



# AMAZING GIRLS' GUIDE TO MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT



Ghana Education Service

# WHAT IS MENSTRUATION?



Menstruation is the monthly flow of blood from the uterus through the vagina. It means a girl is growing up and her body is preparing for the future when she might get pregnant and have babies. It is commonly referred to as Period, a natural bodily function, necessary for the reproductive health of women and adolescent girls. Menstruation occurs monthly for three to seven days, varying from female to female. The average amount of blood lost during a menstrual period is 30 to 72 millilitres (5 to 12 teaspoons).





## WHAT AGE DOES MENSTRUATION START AND END?

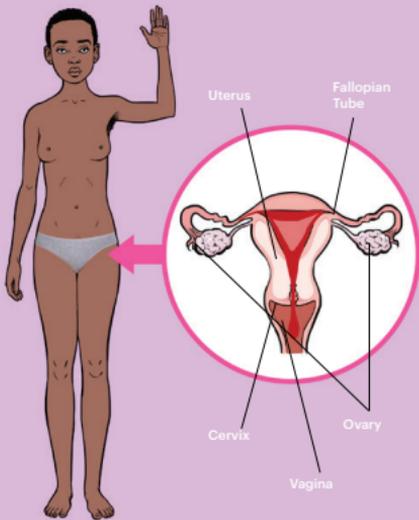
All girls go through a pre-menarche stage. This is the time before menstruation begins. Typically girls start to menstruate during puberty or adolescence, usually between the ages of **10 and 19**. A delay in the onset of menstruation is normal. Most girls will have regular menstruation from age **16 to 18**.

A woman can expect to see her menstrual period continuously until she reaches her menopause. This usually begins when she approaches her late 40s and 50s.

# THE FEMALE REPRODUCTIVE SYSTEM AND MENSTRUAL CYCLE



Your menstrual cycle is the interval between your first and your next menstrual period. On average, the length of the menstrual cycle is **28 days**, but generally this varies from woman to woman. Regular cycles that are longer or shorter than this, from **21-35 days**, are normal.

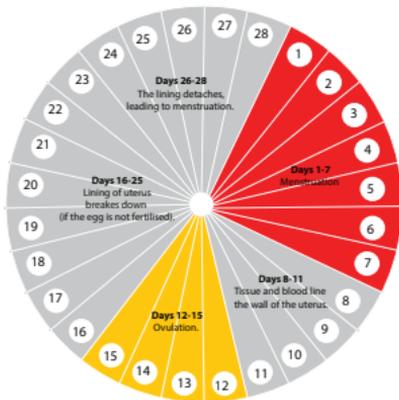


BE AMAZING. PERIOD!

# HOW WELL DO YOU KNOW YOUR CYCLE?



The time from the first day of a girl's menstruation (when bleeding starts) to the first day of her next menstruation is usually **28 days** (one month), but this can range from **21-35 days**. This interval is known as menstrual cycle. It is important to keep track of your cycle to prepare for your menstruation and avoid uncomfortable situations.



It is normal and natural to experience mood changes during your menstrual cycle; the changing levels of hormones during a girl's cycle can affect her moods. This is known as PMS short for Pre- Menstrual Syndrome. Not all girls get this, but some do a few days before they start their menstruation. You can manage your mood changes by educating those close to you on your situation so they know how to relate to you during this time. Laughing, exercising, deep breathing and stretching are all ways to relax so that your moods are better managed.

# MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT



Menstrual hygiene management is when you understand good menstrual hygiene behaviours and practise them. You know you are practicing good menstrual hygiene management when you have:

- An understanding of basic facts linked to the menstrual cycle and how to manage it without discomfort and fear.
- Access to clean absorbent material to collect menstrual blood.
- Access to privacy to change used materials as often as necessary.
- Access to soap and water for washing the body as required.
- Access to safe and convenient facilities to dispose of used menstrual materials.



# MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MATERIALS



Your choice of menstrual materials are based on your preferences and what makes you comfortable, however what matters is to use the materials appropriately to prevent uncomfortable situations or health problems.

Below are some examples of disposable and re-useable materials, some of which are safe to use while others are not.

	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Appropriate?</b>
Re - Useable	<b>Old cotton fabric</b>	✓
Disposable	<b>Sanitary pad</b>	✓
	Toilet Roll	✗
	Paper	✗

When using re-useable material (cotton cloth), it is also important to know how to keep and clean them for future use. Follow this 3 step method

1. Fold cloth, place in plastic bag, before placing in your bag or pocket.
2. Wash with hot water and soap.
3. Make sure you dry in the sun and iron if you can.



## DO's

- Wrap and dispose of your sanitary materials in latrine bins in your school, community or at home.

## DON'Ts

- Do not dispose of your sanitary materials in toilet bowls or toilet pits.
- Do not dispose of your sanitary pad on the toilet floor.
- Do not throw your used sanitary pad on a pile of refuse.



## MENSTRUATION AND PERSONAL HYGIENE

It is important to keep yourself clean during your menstruation in order to prevent uncomfortable situations such as soiling your clothes or smelling bad.

Here are a few personal hygiene tips which can help you through menstruation.

- Change your sanitary pad or old cotton fabric as often as possible to prevent pad rash or other infections.
- Wash yourself regularly with water and soap.
- Wash your private area from front to back and not back to front, to prevent the contamination of the vagina with harmful anal bacteria such as E.coli
- Only use water to wash your vagina.
- Always carry extra sanitary materials on you.

## MENSTRUATION AND YOUR HEALTH



It is common for women and girls to experience a variation in the length of their menstrual cycle, the amount of blood loss and the degree of pain and discomfort at different stages during their menstrual cycle.

Know that the absence of menstruation (amenorrhea) is normal in the following situations:

- During pregnancy
- During frequent breastfeeding (lactational amenorrhea)
- At the time of menarche (when menstruation first begins)
- When food intake is severely limited
- When one is stressed out
- Following the menopause when menstruation ceases





## **POOR MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT POTENTIAL RISKS**

It is important to know some indicators to look out for in order to detect, seek medical attention and treat infections while they are still in their early stages.

Vaginal discharge is normal. The different discharges may be a result of your menstrual cycle or different changes your body and hormones are going through. Normal vaginal discharge can be thin and clear, long and stringy or thick and mucous like. It is also normal when discharge appears cloudy or yellowish when dry on clothing.

However you should seek medical attention, when you notice the following from your vagina.

- Discharge accompanied by itching, rash or soreness
- Persistent increased discharge
- White, lumpy discharge (like curds)
- Grey/white or yellow/green discharge with a bad smell

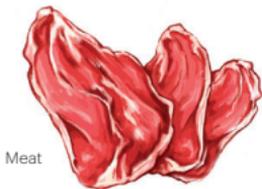
# EAT IRON-RICH FOOD DURING MENSTRUATION



Below are some foods to eat when you are menstruating. These foods also help to ease the pain during menstruation and replace lost blood.

- Meat, Egg: Protein rich food helps put sugar level in check, limiting cravings for sugar
- Fish are rich in omega 3 fatty acids that helps with reducing of pain
- Cocoyam leaves (Kontomire) or leafy green foods – Restore iron lost in the blood during menstruation.
- Bananas – Boosts your mood during your menstrual cycle.

Menstruation is not fun but you will be surprised how your body responds when you eat the right food.



Meat



Chicken



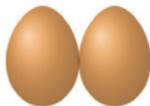
Cocoyam leaves  
**(Kontomire)**



Fish



Bananas



Eggs

## HOW TO BE AMAZING?

### Girls



- By acquiring information on MHM and puberty
- By using hygienic practices during menstruation
- By eating well during menstruation
- By being self-confident and asking for help when needed
- By taking part in school, social and religious activities during menstruation
- By supporting your female classmates during their menstruation

### Boys



- By understanding puberty and MHM
- By understanding & empathizing with your female friend during their menstruation
- By actively supporting girls in challenging situations during their menstruation

### Adults



- By educating adolescent girls on MHM before menarche
- By teaching and supporting her to care for herself during her menstruation
- By encouraging your adolescent girl to stay active during her menstruation

### Teacher



- By giving timely and right information on MHM to adolescent girls
- By creating an enabling environment to discuss MHM among stakeholders
- By encouraging girls to confide in and open up to you on MHM related issues
- By providing adolescent girls and boys with information on puberty and MHM.



## Note

[www.menstrualhygienegh.org](http://www.menstrualhygienegh.org)

