



FACTORS INFLUENCING HYGIENIC PRACTICES DURING MENSES AMONG GIRLS FROM JAIPUR, RAJASTHAN

Medicine

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ABSTRACT

Background- Menstruation is a normal phenomenon among matured females who experience shedding of blood for 1-7 days every month from the age of maturity until menopause. Menstrual hygiene is a very important issue and handling of the young girls experiencing first menstruation should be done sympathetically and carefully.

Methods- Study population included all the adolescent school going girls of 10-19 years age group, residing in the field practice area of RHTC Achrol, Jaipur.

Results- In the current study majority of the adolescent girls (63.0%) in the surveyed population were 13-15 years. Majority i.e. 124 (31.0%) of the adolescent girls reported the age at menarche as 13 years. 85.5% said that they disposed the pads in the dustbin

Conclusions- A variety of factors are known to affect menstrual behaviors, most influential being age and SES.

KEYWORDS

Menarche age, Menstrual hygiene, Adolescent girls, Rajasthan

Introduction-

Menstruation is a normal and natural process but young girls and their parents are often unaware of what represents normal menstrual patterns. They are also not aware of the menstrual hygiene pattern, it is important to educate young girls and their parents regarding the timing of onset of the first period, the range of the normal cycle length and the ability to differentiate between normal and abnormal menstruation. Age of menarche is determined by various factors i.e. general health, genetic factors, socioeconomic and nutritional status. Initially the first few periods are light and irregular with 2 out of 3 girls having a regular pattern of menstruation within 2 years of menarche.

Good hygiene, such as use of sanitary pads and adequate washing of the genital area is essential during menstruation. Menstrual hygiene is an issue that is insufficiently acknowledged and has not received adequate menstruation. Menstrual hygiene is a very important issue and handling of the young girls experiencing first menstruation should be done sympathetically and carefully. Menstrual hygiene can be promoted and achieved through – information, education and communication (IEC) activities like television educational programs, compulsory sex education curriculums in schools and knowledgeable interactions of sociologists, health personnel, teachers & parents with adolescent girls.¹

Material and Methods-

The study was conducted during the study period of 2015 – 2016. A cross sectional study was carried out on 400 adolescent girls from primary and secondary educational institutions. The girls included in the study were from 10-19 years of age and were un married, had attained menarche and were residents of the study area i.e. Achrol, Jaipur. The selected girls were explained about the protocol and purpose of the study and were requested to complete the questionnaire to elicit information relating to demographic features, menarche age and menstrual hygiene and practices.

Menstrual hygiene questionnaire included queries about type of sanitary napkin used, storage place, use of napkins, frequency of change and cleaning. Information about personal hygiene included, washing and bathing during menses. The research protocol was approved by the Ethical Committee, NIMS University, Jaipur.

Results-

Table 1 shows distribution of adolescent girls according to age. Majority of the adolescent girls i.e. 252 (63.0%) were in 13-15 years of age group, followed by 16-19 and 10-12 years i.e. 81 (20.3%) & 67 (16.7%) respectively. The age of the youngest girl was 10 years & oldest was 18 years.

Table 4 shows the distribution of adolescent girls according to knowledge about menarche and mental preparedness for menarche.

Out of the 400 adolescent girls, 395 (98.8%) girls had prior information about menstruation. The mother was the main informant in case of 321 (80.2%), followed by the respondents sister i.e. 74 (18.5%). Regarding the first reaction to menstruation, a majority, i.e. 324 (81%) of the girls said it was normal followed by a minority i.e. 76 (19%) that had fear when it first happened. 299 (74.8%) girls perceived that menstruation was a normal process, while 90 (22.4%) perceived it to be a dirty process & 8(2.0%) girls replied that it helped in purging of body impurities. On enquiring about the relationship of menstruation with child birth, 344 (86.0%) girls replied in affirmative. Table 5 shows the distribution of adolescent girls according to Practices during Menstruation. Out of 400 adolescent girls, a majority i.e. 342 (85.5%) used sanitary pads as compared to only 58 (14.5%) using cloth during menstruation. Cleaning of genitals after urination & changing pads were seen in 294 (73.4%) & 293 (73.2%) of the adolescent girls respectively. Regarding disposal of sanitary pads/ cloth used during menstruation, 342 (85.5%) said that they disposed pads in the dustbin. However there were 58 (14.5%) girls who used cloth during menstruation & they used to wash it & reuse it.

Discussion-

Hygiene related practices of women during menstruation are of considerable importance as it affects health by increasing vulnerability to infection especially the infections of the urinary tract. The type of absorbent material used is of primary concern since reusable material could be a cause of infection if improperly cleaned or poorly stored. Adinma .E.D et al, (2008)² conducted a cross sectional among 550 Nigerian secondary school girls. Amongst material used as menstrual absorbents, toilet tissue paper was most common; sanitary pad was used by 180 (32.7%) of the respondents. While 70 (14.4%) & 59 (10.7%) used clothes & multiple materials respectively.

Omidvar S, et al (2010)³ carried out a study on 350 unmarried females aged 15-22 years to find out the factors influencing hygienic practices during menses among girls from South India & highlighted the use of sanitary napkins by girls according to age. Two thirds of the selected girls i.e. 68.9% regardless of age used disposable pads & a small proportion i.e. 7.4% & 19.1% used cotton or cloth material respectively. 42.0% used washed cloth during menstruation. Majority of the participants i.e. 78.3% of the girls changed napkins 2-3 times a day & 16.6% mentioned that they changed pads once a day.

Mudey .A.B et al (2010)⁴ conducted a cross sectional study amongst 300 school going adolescent girls (10-19 years) on awareness regarding safe & hygienic practices in rural area of Wardha district of Maharashtra, India. 37.0% reused old cloth. Sanitary napkins & new cloth was used by 15.6% & 9.67% of the girls respectively. Cleaning of external genitalia was seen more than 2 times in 34.0% & less than 2 times in 27.33%, while 31.67% reported cleaning of external genitalia as per convenience & privacy. 59.33% practices cleaning with soap &

water, while only water was used by 31.67% of the participants.

Subhash B.Thakre et al (2011)⁵ in their study revealed that 191 (49.35%) girls used sanitary pads during menstruation, 177 (45.74%) girls used old cloth pieces & 19 (4.90%) used new piece of cloth. In the urban based girls, the use of sanitary pads was 60.58% & in rural areas it was seen in 30.82% of the girls. For the cleaning of external genitalia, 225 (58.18%) of the girls used soap & water, 157 (40.57%) used only water & 5 (1.29%) used water & antiseptics. With respect to the method of disposal of the used absorbent, it was found that a majority of the girls i.e. 202 (39.79%) threw it with the routine waste & only 26 (6.72%) used other methods of disposal.

Verma P.B et al (2011)⁶ in their study on menstrual pattern of adolescent school girls of Bhavnagar (Gujarat) found that most of the girls i.e. 87.3% used old plain cloth as absorbent material during menstruation & only 10.6% used commercially available sanitary napkins.

Upashe et al (2015)⁷ in their study on assessment of knowledge & practice of menstrual hygiene among high school girls in western Ethiopia observed that majority i.e. 678 (82.2%) of girls were using absorbent materials during menstruation & 213 (66.2%) of the girls were using commercial made sanitary pads as absorbent material during menstruation.

Conclusion-

Healthy practices are important for health and well being of individuals. Age and SES are the most important determinants in the hygienic practices carried out by adolescent girls.

Education on awareness, access to hygienic absorbents and disposal of MHM items need to be addressed. The Scheme for promotion of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls(aged 10 to 19 years) in rural India promotes better health and hygiene by ensuring that they have adequate knowledge and information about the use of sanitary napkins. Through the scheme, high quality and safe products are made available to the girls and environmentally safe disposal mechanisms are made accessible. The sanitary napkins are provided under NRHM's brand 'Free days'. These napkins are being sold to adolescent girls by ASHAs. The district administration in Rajasthan plans to distribute sanitary napkins for girls through AWCs in rural areas and also by installing vending machines at women colleges and girls schools in the city and at district headquarters. Girls can get 3 napkins after inserting Rs 10 coin into the vending machine. The health department will provide 2 free sanitary napkin packets every month for girls between classes 6-12. Each packet contains 6 sanitary napkins. All AWWs, ANMs have been entrusted the task to distribute napkins for girls in the school and houses free for girls aged 10-15 in rural areas.

Table No. 1 : Distribution of adolescent girls according to age

Age in years	Number	Percentage
10-12	67	16.7
13-15	252	63.0
16-19	81	20.3
Total	400	100.0

Table No -2 : Distribution of adolescent girls according to knowledge about menarche

Variables (n=400)		Respondents	
		No	%
Information about menarche	Yes	395	98.8
	No	5	1.2
Source of information	Mother	321	80.2
	Sister	74	18.5
	Other	5	1.3
Feelings at the time of first menstruation	Normal	324	81.0
	Fear	76	19.0
Feelings regarding the process of menstruation	Normal physiology	299	74.8
	Dirty	90	22.4
	Purging of body impurities	8	2.0
	Other	3	0.8

Table No -3 : Distribution of adolescent girls according to Practices during Menstruation

Menstrual Practices (n=400)	No. of respondents	%	
Use of material during menstruation	Sanitary Pad	342	85.5
	Cloth	58	14.5
Cleaning of external genitalia after urination	Yes	294	73.5
	No	106	26.5
Cleaning of external genitalia after changing pads	Yes	293	73.2
	No	107	26.8
Disposal of pads/ cloth	In dustbin	342	85.5
	Washing & reusing cloth	58	14.5

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