



## MENSTRUAL HYGIENIC PRACTICES AMONG THE SCHOOL GOING GIRLS IN RURAL AREAS OF ALIGARH

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### KEYWORDS :

#### INTRODUCTION

The beginning of menstruation in a girl is marked the start of reproductive life. 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. Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to all females. 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. Women having better knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene and safe practices are less vulnerable to RTI and its consequences. Menstrual hygiene depends upon the educational, socioeconomic, and cultural statuses of family. School curriculum also have some role in menstrual health(1). The prevalence of RTIs is quite higher among girls having poor hygienic practices during menstruation(2). Many studies show that majority of the girls have poor hygienic practices(3). Lack of menstrual hygiene can cause reproductive tract infections(4). Better knowledge about menstrual cycle and hygienic practices can reduce risk of Reproductive Tract Infections(5). Good hygienic practices are very essential such as the use of sanitary pads and frequent change of pads(6). The present study was conducted to assess the practices of menstrual hygiene among the adolescent girls. Adolescent girls often are reluctant to discuss this topic with their parents and often hesitate to seek help regarding their menstrual problems(7). The silence of menstruation does not allow an open discussion on the subject even today. Menstrual hygiene deals with the special health care needs and requirements of women during monthly menstruation. Menstrual Hygiene Day is celebrated every year on 28th May. Unhealthy menstrual practices are not washing genitalia regularly, using unclean cloth, etc. Cleaning and drying cloths is a problem if girls lack water, privacy and a drying place(8).

Drying in the sun instead of damp cupboards or under other clothes is recommended for its microbiocidal effect, but girls prefer hiding cloths because of shame. The UNICEF and WHO defines Menstrual Hygiene Management as (menstrual hygiene day planning guide-2016)-

- The articulation ,awareness, information and confidence to manage menstruation with safety and dignity using safe hygienic materials, together with
- Adequate water and agents and spaces for washing and bathing and
- Disposal with privacy and dignity.

The aim of this study was to determine menstrual hygienic practices among school going girls in rural areas of Aligarh.

#### MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was carried out in Rural Health Training Centre, Jawan, attached to the Department of Community Medicine of J.N. Medical College, A.M.U., Aligarh. The study population includes all adolescent girls in the area of age group 13-19 years who had menarche for at least one year at the time of study. A total of 60 adolescent girls in the age group of 13-19 years were included. The study was conducted in Feb -March, 2018. The data was collected by personal interview on pre-tested semi-structured questionnaires which

consisted of specific questions pertaining to practices regarding hygiene during menstruation. The confidentiality of information was assured and their verbal consent was taken before collecting data. The data was analyzed with Microsoft Excel using SPSS software.

#### Results

**Table 1 (n=60)**

Socio-demographic characteristics	No	%
Age at interview		
(9-15 years)	16	26.66
15+	44	73.33
Age at menarche		
9-12 years	20	33.33
12+	40	66.66
Education status of respondents		
Illiterate	7	11.66
1 <sup>st</sup> to 5 <sup>th</sup> class	15	25
6 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> class	29	48.33
Above 10 <sup>th</sup> class	9	15
Religion		
Hindu	38	63.33
Muslim	22	36.66
Fathers' educational status		
Can't read and write	31	51.66
Read and write Elementary school	9	15
High school	13	21.66
College	7	11.66
Mothers' educational status		
Can't read and write	33	55
Read and write	5	8.33
Elementary school	9	15
High school	7	11.66
College	6	10

**Table =2 (n=60)**

Menstrual hygienic practices	Number	Percentage
Type of Absorbent used		
Sanitary pad	14	23.33
Cloth	22	36.66
Both	24	40
Change of absorbent per day		
One	30	50
Two	23	38.33

Three	07	11.66
Four	00	00
Storage of absorbent		
Bathroom	17	28.33
Don't store	42	70
With routine cloth	0	00
Others	1	1.66
Disposal of absorbent		
Dustbin	8	13.33
Drain	7	11.66
Toilet	0	00
Throw away	45	75
Cleaning of external genitalia		
Less than 2(unsatisfactory)	54	90
More than equal to 2(satisfactory)	6	10
Material used for cleaning		
Water	58	96.66
Soap and water	2	3.33
Antiseptic and water	0	00
Change of undergarments		
Once	35	58.33
Twice	05	8.33
Do not change	20	33.33
Handwash after change of pads		
Regularly	53	88.33
Irregularly	07	11.66
Bath during menstruation		
Yes	32	53.33
No	28	46.66

As shown in table 1,73.3% of the respondent are more than 15 years of age out of 60 respondents..The age of menarche was more than 12years in 66.66% of girls.The educational status of respondents was 6th to 10th class in 48.3%of girls and 25%in 1st -5th class.The respondents were Hindus in 63.3% and 36.6% in Muslims.The fathers educational status was can't read and write in 51.66% and mother educational status was 55% in the same.

As shown in table 2,out of 60 respondents,36.66% of respondents were using cloth and 23.33% were using sanitary pad.40% were using both.50% of girls were changing absorbents once in a day.38.33% of them were changing twice a day.11.66% were changing thrice a day.70% of girls don't store absorbents,28.33% stored in bathroom and 1.66% were using other ways of storing.75% of girls throw away the absorbents.13.33% dispose in dustbin .11.66% drain it.90% of girls clean their genitalia less than two times and 10% more than equal to 2.96.6% of girls were using water for cleaning,3.33% were using soap and water.58.33% of girls changed their undergarments once and 8.33% changed twice.33.33% do not change.53.3% of respondents under study bathe during menstruation.46.6% did not bath during menstruation.88.3%did handwashing regularly after change of pads.And 11.6% did not wash hands regularly after change of pads.

## DISCUSSION

The present study was conducted in rural areas of Aligarh to find out the hygienic practices during menstruation. 60 girls participated between the age group of 13-19 years.

Table 2 of this study reported that out of 60 respondents,36.66% of respondents were using cloth and 23.33% were using sanitary pad.40% were using both.50% of girls were changing absorbents once in a day.38.33% of them were changing twice a day.11.66% were changing thrice a day.70% of girls don't store absorbents,28.33% stored in bathroom and 1.66% were using other ways of storing.75% of girls throw away the absorbents.13.33% dispose in dustbin .11.66% drain it.90% of girls clean their genitalia less than two times and 10% more than equal to 2.96.6% of girls were using water for

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A similar study done by Adhikari P et al showed only 4% of girls took bath everyday during menses(9). 90 % of the girls under study washed genitalia with water only. Only 10% of them washed with soap and water. In a study conducted in Andhra Pradesh(10) , only 4.6% of girls washed genitalia with soap and water and in a similar study in Haryana( 11),11% of girls washed genitalia with soap and water . 92.8 % of the girls did not have separate bathroom. A study by Dasgupta et al (12) in a rural community showed that most of the girls used cloth pieces than sanitary pads(similar to our study). Only 11.25% girls used sanitary pads during menstruation(12). Singh AJ et al (13)found that only 0.4% women used sanitary napkins. Drakshayani DK et al (14)found that almost all the girls were using old cloth as menstrual absorbent.

In a study ,most of the respondents (90.8%) changed the absorbent 2-4 time a day(15).In India,a previous finding in the frequency of changing sanitary materials shown 39.8% changed pads twice a day,29.5% three times a day and 21.7% once a day(16).A study( 17)showed that in tribal adolescent girls ,about 96.9% have very poor menstrual hygiene.(use of dirty cloth ,improper washing of cloth and improper disposal of used cloth)13.Another study shown poor menstrual hygienic practices because girls do not get adequate time and opportunity to clean and change timely at school(18).A study by author Kirti in urban slum area of Guntur district reported 34.63% girls use of old clothes during menstruation(19). A study showed that 74.8% of the girls used homemade sanitary pads and 24% used ready made pads(20).

## Conclusion

Menstruation problems usually cause interruption of daily routine of adolescent girls.School health programme should include provision for screening of adolescent girl for menstruation related problem and providing them with relevant information.Clearing up the misconception relating to menstruation and offering possible treatment options should be done.This may help in improving school and academic performance of students.It was observed that dysmenorrhea and presence of one or more pre-menstrual symptoms (backache, fatigue, breast heaviness, increased weight) were considered as significant factors that made girl perceived the cycle as problematic.Awareness regarding the need for information about good menstrual practices is very important.So,health education program should be setup to create awareness and practice of good menstrual hygiene. Adolescent girls, their mothers and other family members can play a vital role, thus they need to be armed with correct and proper information regarding reproductive health. Awareness regarding the need for information on healthy menstrual practices is very important. It is essential to design a mechanism to address and for the access of healthy menstrual practices.The girls should be educated about the significance of menstruation and development of secondary sexual characteristics, selection of a sanitary menstrual absorbent and its proper disposal.This can be achieved through educational television programmes, school nurses/Health personnel, compulsory sex education in school curriculum and knowledgeable parents, so that she does not develop psychological upset and the received education would indirectly wipe away the age old wrong ideas and make her to feel free to discuss menstrual matters without any inhibitions.

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