

Module C5

Personal Hygiene for Young People

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Summary

As children reach puberty, and their bodies change, their cleaning habits need to change with them. More than half of the world's population will at some point in their life menstruate, yet lack of menstrual hygiene management (MHM) affects women's and girl's access to education and public participation. This chapter addresses the negative impacts of stigmatisation and lack of proper MHM. It gives guidance in how to involve girls and boys in normalising menstruation; and sets out best practices for girls' and boys' personal hygiene.

Objectives

The purpose of this module is to increase girls' and boys' knowledge about menstrual hygiene; to overcome existing taboos about this topic; to raise awareness on the need and benefits of separate school toilet facilities for girls and boys; to make sure hand wash facilities has clean water and soap, and that girls restrooms has sanitary product disposal units; to mobilise school staff and local authorities to enable an adequate MHM at school.

Keywords and terms

Menstruation, menstrual hygiene management, MHM, taboo, sanitary products, clean toilet facilities, period, menstrual cycle

Preparation / materials

Material	Preparation
Flip chart and markers	
Sanitary products (pad, tampons, sanitary napkins, menstrual cup)	
Risk assessment forms of a school toilet and hand-wash facilities	Making copies from Compendium part A, form A7-h and A7-i
Questionnaires for pupils	Adapt questionnaire A8-d, including questions about MHM

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Personal Hygiene for Young People

Introduction

Everyday personal hygiene is about washing hands (see Module C3), keeping the body clean, brushing teeth and covering the mouth when coughing. When becoming teenagers, children’s bodies change and in order to stay healthy, personal hygiene habits need to change too. An important aspect of personal hygiene is menstrual hygiene management. While living in the 21st century, there are still a number of women and girls worldwide who face problems during their menstrual cycle. Many girls are embarrassed and do not know how to best manage their menstruation, nor whom to talk to as they are ashamed of their monthly period. Menstruation is often treated as taboo and as something you should not talk openly about. In certain communities, menstruating girls and women are forced to be invisible. Additionally, girls are often bullied by boys e.g. in the school. Health problems due to poor hygiene during menstruation; lack of sanitation facilities; lack of affordable sanitary products may push menstruating girls temporarily or permanently out of school. Inadequate menstrual hygiene management negatively impacts girls’ right to education. Improving water and sanitation can therefore have a massive positive impact on the lives of girls and women.

1. Puberty

Puberty is when boys’ and girls’ bodies start to change and develop into an adult’s body. This change is due to an extra amount of chemicals, so called hormones, being produced in the body. Every individual experience puberty differently; and it can be a difficult time as the body is changing, When pubescent, girls and boys might have unexplained mood swings; feel depressed at times; have low self-esteem. Girls usually reach puberty when they are 8-16 years old, while boys reach it a little bit later when they are 12-16 years old.

Changes in boys	Changes in girls
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chest broadens, shoulders get wider, muscles start to get bigger and stronger and also breasts look like they're developing a bit • Penis and testicles start to grow • Ejaculations begin—boys start to experience “wet dreams” while sleeping • Voice “breaks” and deepens • Boys gain weight and grow taller • Body and facial hair appears (armpits, pubic area, moustache, beard, or sideburns) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breasts start to develop • Girls gain weight, particularly on the hips • Menstruation starts – girls have to start to manage their blood flow • Bodies become curvier and hip bones widen • Hair grows in pubic area and armpits • Muscles get bigger and stronger, but they do not show up as much as boys’ muscles

Figure 1: What are the changes that take place in girls and boys at puberty?¹

Source: adapted from the SPLASH, (2015) Menstrual Hygiene Management Toolkit.

¹ SPLASH, (2015) Menstrual Hygiene Management Toolkit, page 2.

2. Some Facts About Menstruation

Menstruation (also called “period” and “menses”) is the monthly flow of blood from the uterus through the vagina. Girls have their first menstruation during their puberty, when they are about 10-14 years. They then have it about once a month until they reach menopause. Menopause is when a woman stops having periods, meaning she will no longer be fertile and not able to get pregnant naturally (at the age of late 40s to mid-50s).

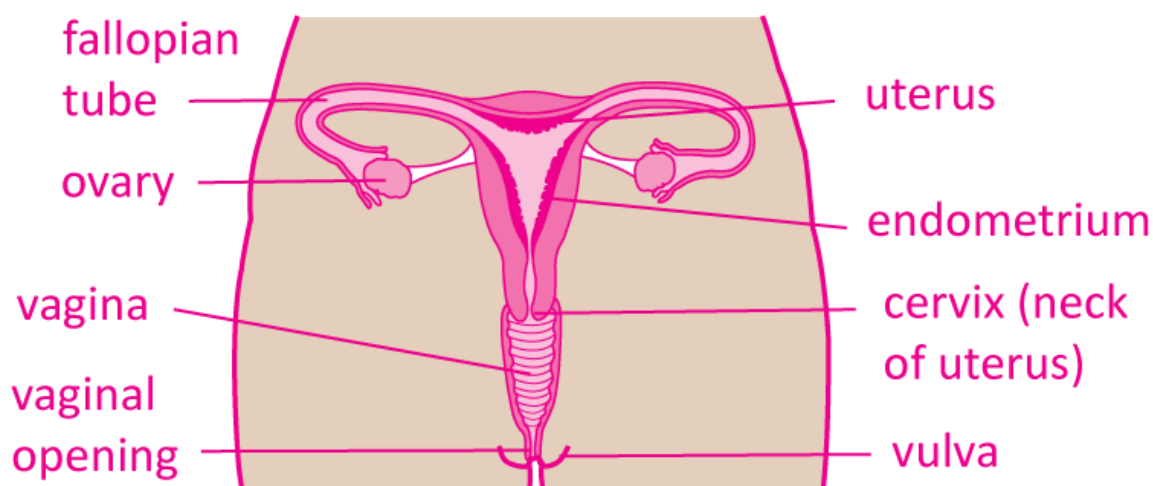


Figure 2: Illustration of the female reproductive system

Source: Rubycup. Available from <http://rubycup.com/all-about-your-period>

The menstrual cycle (see Figure 3) is the time between the first day of a woman’s menstruation to the first day of her next. Most common length for the menstrual cycle is 21-35 days, with an average of 28 days. In the first part of the cycle, levels of oestrogen increases, causing the lining of the uterus to grow and thicken. Simultaneously, an egg starts to mature in the ovaries and about halfway into the menstrual cycle (around day 14) the egg leaves the ovary. This is what is referred to as “ovulating”. The egg then travels through the fallopian tube to the uterus (see Figure 2). If the egg is fertilized by sperm and attaches to the uterine wall, the girl or woman becomes pregnant. If the egg is not fertilized, it will break apart and the thickened lining of the uterus will shed, causing the menstrual blood flow.² The bleeding usually lasts 2-7 days and around 5-12 tablespoons of blood are lost during this time.³ The first years of a girl’s menstrual cycles are usually irregular.

Pre-menstrual syndrome (PMS) happens in the latter part of every menstrual cycle (see Figure 3, after ovulation) and is caused due to changes in the levels of hormones.⁴ PMS symptoms include bloating, swollen and sore breasts, mood swings, pain (“cramps”), as well as acne.⁵ Every woman and girl’s PMS is different. Whereas some might have PMS for two weeks, others might have it just for a couple of days, or not at all. Some might feel very moody and not in control of their emotions, whereas others have painful cramps (or both). Your symptoms might also be different from cycle to cycle. Many girls skip school because their cramps are causing them pain and physical discomfort. There are ways to alleviate the pain though by applying warmth to the lower belly (a hand or hot water bottle), eating healthy (avoiding high levels of salt, sugar, alcohol, and caffeine), exercising, and practicing relaxing techniques (yoga).⁶

² Women’s Health, (2014) Menstruation and menstrual cycle fact sheet.

³ NHS, (2016) Periods.

⁴ House et al., page 212.

⁵ House et al., page 33.

⁶ EEHYC, (2015) Much Hygiene, page 7.

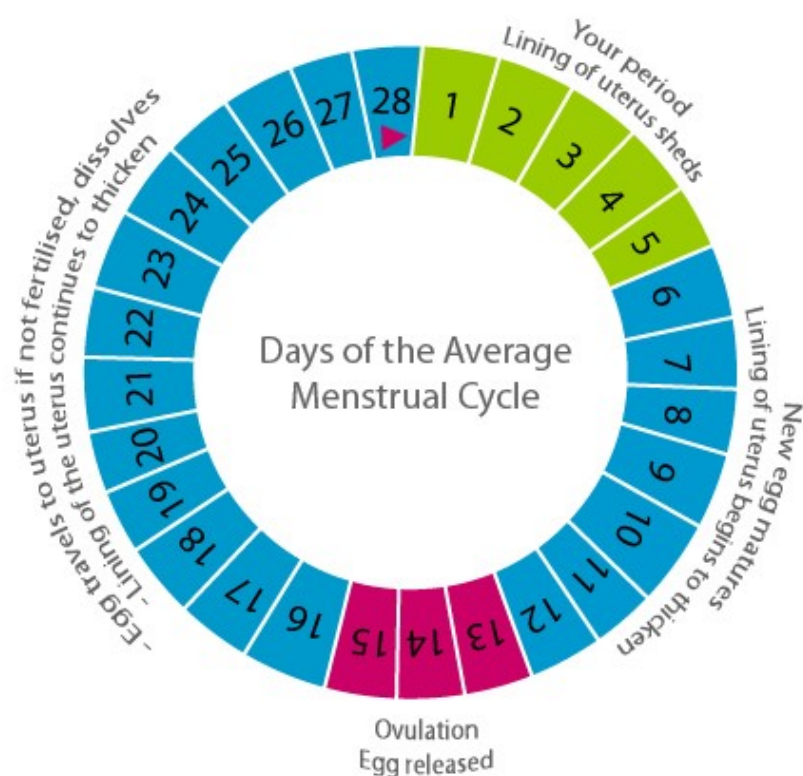


Figure 3: An average menstrual cycle

Source: New Health Advisor. Available from <http://www.newhealthadvisor.com/Short-Menstrual-Cycle.html>

3. Belief, Myths, Taboos & Stigma Around Menstruation

In many cultures all around the world, it is taboo to speak about menstruation, even though more than half of the world's population menstruates. Almost all cultures have some form of beliefs, myths and taboos relating to menstruation. These include unwritten rules and social norms about managing menstruation and menstruating women. For example, in some cultures, women and girls are told that during their menstrual cycle they should not bathe (or they will become infertile), touch a cow (or it will become infertile), look in a mirror (or it will lose its brightness), or touch a plant (or it will die).⁷ Also, whereas tampons and menstrual cups can tear the hymen, they will never cause you to lose your virginity, as that requires sexual intercourse.

Due to the many cultural and/or religious misconceptions, myths, superstitions, and taboos regarding menstrual blood and hygiene, women and girls are sometimes deemed "impure" during their menstruation. This can have devastating effects on women and girls, who can have the control over their own mobility restricted by their family and community.

Taboos and stigmatisation (i.e. condemning or showing disapproval) has a huge individual impact on women and girls. Expensive sanitary products, lack of water, soap, disposal bins and individual toilet cubicles, mean that girls might not be able to change their pads and tampons as frequently as they ought and wish to. Causing, occasionally, odour and blood stains on clothes. The bullying of girls for their blood stains (caused by factors they cannot control themselves) causes psychological distress and can lead to girls skipping and missing out of school.⁸

⁷ House et al., page 25.

⁸ SSWM (N/A) Menstrual Hygiene Management.

Silencing and stigmatising of women and girls for the sole reason that they are menstruating has a tremendous larger scale impact. It means society gives low priority and funding in finding solutions for MHM. It also means that certain necessities, such as tampons, might get taxed higher and become more expensive only because decision-makers, whom are most often male, see them as “luxury products”. Stigma around menstruation violates women and girls’ right to human dignity, non-discrimination, freedom from inhumane and degrading treatment, equality, health, privacy, and bodily integrity.⁹ The first step to end stigmatisation of menstruating women and girls is to break the silence and let them voice their needs for improved menstrual hygiene.¹⁰

4. Personal Hygiene for Girls

4.1. Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM)

Box 1 – MHM definition

“Women and adolescent girls use a clean material to absorb or collect menstrual blood, and this material can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of menstruation. MHM also includes using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials.”¹¹

Women and girls make up 50% or more of users of WASH services and are the actual (*de facto*) water and sanitation managers on the ground across the world. Women menstruate on average 3000 days over their lifetime. Yet, water, hygiene and sanitation services often ignore the needs of half of the global population.¹² About 52% of the female population is of reproductive age and most of them are menstruating every month. Worldwide however, the majority of them, particularly girls at school and women working (using public institutions), have no access to clean, private, and safe sanitary facilities. Meaning, they have no space to change their pads or tampons, nor a place to wash their hands.

Global trends, in particular rural areas, show that lack of proper menstrual hygiene management affects girl’s participation in school. Occasionally, it is so severely disruptive it even results in school drop-outs of girls at higher forms (grade four and five) of primary and secondary education.¹³ These gender unfriendly school environments undermine schoolgirl’s and female teachers’ right to privacy, water and sanitation.¹⁴ Consequently, with inadequate MHM, girls and women get left behind in society, disrupting their equality to opportunity and participation in public life as protected by the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).¹⁵

There tends to be a huge difference between MHM in urban and rural schools, particularly in lower income countries. Whereas schools in the cities might already have separate toilet facilities (with water, soap and disposable bins) for girls and boys; rural schools might not even have sufficient water to wash hands. This means that girls living in rural areas face greater challenges than girls living in the city.

CEDAW recently recognised that rural women and girls experience even further discrimination of their human rights than urban women. To decrease the risk of ill health, the distances walked to find privacy and toilet facilities, CEDAW recommends that rural women and girls must have “physical and economic access to

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ House et al., page 8.

¹¹ Sommer, Marni, Emily Vasquez, Nancy Worthington and Murat Sahin (2013) WASH in Schools Empowers Girls’ Education: Proceedings of the Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools Virtual Conference 2012, United Nations Children’s Fund and Columbia University, New York.

¹² Patkar, Archana. (2011) Preparatory Input on MHM for End Group.

¹³ SSWM (N/A) Menstrual Hygiene Management.

¹⁴ SSWM, (N/A) The right to water and sanitation.

¹⁵ CEDAW, (1997) General Recommendation No. 23, paragraph 7.

sanitation”.¹⁶ All state parties who have ratified CEDAW have a positive obligation to ensure that rural women have access to essential services and goods, such as sanitary pads, to ensure that they have adequate sanitation and hygiene.¹⁷ This obligation also stretches out to girls’ equal right to education, and imposes an obligation upon ratified state parties to ensure “schools in rural areas have adequate water facilities and separate, safe, sheltered latrines for girls, and offer hygiene education and resources for menstrual hygiene, with special focus on girls with disabilities.”¹⁸

Box 2 – How you can use the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

Are you advocating for your school or local authority to improve the MHM facilities in your school? Go to www.un.org/en/member-states/index.html to see if your country has ratified CEDAW. If they have, then you can refer to your country’s obligations to CEDAW mentioned above. Tell them that poor MHM is a violation against girls’ right to education. Bear in mind though, the CEDAW Recommendation is not legally binding, but is there to give guidelines to its Member States in how to interpret the Convention.

UNESCO includes additional systemic factors impacting menstrual hygiene management (MHM) positively¹⁹:

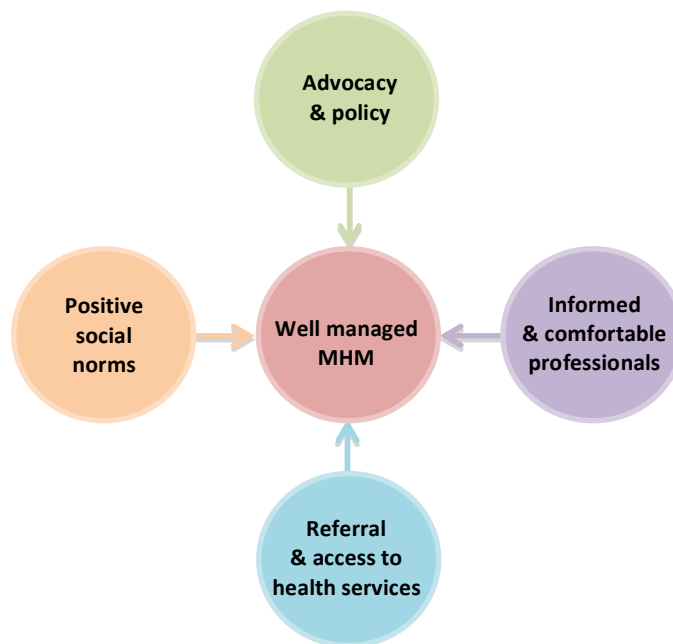


Figure 4: Factors impacting positively on menstrual management

¹⁶ CEDAW, (2016) General Recommendation 34: Rights of Rural Women. UN Doc CEDAW/C/GC/34, paragraph 83.

¹⁷ CEDAW, (2016), paragraph 85 (b).

¹⁸ CEDAW, (2016), paragraph 34(h).

¹⁹ UNESCO, (2014) Booklet 9: Puberty Education, & menstrual Hygiene Management, page 32.

Advocacy & Policy – the civil society must advocate for local, national and international authorities to implement good policies on MHM. Policies should work to remove the stigma of menstruation and make it more visible in our societies. Policies should offer more affordable and sustainable solutions, with particular assistance in rural communities.²⁰

Informed & comfortable professionals – it is important that teachers and health workers can talk about menstruation in an informed, accessible and comfortable way with both girls and boys. For MHM to be incorporated into planning and building phases of water and sanitation efforts, it is important that project planners are aware and consult on issues regarding menstrual management.²¹

Referral & access to health services – schools need to set up a strong referral system for issues they cannot resolve themselves. The referral system should include health service providers, child protection services and community support groups.²²

Positive social norms – a shift is needed in how society treats menstruation; it should be treated positively and with greater understanding instead of as taboo and shameful. After all, more than half of the world's population will at some point throughout their life cycle menstruate. We need to break myths and misconceptions, so that we can develop good public policies and practices around it.²³



School girls in front of hand washing facilities

4.2. SDGs and Menstrual Hygiene Management

In 2015, 193 member states of the United Nations agreed on a set of goals “The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)” to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all²⁴ (see also module B7). The SDGs consist of 17 goals with targets and indicators for achieving sustainable development and equality by 2030. Like in life, many issues intersect with several SDGs simultaneously. Meaning, menstrual health is not only linked to SDG 6, but it also affects SDG 3, 4, 5, 8, and 12. Therefore, good MHM is vital for achieving the SDGs.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ UN, (2015) Historic new sustainable development agenda unanimously adopted by 193 UN members.

Box 3 – SDGs case study

Try match the following statements with the affected SDGs:

- a) Anna lives in a rural community and goes to a rural school which does not have any separate toilet cabins for girls and boys.
- b) The toilet cabin does not have any sanitary disposal bins and almost no water to wash your hands.
- c) Once, while standing in front of her class, her classmate noticed that she had a menstrual stain on her trousers. Everyone laughed, and as Anna had not brought any change of clothes, she left school early.
- d) Now when Anna has her period she rather stays at home, as she would have nowhere to change her pad at school and she does not want be embarrassed by her classmates again.
- e) Her menstrual flow is quite heavy, and sometimes Anna stays home from school up to a week. Because of all the chores she has at home, it is difficult for her to catch up with the school work she has missed while she has been away.
- f) As Anna’s family is rather poor, she cannot always afford buying new pads and tampons and must use toilet paper sometimes.
- g) Anna’s teacher Maya uses contraceptives that ensure that she will not get her period at all. All, because there are no clean toilets at school, and she does not want to miss her work.
- h) Anna’s friend Ani gets really bad cramps the week before her period arrives (PMS), they hurt so bad all she wants to do is cry. The teacher and her male classmates just tell her to “toughen up”.

Can you think of any menstrual hygiene management practices that would have prevented these situations?

Answer: SDG 3(bfg), SDG 4(cdeh), SDG 5(abcdefgh), SDG 6(abg), SDG 8(adeff), SDG 12(f)



4.3. Practical tips for MHM

Poor menstrual protection and inadequate washing facilities can increase the risk of getting an infection. It also increases the risk of girls being stigmatised by the odour of menstrual blood.²⁵ In addition, the risk of infections (including sexually transmitted infections) is heightened during the menstrual period as the cervix (see Figure 2) is more open than normal and blood containing bacteria might get into the uterus.²⁶ Certain practices are more likely to increase the risk of infection, as can be seen in the table below.

Practice	Health risk	Prevention & best practices
Unclean sanitary pads/materials	Bacteria can cause local infections or travel up the vagina and enter the uterus.	Never use unclean sanitary products. Deep clean your reusable cloths, pads and menstrual cups after the period has finished. Keep them clean by wrapping them in a tissue or plastic bag when not used.
Changing pads infrequently	Wet pads can cause irritation which can lead to infection if the skin breaks.	Change your pads regularly (every 2-6 hours depending on your flow). This will also help to avoid staining of clothes and odour.
Insertion of unclean material into vagina	Bacteria will have easier access to the cervix and uterus.	Never insert unclean material (tissues, pad, cloths, rags etc.) inside your vagina. Only insert clean tampons or cleaned menstrual cups.
Using highly absorbent tampons during a time of light blood loss	Toxic Shock Syndrome (TSS) which is caused by a strain of bacteria that produces a toxin in your body. Signs of TSS include rash, sudden fever, dizziness, fainting, muscle aches, disorientation, vomiting, and diarrhoea.	Change tampons regularly (every 4-8 hours). Do not use tampons when you are only spotting.
Wiping from back to front following urination or defecation	Increases the chances of bacteria (from the anus) being introduced to the vagina.	Always wipe from front to back.
Unprotected sex	Possible increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (including the transmission of HIV or Hepatitis B) during menstruation.	Always use protection during sexual intercourse, particularly the days coming up to and during your period.
Unsafe disposal of used sanitary materials or blood	Risk of infecting others, especially with Hepatitis B (HIV and other Hepatitis viruses do not survive for long outside the body and pose a minimal risk except where there is direct contact with blood just leaving the body).	If using a reusable pad, then put it into a plastic bag, until it can be washed and dried. If using disposable pads, tampons or cloths then wrap it in paper to make a clean package and put it in the bin.
Frequent douching (forcing liquid into the vagina)	Can facilitate the introduction of bacteria into the uterus.	Never douche during your period. Do wash the outside of your genitals every day with a mild soap and water. Avoid getting the soap inside your vagina, as that might affect your pH value and cause irritation.

²⁵ SSWM (N/A) Menstrual Hygiene Management.

²⁶ House et al., (2012), page 36.

<p>Lack of hand-washing after changing a sanitary towel</p>	<p>Can facilitate the spread of infections such as Hepatitis B or thrush (yeast infection).</p>	<p>Always wash your hands thoroughly before and after changing your tampon, cup, pad, cloth, tissue.</p>
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Figure 5: Best practices to avoid potential health risks caused by poor hygiene
 Source: House et al., (2012), pages 34-35 (for column 1&2), p. (column3)

4.4. Female sanitary products

Female sanitary products absorb or collect the blood when you menstruate. See photo below for examples of sanitary products:

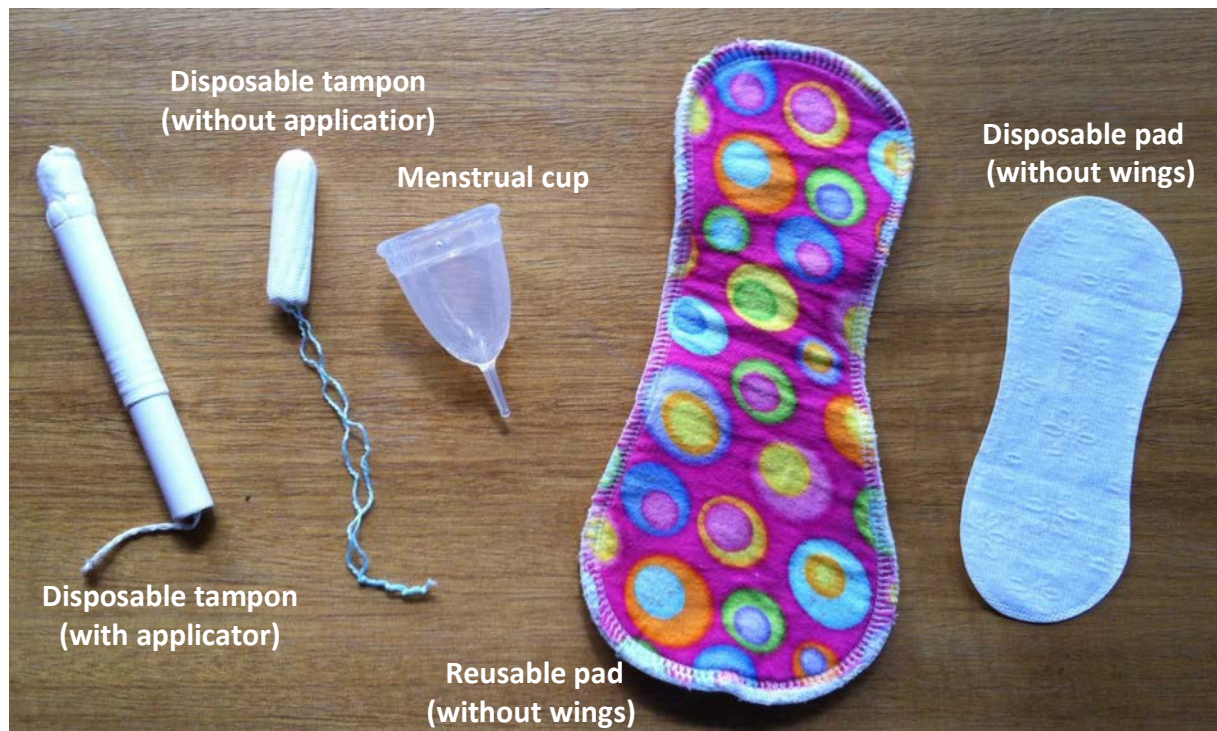


Figure 6: Variety of female sanitary products
 Source: Juju cup. JuJu Menstrual Cup, (2013), Feminine hygiene options including tampons, JuJu reusable menstrual cup, reusable cloth pads and disposable pads. Available from www.juju.com.au

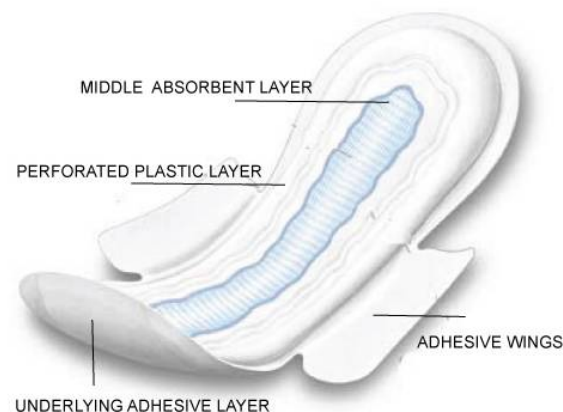


Figure 7: Disposable pad with wings
 Source: Glamcheck. Available from <http://www.glamcheck.com/fashion/2010/05/19/what-are-sanitary-pads-types/>

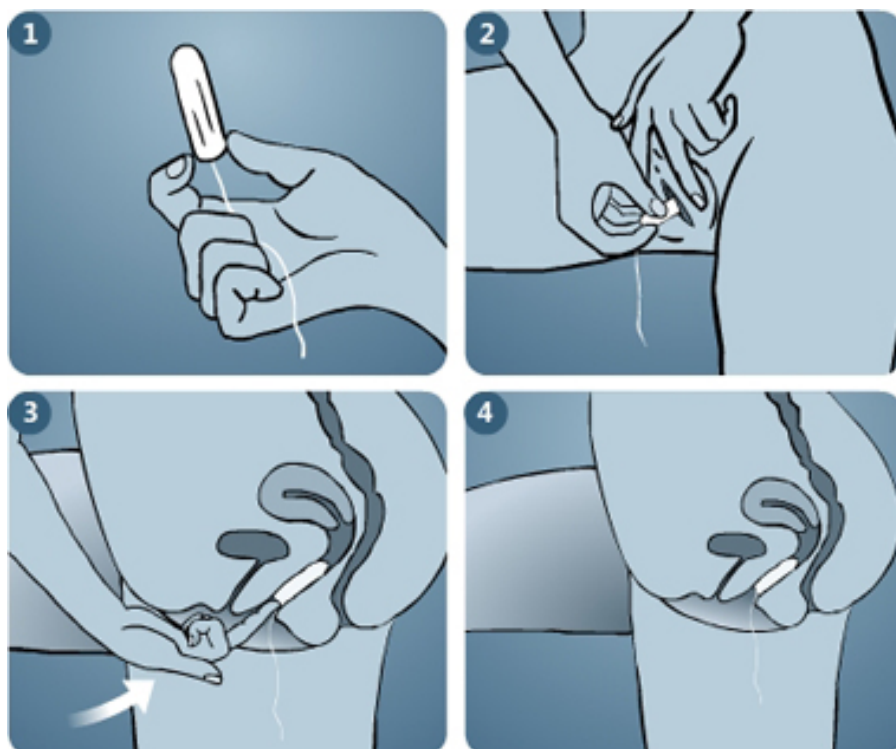


Figure 8: How to insert a tampon

Source: Menstrupedia. Available from <https://www.menstrupedia.com/articles/hygiene/how-tampon>

Disposable pads

Come with and without wings. They are strips of padding with an absorbent layer to collect blood and a sticky side which helps holding them in place in the underwear. Most common commercial sanitary product. See Figures 6 & 7.

Pros – easily available, easy to use, comes in different sizes (you can change them according to your menstrual flow), sometimes available to buy separately.

Cons – not always available in remote rural areas, generates a lot of waste, not very environmentally friendly, often expensive.

Use – remove the protective film and place the sticky against the inside of the underwear.

MHM – to avoid leakage, odour and risk of infections, pads should be changed every 2-6 hours depending on your flow.

Reusable pads

Absorbs the menstrual blood and is a more sustainable option to disposable pads, as each pad can be used, washed and used again. When making your own cloth pads, it is suggested that you use 100% cotton fabrics (such as old towels, sheets, pyjamas, t-shirts, cotton flannel), hemp, or anything you feel is comfortable, soft, and gentle next to your skin.²⁷ See Figure 6.

Pros – environmentally friendly, cheap if you make them yourself, income generating (particularly a bonus if produced locally)

Cons – commercial versions are quite expensive, user needs somewhere private to wash and dry the pads, not always absorbent enough or sufficient for higher-flow days.

Use – attach the pad holder to the underwear, and place a fresh pad into the slot. Pads without a holder are simply placed in the underwear.

MHM – change regularly, particularly if you have a heavy flow. Store used pads in a plastic bag until they can be washed and dried. Wash your hands before and after changing the pad. When pads are not in use, store them in a plastic bag or piece of fabric to keep them clean.

²⁷ SPLASH, page 19.

<p>Tampons Absorbs blood in the vagina, before it has the chance to leave the body. Are made of soft cotton, and shaped as a small cylinder with a string. They expand when being exposed to humidity. Comes in a variety of sizes and absorbency abilities.</p>	<p>Pros – convenient, comfortable, good option for when going swimming or doing other sports Cons – generates a lot of waste, may not be culturally appropriate, needs MHM facilities, and might be difficult to get hold of (particularly tampons with applicator). Use – see Figure 9. Don't have them in too long as that can cause irritation and diseases (such as TSS, mentioned in Figure 6 above). MHM – user needs somewhere private, with accessible water and soap, to change the tampon. Important to wash your hands thoroughly before and after changing the tampon.</p>
<p>Menstrual cups Are made of durable silicon and collect, rather than absorb, menstrual blood from the vagina. Menstrual cups are the most sustainable alternative of sanitary products as it is reusable, durable, economically and environmentally friendly.</p>	<p>Pros – reusable & environmentally friendly, easy to clean, a one-time purchase, can last up to 10 years, you cannot get TSS from them, you can go an entire day without the need to change/empty it. Cons – not always culturally appropriate to use, needs MHM facilities, are expensive in the short term but cheap in the long term. Use – see Figure 10. The menstrual cup is not inserted as deep into the vagina as a tampon, but is positioned closer to the vaginal opening. You can use the menstrual cup even if you have never had sexual intercourse. But if the hymen remains unbroken/unstretched, it can be advisable to use lubricant to decrease the discomfort when inserting. MHM – always wash hands thoroughly before and after inserting/emptying the menstrual cup. Remove and clean every 4-10 hours (depending on the menstrual flow). To clean it during your menstruation, simply empty it into the toilet, wash it in clean water and pat dry with paper. After the menstruation it should be cleaned more thoroughly (in for example boiling water).</p>
<p>Rags & cloths Absorbs the blood and is one of the cheaper options as it recycles old fabric you have at home.</p>	<p>Pros – cheap, reusable and can be made of old clothes. Cons – if old clothes are not cleaned well, they can become unhygienic, user needs somewhere private to wash and dry the rags Use – Place the cloth in your underwear; never insert the cloth in your vagina. Use material that breathes (e.g. cotton), absorbs well, is not too rough (an old towel can be wrapped with a softer material), is dark in colour (so stains will not be too visible), and which dries easily.²⁸ MHM – Wash your hands before and after changing the pad. Always clean the old clothes before using. Dispose of similarly as with reusable pads.</p>
<p>Toilet paper Absorbs the blood and is easily accessible and cheap.</p>	<p>Pros – easily available in local markets Cons – not convenient, falls apart when wet, difficult to hold in place. Use – place paper/tissue in underwear, change every 2 hours (depending on your flow) to avoid odour and irritation. MHM – simply throw the used paper in the toilet, or wrap up in paper to a clean package and throw it in the bin.</p>

Figure 9: Different female sanitary products; with MHM guidance, pros and cons

Source: Author's own; House et al., pages 65-73.

²⁸ House et al., page 67.

5. Personal Hygiene for Boys

Personal hygiene of the penis is also very important for boys. If the foreskin is washed inaccurately, a cheese-looking substance called smegma can start to form. Smegma acts as a natural lubricant and is found at the head of the penis. If not washed away it builds up in the foreskin and starts to smell, enables bacteria to grow, and makes the foreskin more difficult to pull back. This can cause redness and swelling. Also, if the area between the base of the penis and the testicles are not washed regularly, sweat can accumulate and create a strong odour. Smegma and odour are easily preventable by thoroughly washing the head of the penis while pulling back the foreskin gently; the area between the base of the penis and testicles; the area between the testicles and anus. Too much washing and too strong soap can cause irritation. Therefore, washing the penis once a day is enough, and make sure to use a mild soap.²⁹



School boys in front of a toilet

6. International Menstrual Hygiene day

Menstrual Hygiene Day on May 28th is a global annual awareness day for MHM. The day aims at breaking taboos and raise awareness about the importance of good MHM for women and adolescent girls worldwide. It was initiated by the German-based NGO WASH United in 2014. The initiative for Menstrual Hygiene Day has received the support of over 270 global partners who are committed to making good menstrual health and hygiene a priority worldwide. May 28 was chosen for its symbolism since May is the 5th month of the year and most women average 5 days every month and their cycle is approximately 28 days. You can read more about it and get ideas for activities from other parts of the world on their website: menstrualhygieneday.org

7. Questions and Exercises

Questionnaire or quiz game for students (add on the questions you think are missing):

- What usually happens to a girl/boy during puberty?
- When does a girl/boy usually enter puberty?
- Between which years do girls usually get their first period?
- How long does a menstrual cycle usually last?
- How many days does the bleeding part of the menstrual cycle usually last for?

²⁹ NHS, (2015) How to keep a penis clean. Available from <http://www.nhs.uk/Livewell/penis-health/Pages/how-to-wash-a-penis.aspx>.

- What do menstrual sanitary products do?
- Can you lose your virginity by using a tampon or menstrual cup?
- What products can you use to collect or absorb the blood when you are on your period?
- What is PMS (pre-menstrual syndrome)? Give some examples of PMS symptoms.
- How can you end the stigmatisation of menstruation?
- What is ovulation?
- Once a woman/girl gets her first period, she will have periods until she dies; true or false?
- What is menopause?
- What is smegma, and why does it occur? How do you prevent smegma?

Focus group discussions with boys and girls separately

- As introduction, ask your class what they know about menstruation and menstrual hygiene. Write up their answers on the board/flipchart. After your presentation, take help from the class to go through and correct the statements on the board. Tell the class if the statement is correct, incorrect or a myth.
- For girls: bring a wide range of different female sanitary products (either samples or pictures of). Display so that the entire class can see them. Then go through them one by one, using Figures 5-9 to define the use and disposal of them. For example: illustrate the absorbency of a tampon and pad by placing a tampon in a glass of water, and by pouring food-coloured water onto a pad. With a menstrual cup, show the different folding techniques, and how to rinse and wipe it.³⁰
- For boys: start discussing their personal hygiene issues. Teachers (good if male teachers are available for such focus group discussion) should create an open atmosphere with the boys so that they are open to discuss taboo issues. Another point is to raise awareness about how girls manage their menstruation and to trigger them so they will stop teasing and embarrassing their female classmates. The role play is a good tool to open their eyes.

Interactive role reversal play

Use the case story in Figure 5 but change all the names to boy names; Anna to Alexander, Maya to Stefan, Ani to Filip. You will need 3 male volunteers from the class to play Alexander, Stefan, Filip and 4-6 female students to play the classmates. Ask the volunteers to act out what you are reading to them. Then read the case story with the changed names. After the play, ask the student who played Alexander how he feels and what scenario had most impact on him. Then turn to the rest of the class and ask them. Ask them what could have been done differently to improve Alexander's situation.

WSSP related activities

See our Module A7-h on "risk assessment of a school or public" and Module A7-i on "risk assessment of hand wash facilities in the school". In addition, see the checklist below. Which items can your school tick off:

- Repeat (or add to) the exercise in Module C3 where the children are brought to the school toilet. Let them answer the checklist below (Figure 11). Ask them what could be improved to ensure that your school toilets have proper MHM.
- Share the results with school staff, responsible authorities and the community (parents)!
- Discuss and implement actions leading to improvements!

³⁰ See: The Pistachio Project (2015) 6 Folding Methods for Menstrual Cups.

Are the following MHM program elements in place?	✓ Yes	✓ No	Notes/plan and date to turn No to Yes!
Informational program for school and community			
Local and/or national regulations concerning MHM at schools in place			
Washrooms for girls			
Water and soap in girl's washrooms			
Disposal place (bins) for used pads and regular emptying			
Emergency pads in a place where girls know to find them			
Guidance teacher or counsellor designated for MHM			
MHM training for all teachers			
WASH Club with MHM activities			
Talks on MHM from local nurses or environmental health technicians			
Mentoring by older girls for younger girls			
Booklets on puberty for boys and girls			
Guidance materials for teachers			
Visual aids (posters, photos, videos, diagrams) on menstruation and puberty			
Inclusion of menstruation and puberty in classroom subject teaching			
<i>Add your own ideas!</i>			

Figure 11: MHM school checklist

Source: adapted from SPLASH, (2015) page 7

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Module C6

Utilisation of Water in Our Daily Life

Author: Friedemann Klimek

Summary

Water is utilised for a variety of purposes in everyday life. Domestic water used for body care and household purposes is most familiar. Domestic water consumption varies among countries, also within Europe. In brief, this lecture describes for what purposes humans utilise water. This module gives an overview of water consumption in Europe, which puts it in an international context. The first part illustrates water consumption in Europe and the different sectors of water use. The second part focuses on 'Virtual Water' and the 'Water Footprint' by explaining their concepts and giving some examples.

Objectives

The readers gain knowledge of the amount of water used for different purposes and especially in their immediate environment and abroad. The reader gets an idea of different terms of water, the concept of 'virtual water' and the 'water footprint', and how water consumption and the water footprint are connected to water use and scarcity.

Key words and terms

Water consumption, sectorial water use, water abstraction, virtual water, water footprint.

Preparation/materials

Material	Preparation
Copies of table 4 at the end of this module	

Remarks: This module is directly linked with module C6. The suggested activities are very suitable to implement in cooperation with or by students of a secondary school or university.

Module

C7

Module

C6

Module

C5

Module

C4

Module

C3

Module

C2

Module

C1