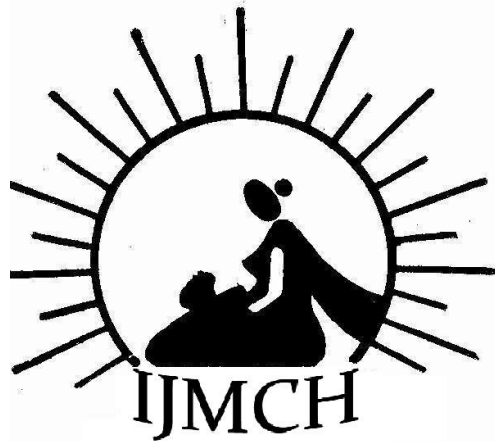


Volume 13 (3), 2011

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*Keerti Jogdand
Pravin Yerpude*

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INDIAN JOURNAL OF MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

What are menstrual hygiene practices among adolescent girls?

A community based study on menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls

Keerti Jogdand,* Pravin Yerpude*

*Assistant professor, Dept of Community Medicine, Katuri Medical College and Hospital, Katuri Nagar,
Chinakondrupadu, Guntur (AP).

Correspondence: Dr. Keerti Jogdand,

Email: drrajupravin007@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

Research Question

What are menstrual hygiene practices among adolescent girls?

Settings: Urban slum area under urban health training centre of Katuri Medical College and Hospital, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh.

Study design: A community based cross sectional study

Participants: 360 adolescent girls

Methodology: One slum area out of four selected by simple random sampling and all adolescent girls in that slum area selected for study

Results: Age of attainment of menarche ranged from eleven to sixteen years. Only 36.19% girls were aware regarding menstruation prior to the attainment of menarche. Mother was found to be the first source of information regarding menstruation in 61.29% of girls. 34.63% girls reported use of old cloth for protection during menstruation. 78.99% girls were restricted to attend religious occasions during menstruation

Key words: *Adolescent girls, menstrual hygiene, menstrual practices*

INTRODUCTION

WHO has defined Adolescence as the period between 10-19 years of life.⁽¹⁾ Adolescent girls constitute about 1/5th total female population in the world. Adolescence in girls has been recognized as a special period in their life cycle that requires specific and special attention. This period is marked with onset of menarche. Menstruation is a phenomenon unique to all females.⁽²⁾ It is still considered as something unclean or dirty in Indian society.⁽³⁾ This concept is responsible for related taboos. The first menstruation is often horrifying and traumatic to an adolescent girl because it usually occurs without her knowing about it.⁽⁴⁾ Although menstruation is a natural process, it is linked with several perceptions and practices, which sometimes result in adverse health outcomes. Women having a better knowledge regarding menstrual hygiene and safe menstrual practices are less vulnerable to reproductive tract infections and its consequences. So the present study was undertaken to study knowledge, status of hygiene and practices regarding menstruation among adolescent girls in an urban slums.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The Urban health training centre at Guntur is urban field practice area attached to the dept of Community Medicine, Katuri Medical College and Hospital, Guntur. The field practice area is divided into 4 slum area out of which one area i.e. Shrinavas Rao Thota was selected by simple random sampling method. The population of area was approximately 3500. Total 360 adolescent girls were present in the study area. All unmarried, non-pregnant, non-lactating adolescent girls (10-19 years) with attainment of menarche were included in the study (n=257). A community based cross-sectional study was carried out from March 2008 to September 2008. After obtaining informed consent, information regarding menstrual hygiene was recorded in predesigned pre-tested proforma.

RESULTS

Out of total 360 adolescent girls, 257 (71.39 %) girls have attained menarche. Maximum number of girls (72.77%) have attained menarche in the age ranged between 12-14 years. 15.96% girls have reported blood flow for more than 5 days. In 66.54% girls, menstrual cycle was of 28-32 days (Table I).

Only 36.19% girls were aware regarding menstruation prior to the attainment of menarche. In 61.29% of girls mother was found to be first source of information regarding menstruation. Teachers, friends and relatives were other sources of information (Table II).

53.7% girls have reported use of sanitary pads during menstruation. 34.63% girls have reported use of old clothes during menstruation (Table III).

78.99% girls were not allowed to attend religious occasions. 22.97% and 20.63% girls respectively were restricted from doing routine household work and playing (Table IV).

Table I: Menstrual pattern in adolescent girls (n=257)

Pattern	Number (%)
Age at which menarche attained	
< 12	19(7.39)
12-14	187(72.77)
>14	51(19.84)
Duration of blood flow in days	
< 2	19(7.39)
3-5	197(76.65)
>5	41(15.96)
Length of cycle in days	
< 28	37(14.40)
28-32	171(66.54)
>32	49(19.06)
Quantity of blood flow	
Normal	202(78.59)
Excessive	39(15.18)
Scanty	16(6.23)

Table II: Awareness regarding menstruation among adolescent girls

Awareness (n=257)	Number (%)
Present	93(36.19)
Absent	164(63.81)
Source of information regarding menstruation(n=93)	
Mother	57(61.29)
Teacher	13(13.98)
Friend	21(22.58)
Relative	2(2.15)

Table III: Practices of menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls (n=257)

Type of protection used	Number (%)
Sanitary pads	138(53.70)
Old clothes	89(34.63)
Both	30(11.67)

Table IV: Restrictions practiced during menstruation among adolescent girls (n=257)

Restriction practiced for(multiple responses)	Number (%)
Religious occasions	203(78.99)
Routine household work	59(22.96)
Playing	53(20.62)
Attending school	27(10.51)
Certain types of foods	9(3.50)

DISCUSSION

In the present study maximum number of girls have attained menarche between 12-14 years. Narayana *et al*⁽⁵⁾ reported findings similar to present study. 76.65% girls have reported blood flow between 3-5 days. Balsubramanian⁽⁶⁾ reported 84% girls had 3-5 days menstrual blood flow.

Only 36.19% adolescent girls were aware about menstruation before attainment of menarche. This may be due to ignorance and low level of education among mothers of adolescent girls. Similar findings were reported by some authors.^(4,7) In present study 61.29% girls reported mother as a first source of information. Close relation and better communication between mother and daughter may be the reason for present study finding. Singh *et al*⁽⁸⁾ found in 64.9% girls mother was first source of information similar to the present study. 34.63% girls have reported use of old clothes during menstruation. Poverty, high cost of sanitary pads and ignorance may be the reasons for present finding. Few authors^(3,7,8) found ignorance among girls regarding use of sanitary pads during menstruation similar to present study. A number of studies^(3,4,5,8) reported different type of restrictions observed during menstruation similar to present findings.

CONCLUSION

The result of the study revealed that mothers of adolescent girls were ignorant about informing daughters about menstruation prior to menarche. All mothers irrespective of their educational status should be taught to break their inhibitions about discussing with their daughters regarding menstruation before age of menarche. Education regarding reproductive health and hygiene should be included as a part of school curriculum. Better hygienic practices can be adopted by making sanitary pads available at affordable prices (social marketing). Government of India is starting a scheme of making available subsidized sanitary napkins to adolescent girls in the age group of 10-19 years in rural India from August 2011. As part of promotion of menstrual hygiene, the napkins will be sold by the ASHA to girls at a cost of Rs.6 for a pack of six i.e. Rs.1 per piece in the villages.

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