



Menstrual hygiene: A challenging development issue



Menstruation and menstrual practices are still clouded by taboos and socio-cultural restrictions resulting in adolescent girls remaining ignorant of the scientific facts and hygienic health practices, which sometimes result into adverse health outcomes.

Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to the females. The onset of menstruation is one of the most important changes occurring among the girls during the adolescent years. The first menstruation (menarche) occurs between 11 and 15 years with a mean of 13 years.

Adolescent girls constitute a vulnerable group, particularly in India where female child is neglected one. Menstruation is still regarded as something unclean or dirty in Indian society. The reaction to menstruation depends upon awareness and knowledge about the subject. The manner in which a girl learns about menstruation and its associated changes may have an impact on her response to the event of menarche. Although menstruation is a natural process, it is linked with several misconceptions and practices, which sometimes result into adverse health outcomes.



According to the National Family Health Survey (2015-2016), only 36% of women in India use sanitary pads. Today we conducted an awareness session covering various topics related to menstruation and importance of maintaining hygiene, also made them aware about the right ways of using, cleaning and storing of the reusable sanitary pads.

Also we have distributed more than 100 sanitary pads to the women of rural areas and they happily promised us to spread this information further among with others.

Let's not just distribute sanitary napkins but also educate women about menstrual hygiene and remove this taboo for the society.

A woman's menstrual health is crucial to her well-being and also to the well-being of her family and community. But too often — especially in the developing world — mindsets, customs and institutional biases prevent

women from getting the menstrual health care they need. Menstrual hygiene continues to be amongst the most challenging development issues today.

Menstruation is associated with the onset of puberty in girls and many a times, it brings with it rules, restrictions, isolation and changed expectations from the girls by the society. This changed attitude towards girls such as restrictions on their self expressions, schooling, mobility and freedom has far reaching consequences on the mindset of women.



Conclusions:

Menstrual hygiene, a very important risk factor for reproductive tract infections, is a vital aspect of health education for adolescent girls. Educational television programmes, trained school nurses/health personnel, motivated school teachers and knowledgeable parents can play a very important role in transmitting the vital message of correct menstrual hygiene to the adolescent girl of today. The latest National Family and Health Survey found that 58 per cent of young Indian women (15-24 years) use a hygienic method of protection (mostly sanitary pads), a significant increase from the 12 per cent using pads in 2010.

This is, no doubt, a consequence of greater attention to menstrual hygiene management over the past few years in India. This not only prevails in the Indian society but is a global issue.

On a global level, at least 500 million women and girls lack adequate facilities for menstrual hygiene management. Lack of adequate information on

sanitation and hygiene facilities, particularly in public places like schools, workplaces or health centres can pose a major obstacle to women and girls.

The objective of this holistic sensitisation programme will be accomplished through integrated awareness, motivation and meditation programmes. It will provide them with know-how on how to handle menstruation, improve knowledge of personal hygiene and boost confidence by answering unanswered questions through interactive and engaging training methods.

