

## A Study of Menstrual Problems & Practices among Girls of Mahila College

Dr. Harsha Solanki\*, Dr. Vibha Gosalia\*, Dr. Harshad Patel\*\*, Dr. Falguni Vora\*\*\*, Dr. M.P.Singh\*\*\*\*

\* Assistant Professor, \*\*Associate Professor, \*\*\* Tutor, \*\*\*\*Professor & Head,  
Department of Community Medicine, Government Medical College, Bhavnagar

**Abstracts:** Background: Menstruation is a normal physiological phenomenon for females still it is associated with some degree of sufferings & embarrassment. In spite of relative openness in the society, the menstrual hygienic practices have not changed much. Objectives: To study the menstrual pattern, disorders & hygiene practices among Adolescent girls of Mahila College in Bhavnagar City. Materials & Method: Present cross-sectional study was conducted among 68 adolescents from Mrs. N.C.Gandhi & Mrs. B.V.Gandhi Mahila Arts & Commerce College, Bhavnagar city. Information was obtained in a self administered questionnaire in a local language related to menstruation after verbal consent. Once the girls have finished filling up the Performa, open discussion & health education was given to the adolescents regarding menstruation & myths related to it. Results: The mean age of menarche was 14.5. Most of the girls (85.3%) had the prior information about menstruation & the most common source of information was from family members (mother & sister) & least common was school teacher. The most common menstrual pattern was >30/3-5 days. Dysmenorrhea was the main menstrual problem reported by them (66.2 %). 66.2 % girls used old plain cloth as menstrual absorbent. Conclusion: Menstrual problems particularly dysmenorrhea is common among adolescent girls. In most of the girls' menstrual hygiene practices found to be poor. So the teachers, family members, health educators & media play very important role in improving menstrual hygiene in adolescence, so there won't be any misconception to adolescent girls regarding menstrual hygiene. [Solanki H et al NJIRM 2012; 3(4): 24-27]

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**Author for correspondence:** Dr. Harsha M. Solanki, Assistant Professor Department of Community Medicine, Government Medical College, Bhavnagar-364001 Email: hum\_09@yahoo.co.in

**Introduction:** The WHO has defined adolescence as: - a) Progression from appearance of secondary sex characteristics (puberty) to sexual & reproductive maturity. b) Development of adult mental processes & adult identity.<sup>1</sup>

The transition from childhood to adulthood occurs during adolescence period which is characterized by major biological changes like physical growth, sexual maturation & psycho-social development. During this phase of growth, girls first experience menstruation & related problems which is marked by feelings of anxiety & eagerness to know about this natural phenomenon. However, they do not get the appropriate knowledge due to lack of a proper health education programme in schools. Moreover, the traditional Indian society regards talks on such topics as taboo & discourages open discussion on these issues. This leads to culmination in repression of feelings which can cause intense mental stress. Understanding the health problems related to menstruation & the health seeking behavior of the adolescent girls will help us in planning programmes for this vulnerable group.<sup>2</sup>

Most adolescent girls in India have little knowledge of menstruation, sexuality & reproduction. Large numbers of rural & urban populations believe that menstruation contaminates the body & makes it unholy. As a consequence, the girl often sees herself as impure, unclean & dirty. According to the Nutrition Foundation of India, the average age of menarche is 13.4; yet 50% of girls aged 12-15 do not know about menstruation. This is true for rural as well as the urban poor. The lack of information can be attributed to a veil of secrecy that surrounds menarche. In India, school systems are ambivalent about imparting sex education. Even in some schools where sexual & reproductive health education exists in the curriculum, teachers are often too embarrassed & uncomfortable to effectively instruct.<sup>3</sup>

A study by Dongre et al.<sup>4</sup> showed significant improvement in personal hygiene of students & concluded that the school health education program with active involvement of school teacher lead to improvement in personal hygiene in school children & reduction in related morbidities.

The present study was planned to find out the menstrual pattern of girls, as well as their menstrual hygienic practices. It was also tried to find out the prevalence of menstrual disorders & their types.

**Material & Methods:** Present cross-sectional study was conducted among representative group of 68 adolescents from Mrs. N.C.Gandhi & Mrs. B.V.Gandhi Mahila Arts & Commerce College, Bhavnagar city.

The semi-structured questionnaire was prepared in Gujarati language so to make it understand easily by girls. The questionnaire was self-administered, however expert doctors were present to remove the inhibitions & provide the clarification of doubts if any & verbal consent was taken. The Performa contained the questions related to age of menarche, pattern of menstruation in the form of inter-menstrual gap, total days of bleeding, regularity of cycle. An enquiry was also made to know menstrual related problems like dysmenorrhoea, menorrhagia, etc. It was also tried to find out menstrual hygienic practices among them.

Open discussion followed by health education was given to the adolescents regarding menstrual cycle, menstrual disorders & myths related to it by expert from PSM Dept. of Government Medical College, Bhavnagar. They were also guided for menstrual disorders in terms of from where & from whom to seek medical care. At the same time many myths related to menstruation were also removed. The data were analyzed & presented in the form of tables & graphs.

**Results:** The background of a person helps in revealing possession of certain knowledge & qualities. The background information of the adolescent girls is given in table 1.

In the present study, maximum adolescents (76.5%) were belonging to 18-20 years of age group. 75% adolescents were studying in B.A.

**Table 1: Background information of the adolescent girls**

Variables	No	%
<b>Age</b>		
15-17	06	08.8
18-20	52	76.5
>20	10	14.7
<b>Education</b>		
B. A	51	75.0
M. A	05	07.4
B.Com	12	17.6

**Table 2: Menstrual knowledge & its source**

Menstrual history	No.	%
<b>Age at menarche (yrs)</b>		
10-15	51	75.0
>15	17	25.0
<b>Knowledge about Menstruation</b>		
Yes	58	85.3
No	10	14.7
<b>Source of knowledge</b>		
Family members (mother ,sister)	39	57.4
School (teacher)	02	02.9
Friends	07	10.3
Book	03	04.4
More than one source (which includes above)*	08	11.8
No response	10	14.7

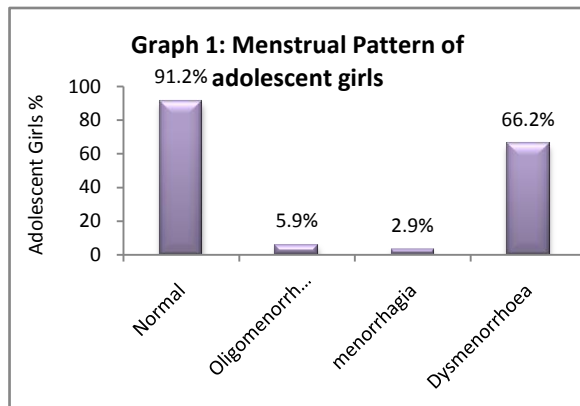
\* Multiple responses

**Information about menstruation:** Mean age of menarche was 14.5 years. Interestingly 85.3% girls had the information about the menstruation before they achieved the menarche. The main source of information was family members (mother, sister) (57.4%). An important finding was that only 2.9 % girls got the information from their teacher.

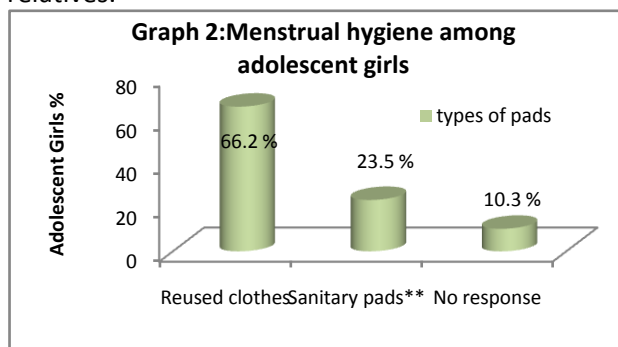
The most common menstrual pattern found among girls was > 30/3-5 days followed by 28-30/5-7 days. 91.2% felt that the amount of menstrual flow was normal, while 5.9% felt that it was below normal & 2.9% felt that it was more than normal. 22.1% were having irregular menstruation.

**Table 3: Information regarding menstrual pattern**

Variables	No.	%
<b>Menstrual cycle length</b>		
25- 28 days	15	22.1
28-30days	14	20.5
> 30 days	39	57.4
<b>Duration of flow</b>		
</= 2 days	04	05.9
3-5 days	51	75.0
5-7 days	11	16.2
>7 days	02	02.9
<b>Menstruation regular/irregular?</b>		
Regular	53	77.9
Irregular	15	22.1



Majority of them (66.2%) had dysmenorrhea, but out of them only 12 sought some help. Those who sought some help, 6 consulted a doctor & other sought the help of their mother or other female relatives.



Majority of girls (66.2%) used household cotton cloth during menstruation (which was being reused in the next menstrual cycle after washing it) & only 39.7% used commercially available sanitary pads (Whisper, Stayfree & so on).

Remaining (10.3%) girls didn't respond to this question.

**Discussion:** Our study suggested that 85.3% girls had the information about menstruation. The main source of information was the family members of the girl. Similar result were found in a study done by Nemade D<sup>5</sup> & study by Dasgupta A<sup>6</sup> wherein girls reported that their mother was the main source of information about menstruation followed by other sources such as friends, relatives, literatures e.g. magazines, newspapers, T.V.<sup>5,6</sup> However it was interesting to note that only 2.9% girls obtained the information from their teachers. The reason behind it could be that teachers feel embarrassed talking on this topic. The mean age of menarche in our study was 14.5 year. The results are almost same as by Shabnam Omidvar & Khyrunnisa Begum.<sup>7</sup>

In their study, the mean age of menarche was 13.4+/-1.2 year. In another study in Maharashtra (Pune city), the mean age of menarche was found to be 12.62 +/-1.05 year which is less as compared to our study.<sup>8</sup> The most common menstrual problem was dysmenorrhea (50.6%). Though the dysmenorrhea was common, only 26.7% sought for help either to a doctor or their mother. Remaining accepted it as their destiny. Other study have also found the dysmenorrhea the most common menstrual disorder.<sup>5</sup> It was amazing to note that still most of the girls (66.2%) use household cotton cloth as absorbent during menstruation & only 23.5% use sanitary napkins (Whisper, Stayfree & so on). Mostly it is because of a sense of hesitation to buy sanitary pads from the market & to an extent because of financial restraints. A Study by A Dasgupta & M Sarkar reported the same result that only 11.25% girls used sanitary pads during menstruation.<sup>6</sup> However reverse result were obtained in a study done by Ruchi Juyal, S D Kandpal, Jayanti Semwal, K S Negi wherein 38.4 % adolescent girls were using sanitary napkins as menstrual absorbent, while 30 % were using a new cloth/rag every time.<sup>9</sup>

**Conclusion:** Girls should be informed well in advance about the menstruation, physiological

process involved, its importance etc. Mothers are primarily responsible for the transmission of such type of information which will help the girls to take it positively. Hygiene during menstruation should be maintained, so to avoid any reproductive tract infection. Teachers play important role for the transmission of information.

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