

Safe & Healthy Menstrual Hygiene Practices (PDF)

A Guide for Girls, Women, and Educators

Menstruation is a natural and powerful part of life, and **menstrual hygiene** is essential to staying comfortable, confident, and healthy during your cycle. Whether you're new to menstruation or experienced, understanding and practicing safe menstrual hygiene is key to maintaining your well-being.

Why Menstrual Hygiene Matters

Menstrual hygiene is all about keeping your body and reproductive system clean and healthy during your cycle. When you manage menstruation properly, you:

- **Prevent infections:** Using clean menstrual products and following good hygiene practices reduces the risk of bacteria and fungal infections.
 - **Feel more comfortable:** Regular changes, fresh underwear, and proper care keep you feeling confident and comfortable.
 - **Maintain mental well-being:** Knowing you're taking care of yourself can reduce stress and help you stay positive throughout your cycle.
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Safe Menstrual Hygiene Practices

1. Choosing the Right Menstrual Product

There are several menstrual products available, each offering different benefits. Choose the one that works best for you and your flow:

- **Pads:** Available in different sizes for light, moderate, and heavy flow. Ideal for beginners and for use during sleep. Make sure to change your pad every 4-6 hours.
- **Tampons:** Inserted into the vagina to absorb menstrual blood. Great for active days and swimming. Remember to change them every 4-8 hours.
- **Menstrual Cups:** A reusable, eco-friendly option. Menstrual cups collect menstrual blood and can be worn for 8-12 hours. Remember to sterilize it before and after use.
- **Period Underwear:** Designed to absorb menstrual blood without any extra product. Ideal for lighter days or as a backup.

Top Tip: Always use clean, high-quality products. Avoid using homemade items like cloths or rags that might not be sterile.

2. Changing Your Menstrual Product Regularly

One of the most important aspects of menstrual hygiene is **changing your product regularly**. This helps to prevent:

- **Odor:** Leaving products on for too long can result in unpleasant smells.
- **Infections:** Bacteria grow in used menstrual products, leading to possible infections if left on too long.
- **Discomfort:** Worn-out products can cause discomfort or leaks.

How often to change:

- Pads & Pantyliners: Every 4-6 hours.
 - Tampons: Every 4-8 hours (Never wear a tampon for more than 8 hours).
 - Menstrual cups: Every 8-12 hours (depending on your flow).
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3. Proper Hand Hygiene

Before and after changing your menstrual product, always **wash your hands** with soap and water. This reduces the risk of transferring bacteria to your genital area, which can cause infections.

4. Keeping Products Clean and Dry

Store your menstrual products in a cool, dry place to keep them clean. If you're using a menstrual cup, be sure to **sterilize it** properly before each cycle to prevent infection.

- **Pads and tampons** should be disposed of in a sanitary bin.
- **Wash your menstrual cup** with mild soap and water before storing it in a clean, breathable pouch.
- **Period underwear** should be washed regularly, either by hand or in a washing machine, following the care instructions.

5. Wearing Comfortable, Breathable Clothing

Opt for **loose, breathable clothing** and **cotton underwear**. Tight-fitting clothes and synthetic fabrics can trap heat and moisture, leading to discomfort and even infections. Cotton allows the skin to breathe and helps keep the area dry.

6. Keeping the Private Area Clean

Daily hygiene is important. Washing the outer genital area with mild soap and warm water can help you stay fresh.

- **Avoid scented products:** Scented soaps, sprays, or wipes can cause irritation and disrupt the natural balance of your intimate area.
 - **Don't douche:** The vagina is self-cleaning, and douching can disturb its natural pH balance, leading to infections.
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Menstrual Hygiene Tips for Educators

For secondary school educators, it's crucial to provide a supportive, non-judgmental environment for students learning about menstruation and hygiene.

- **Educate students** about menstruation in a way that's accurate, inclusive, and sensitive to their cultural contexts.
 - **Provide access to sanitary products** and ensure students have access to clean, private spaces to manage their menstruation.
 - **Promote open discussions** about menstrual hygiene to reduce stigma and build confidence in your students.
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The Bottom Line: Your Health, Your Choice

Remember, menstrual hygiene is about **respecting your body** and making choices that keep you healthy, comfortable, and empowered. By following these simple practices, you can ensure that your menstrual cycle is a smooth and healthy experience.

Key Takeaways

- **Choose the right products:** Find what works best for you and change them regularly.
- **Cleanliness is crucial:** Wash hands before and after changing products and clean products after use.
- **Wear breathable clothing:** Stay comfortable and dry.
- **Educate and support:** Create an open environment to talk about menstruation and support those around you.

Remember: Menstruation is a normal part of life and shouldn't be something you hide or feel ashamed of. Stay informed, stay healthy, and always embrace your power!  

This resource is meant to support everyone in building a better understanding of menstrual hygiene, creating a space for learning, and reducing the stigma around menstruation. Share this with your friends, family, and students to make the world a more informed and supportive place!

Stay confident, stay clean, and stay empowered! 