

# AWARENESS AND PRACTICES REGARDING MENSTRUAL HYGIENE IN FEMALE PATIENTS OF REHMAN MEDICAL INSTITUTE

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## Abstract

**Objective:** To know the awareness regarding menstrual hygiene among female patients. 2. To know the knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene among female patients.

**Materials & Methods:** A community based, cross-sectional study was conducted at Rehman Medical Institute, Peshawar. A total of 230 female patients of the age group between 14-45 years were included. Patients were selected randomly and data will be collected via convenient sampling technique.

**Results:** The study showed 93.5% of girls believed menstruation is a normal process. Regarding the cause of menstruation, 69.1% girls said the cause is hormonal. Majority (63.9%) of the respondents believed the origin of blood is from the uterus. 54.3% were not aware about menstruation before menarche while 45.7% had knowledge about menstruation before menarche. Mothers were the source of information in majority (56.5%) of the girls. Many girls (63%) thought there is a foul smell associated with menstruation. 94.8% of the girls said menstrual blood is unhygienic. Regarding the type of absorbent material used, 77% used sanitary pad and 20% used cloth. 95.7% of the girls clean their genital area after menstruation.

**Conclusion:** Majority of the female patients were aware regarding menstrual hygiene and its implications on the reproductive health. This information about awareness and practice regarding menstruation and menstrual hygiene in female patients needs to be considered and health promotion programs should be implemented.

**Keywords:** Menstruation, Menarche, Reproductive health, Hygiene, Awareness, Biological Phenomena

## INTRODUCTION

UNICEF defines menstrual hygiene management (MHM) as when women and adolescent girls use a clean material to absorb menstrual blood, and this material can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of the menstrual period. MHM also includes soap and water for washing the body as required, and access to facilities for disposal of used materials.<sup>1</sup> Due to the taboo surrounding

menstruation, there is limited information on the process of menstruation and the proper requirements for its management.<sup>2</sup>

Increasing evidence from low-income regions suggest that poor MHM is a considerable barrier to the advancement of women.<sup>3</sup> The lack of accurate information about menstrual health have resulted in incorrect and unhealthy behaviors.<sup>4</sup> MHM is a globally recognized public health issue.<sup>5</sup> Worldwide research has addressed problems related to menstrual health.<sup>4</sup>

Reproductive tract infections have adverse effects on women's lives and are closely related to poor

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menstrual hygiene. Good menstrual hygiene reduce the incidence of reproductive tract infections and its complications<sup>6</sup> According to research conducted in the past decade, Iranian girls have average to poor menstrual health.<sup>4</sup> A study conducted in Ethiopia suggest that most girls are at risk of getting genito-urinary tract infections due to unhygienic practices during menstruation.<sup>6</sup>

Another study from Pakistan showed a significant difference in prevalence of suspected pelvic inflammatory disease among the women who used a washed cloth to absorb menses (13.3%), women who used nothing (33.3%), and women who used other methods (26.7%), such as unwashed cloth ( $p=0.003$ ).<sup>7</sup> A hospital-based research conducted in India shows that women using reusable absorbent pads were more likely to have urogenital infection than women using disposable pads. Low educational status was also associated with Urinary tract infection.<sup>8</sup>

Research shows that the lack of prior awareness about menstruation and menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls do have an effect on their practices during menstruation.<sup>9</sup> Many girls start their periods uninformed and unprepared. Mothers are usually the primary source of information but the information conveyed is too-less and too-late and often includes their own misconceptions. The lack of self-care needs and support effect everyday life of girls and also form the bases of life-long disempowerment.<sup>10</sup> Worldwide women follow their own personal methods to cope with menstruation. Studies have shown many unhygienic practices being followed across Africa, South East Asia and the Middle East including use of unsanitary absorbents and inadequate washing and drying of reusable materials.<sup>11</sup> Studies from Africa show that only 18% Tanzanian women use sanitary pads remainder using cloth or toilet paper.<sup>6</sup>

The rationale of this study is that worldwide especially in low income countries (like Pakistan) there is lack of awareness about MHM which has resulted in unhealthy practices during menstruation. This is a cause of many urinary and genital tract infections social and psychological problems. With proper research, awareness programs and interventions we can easily overcome these problems. The purpose of this research was to know about the awareness and practices regarding menstrual hygiene among

female patients.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a hospital-based cross sectional study with data collected through convenient sampling technique. The population for the study included all female patients aged between 14 and 45 years either admitted in gynecology department or opd in RMI, Peshawar while those presenting with primary amenorrhea were excluded from the study.

A KAP study was done of female patients in gynecology department and opd of Rehman Medical Institute, Peshawar from February 2018 to September 2018 by directly asking questions from the patients. Patients were categorized according to their age. The age categories were 14-24, 25-35, 36-45 years' category. A total number of 230 patients were involved in this study.

The data collected was analyzed using SPSS 16. After the collection of data, all the data was entered into SPSS 16 for results and are presented as simple frequencies and tables. The data analyzed was based on the frequency of patients and the variables under study i.e. cause of menstruation, age of menses, information regarding menstruation, type of absorbent used, cleaning of genital area etc.

## RESULTS

A total of 230 respondents were recruited for the study. Half of the population (50%) were between age group 25-35, 37.4% respondents were between 14-24 and 12.6% were between 36-45. Majority of the population (74.8%) were married while the remainder population (25.2%) were single. Educational status of the respondents was as follows; secondary 30.9%, graduate 23.5%, illiterate 19.6%, primary 18.7% and post-graduate 7%.

## DISCUSSION

In the present study 45.7% of the subjects were aware about menstruation before menarche while 54.3% were not aware. A study in Nagpur suggested that only 36.95% of the subjects were aware about menstruation before menarche<sup>12</sup> while another study showed that only 40% in urban area and 9.09% in rural area were partially aware of menstruation, 63.38% in urban area and 47.57% in rural area were aware of menstruation before menarche<sup>13</sup>

In the present study, mothers were the source

of information regarding menstruation in 56.5% of the girls. A study done in 2014 found 31.02% girls in urban and 17.51% in rural area were informed by teacher. The major source of information about menstruation for them was found to be their mothers.<sup>14</sup>

Our study showed majority (69.1%) of the girls believed that hormones are cause of menstrual bleeding while 63.9% believed that uterus is the source of the bleed. 93.5% of the girls thought menstruation is a normal process. In a study done in 2011, found that more than three fourth of the girls in the study were not aware of the cause and the source of the bleeding. It was observed that 80.62% of the study subjects were not aware of the cause of the bleeding, 18.35% girls believed that it was a physiological process.<sup>14</sup>

In this study 87% thought that girls get menarche between ages 11 and 15. It showed 77% of the respondents use sanitary pad while 20% of the girls use cloth as an absorbent material. A study conducted in the city of Indore, India showed that significant number of the subjects used pads. It was found that a majority of them had knowledge about the use of sanitary pads. The mean age of menarche in the study subjects was  $12.85 \pm 0.867$  years. Sanitary pads were used by 49.35% of the selected girls. The practice of the use of old clothes was reported 45.74% of the subjects.<sup>15</sup>

It was also found in the present study that 95.7% of the subjects clean their genital area after menstruation and 55.2% of the girls stated that they use both soap and water to take bath during menstruation. A study conducted on menstrual hygiene observed that satisfactory cleaning of the genital area was practiced by 33.85% of the girls. Cleaning of external genitalia with soap and water was present only in 25.9% of respondents while for cleaning purpose, 97.5% girls used both soap and water.<sup>16</sup>

This study showed that 63% of the girls think there is a foul odor during menstruation while 57% responded by saying itching does not occur before/after menstruation. A study conducted in West Bengal, India suggested that out of those having reproductive tract infection, most of the individuals complained of itching only (48.3%). Whereas, some complained of itching and rash, foul smelling white discharge per vagina.<sup>17</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Our study showed that mothers were the main source of information regarding menarche. More than half of the girls were not aware about menstruation before menarche. Use of sanitary pads as an absorbent was most common among the girls. A significant number of girls used to clean their genital area after menstruation. Majority of the female patients were aware regarding menstrual hygiene and its implications on the reproductive health. This information about awareness and practice regarding menstruation and menstrual hygiene in female patients needs to be considered and health promotion programs should be implemented.

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