of the menstrual cycle.
- Follicular phase: This phase also begins on the first day of menstruation, but it lasts till the 13th day of the menstrual cycle.
- Ovulation phase: On the 14th day of the cycle, the pituitary gland secretes a hormone that causes the ovary to release the matured egg cell.
- Luteal phase: “This phase begins on the 15th day and lasts till the end of the cycle. The egg cell released during the ovulation phase stays in the fallopian tube for 24 hours. If a sperm cell does not impregnate the egg cell within that time, the egg cell disintegrates.

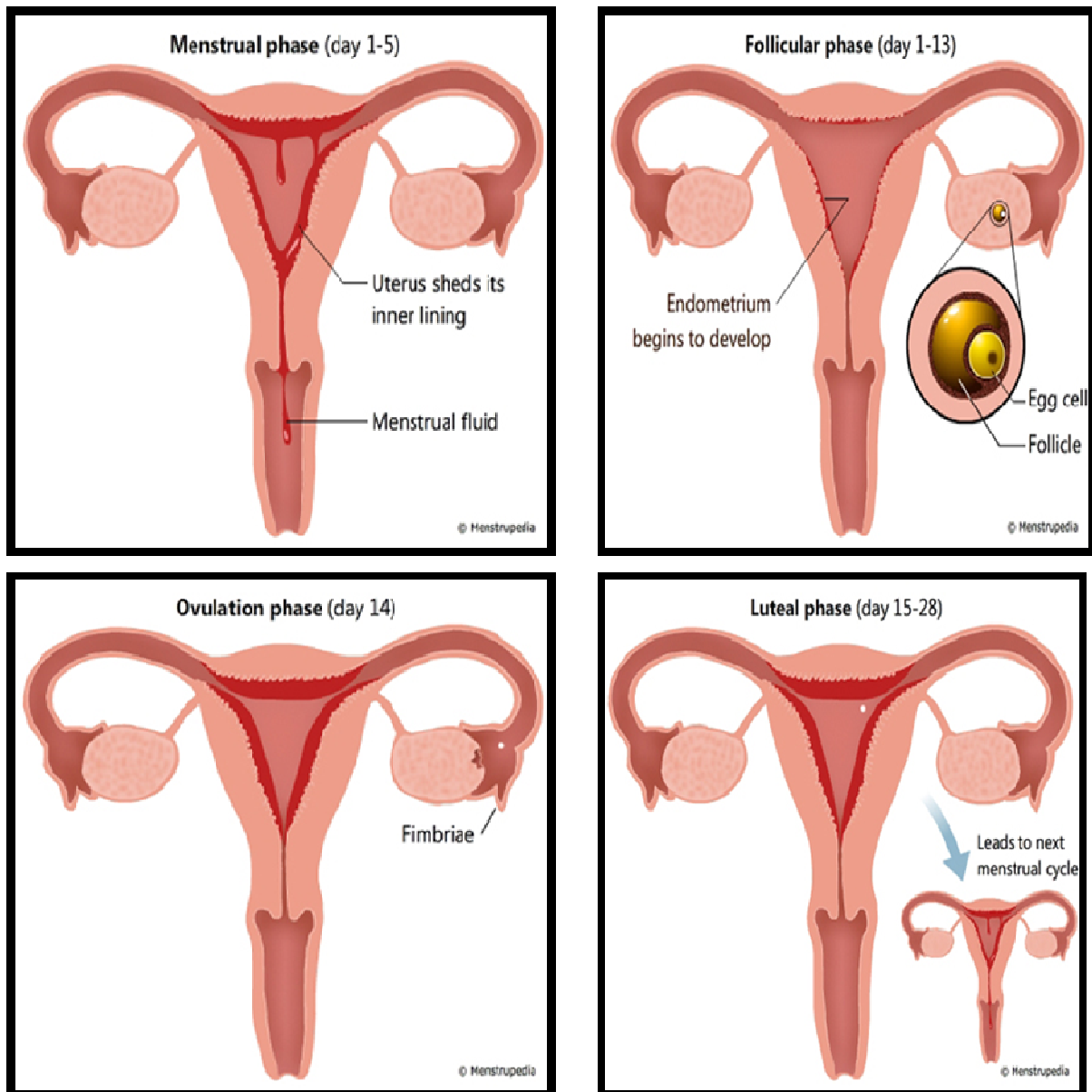


Figure 2

Source: www.menstrupedia.com

Menstruation Myths in Indian Society

- In Hindu, ritual women are banned to participate in normal life while menstruating.
- During menstruation many girls and women are facing sets of restrictions in their daily lives because of they are menstruating. Not allowing to enter in the “pooja” room, it is the major restriction found in Indian society, as well as, they are not allowed to enter in the kitchen.
- In India, menstruating girls and women are facing restricted to offering prayers and touching holy books.
- “In India, some strict dietary restrictions are also followed during menstruation such as sour food like curd, tamarind, and pickles are usually avoided by menstruating girls. It is believed that such foods will disturb or stop the menstrual flow”.

Impact on Women's Life Due to Menstruation Myths

“There are health and hygiene issues also to be considered relating to girls and menstruation. Over 77% of menstruating girls and women in India use an old cloth, which is often reused. Further, 88% of women in India sometimes resort to using ashes, newspapers, dried leaves and husk sand to aid absorption. Poor safety and insufficient washing facilities may increase weakness to infection, with the odor of menstrual blood putting girls at risk of being stigmatized. The latter may have significant implications for their mental health. The challenge, of addressing the socio-cultural taboos and beliefs in menstruation, is further compounded by the fact the girls’ knowledge levels and understandings of puberty, menstruation, and reproductive health are very low”.

Role of Menstrual Hygiene Management in India

Government of India has included MHM into national policies and programs as it is a part of initiatives for improving health, well-being, and nutritional status of adolescent girls and women, as well as for reducing school absenteeism of adolescent girls. MHM (Menstrual Hygiene Management) has been made an essential part of the “Swachh Bharat Mission”. Hard work are done to provide sanitary napkins to school-going girls by installing napkin-vending machines at schools and to increase the accessibility of environmentally safe disposal mechanisms such as low-cost incinerators attached to the girls' toilets in schools for disposal of used MHM products. “Government has launched 100% oxy-biodegradable sanitary napkins on women’s day 2018 named called as “Suvidha” in packs of four napkins priced at Rs. 10 which are available on Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana Stores”.

Types of Menstrual Absorbents

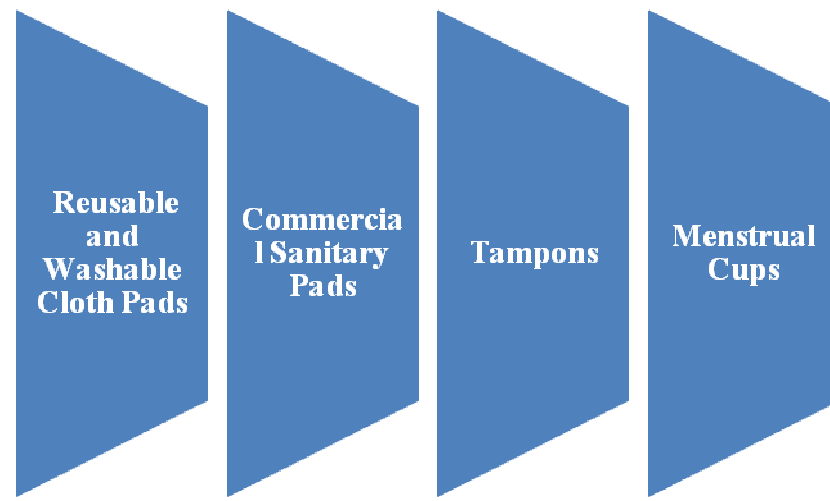


Figure 3

Raw Materials Used in Making Sanitary Napkin / Pad

“A sanitary napkin, menstrual pad, or pad is an absorbent item worn in the underwear when menstruating, bleeding after giving birth, recovering from gynecologic surgery, experiencing a miscarriage or abortion, or in any other situation where it is necessary to absorb a flow of blood from the vagina”. A menstrual pad is a kind of hygienic product that is worn by female from the protection of menstrual fluid which comes from groin area. And the pad has to be changed several times in 24 hours by female and it depends upon on whether menstrual flow is heavy or light. The main materials usually used in making of sanitary pad such as bleached rayon (cellulose made from wood

pulp), cotton and plastics. As extra addition of feature can be included fragrance and antibacterial agents. The plastic parts are made up of the back sheet and polymer powder as a providing additional powerful absorbent (superabsorbent polymers) that turns into a gel when moist. In sanitary pads, cellulose gel is used for good absorbency.



Figure 4

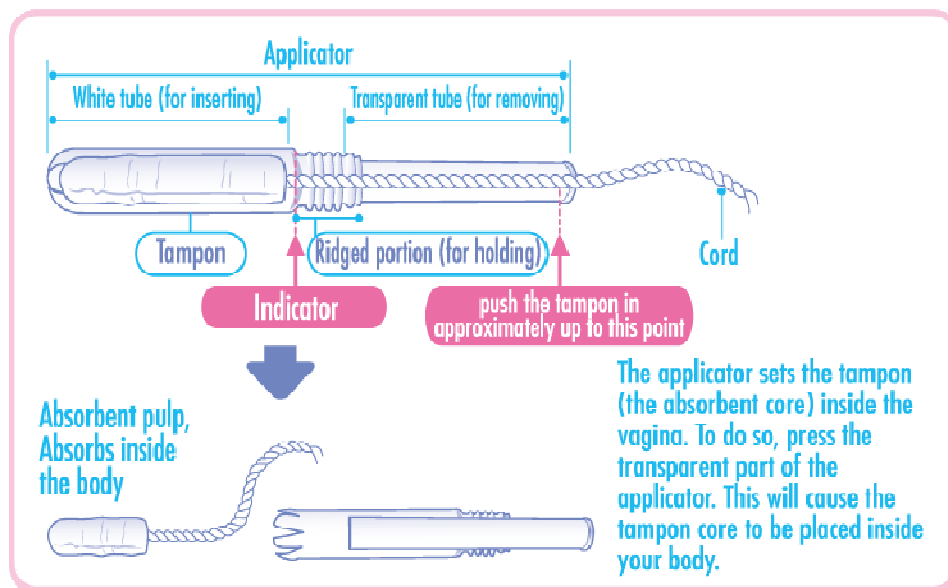


Figure 5

Source: Google images

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