



## World Menstrual Hygiene Day

**For Prelims:** World Menstrual Hygiene Day, Government schemes to promote menstrual hygiene, Menstruation

**For Mains:** Issues Related to Women, comprehensive menstrual health education, India's initiatives and policies for menstrual hygiene

### Why in News?

Recently, on the occasion of **World Menstrual Hygiene Day**, **Child Rights and You (CRY)** an NGO released the findings of a study conducted to assess the **awareness and knowledge of menstrual hygiene and health among adolescent girls in India**.

- The study conducted for two months with the participation of nearly 4,000 girls aged 10-17 years from 38 districts across the country, sheds light on the **perceptions, practices, and challenges faced by young girls regarding menstruation**.

### What is World Menstrual Hygiene Day?

- **About:**
  - World Menstrual Hygiene Day, also known as **Menstrual Hygiene Day**, is an annual global advocacy day **celebrated on May 28<sup>th</sup>**.
  - The day aims to **raise awareness and promote good menstrual hygiene management (MHM) practices worldwide**.
- **Reason for May 28<sup>th</sup>:**
  - Menstrual Hygiene Day is observed on the 28th day of the fifth month.
    - Represents the **average length of the menstrual cycle**, which is often around 28 days.
    - Symbolizes the **average duration of menstruation**, which lasts **around five days each month**.
- **History:**
  - Started in 2013 by **Germany-based NGO WASH United**.
  - Initially launched as a 28-day social media campaign to raise awareness about menstruation.
  - Positive response led to the establishment of Menstrual Hygiene Day on May 28, 2014.
- **Theme:**
  - Theme for 2023: **"Making menstruation a normal fact of life by 2030."**
- **Significance:**
  - Highlights the importance of menstrual hygiene for the well-being and dignity of individuals who menstruate.
  - Promotes proper menstrual hygiene practices:
    - Using clean and safe menstrual products.
    - Maintaining personal hygiene during menstruation.
    - Managing menstrual discomfort effectively.

- Advocates for improved access to menstrual products, particularly in low-income communities.
- Encourages knowledge acquisition about bodies, menstrual cycles, and reproductive health.

## What are the Key Findings from the Study?

- Close to 12% of young girls believed **menstruation is a curse from God** or caused by disease.
- 4.6% of the **girls had no knowledge about the cause of menstruation.**
- 84% of the girls correctly identified menstruation as a **biological process.**
- 61.4% of the girls acknowledged the existence of societal embarrassment related to periods.
- 44.5% of the girls used **homemade absorbents or cloth instead of sanitary pads.**
  - Hesitation or shyness, difficulty in disposing of pads, poor availability, and lack of knowledge were reasons for not using sanitary pads.
- The girls received information about menstruation from their mothers, female friends and elder sisters.

## What are the Challenges Faced by Young Girls Regarding Menstruation?

- Lack of knowledge and awareness about menstruation.
- **Social stigma and taboos surrounding menstruation.**
- Limited access to **sanitary products and proper menstrual hygiene resources.**
- Financial constraints to **afford sanitary pads or other menstrual products.**
- Inadequate **sanitation facilities, especially in schools and public places.**
- **Lack of privacy and suitable disposal methods** for used sanitary products.
- Unequal access to **menstrual health education and support.**
- Peer pressure and embarrassment related to discussing menstruation.
- **Absence of open dialogue and support** from family members and community.
- **Disruption of daily activities and restrictions on participation** due to menstrual discomfort or pain.

## What are India's Initiatives for Menstrual Hygiene?

- The **Menstrual Hygiene Scheme**, launched in 2011 by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, aims to **promote menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls in rural areas.**
- [Swachh Bharat guidelines](#) in 2015 included menstrual hygiene management (MHM) in schools, providing sanitary pads, vending, and disposal mechanisms, and exclusive washrooms for girl students.
  - MHM was released by the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.
- Department of Pharmaceuticals under Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers implements the **Pradhan Mantri Bharatiya Janausadhi Pariyojna (PMBJP)**, an important step in ensuring the **health security for women.**
  - Under the project, over 8700 **Janaushidhi Kendras** have been set up across the country that provides **Oxo-biodegradable sanitary napkins named Suvidha at Rs. 1/- per pad only.**
- Supreme Court of India called for a **uniform national policy in 2022 to ensure menstrual hygiene** in schools, aiming to provide sanitary pads, vending and disposal mechanisms, and exclusive washrooms for girl students.
- Various states have their own schemes to distribute subsidised or free sanitary napkins to adolescent girls, such as **Asmita Yojana (Maharashtra), Udaan (Rajasthan), Swechha (Andhra Pradesh), She Pad (Kerala), and Khushi (Odisha).**
- Kerala and Karnataka governments have been distributing **menstrual cups as a sustainable alternative to sanitary napkins.**

## Way Forward

- **Comprehensive Menstrual Health Education:**
  - Implement engaging and interactive workshops in schools to **educate girls about**

**menstrual hygiene, debunk myths, and promote positive attitudes.**

- Incorporate menstrual health education into the curriculum, covering topics like **menstrual cycles, hygiene practices, and emotional well-being.**

▪ **Accessible and Affordable Menstrual Products:**

- Advocate for **subsidies or free distribution of sanitary pads** in schools, community centers, and public spaces to ensure accessibility for all girls.
- Encourage innovative solutions such as **reusable menstrual products or eco-friendly alternatives to address affordability and environmental concerns.**

▪ **Sanitation Facilities:**

- Raise funds or seek partnerships to **install sanitary pad vending machines or dispensers in public spaces** for easy access to menstrual products.

▪ **Engaging Male Allies:**

- Conduct workshops and **awareness programs for boys and men** to foster empathy and **understanding about menstruation, reducing stigma and promoting supportive attitudes.**

▪ **Sports and Physical Activities:**

- Promote physical activities, sports, and yoga as means to **alleviate menstrual discomfort and improve overall well-being**, breaking the stereotype that **menstruation restricts girls' participation.**

[Source: TH](#)

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