

A study on practices regarding menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls of urban areas of Jabalpur District

Shubhangi Nayak, Neelam Anupama Toppo, Shashi Prabha Tomar, Pradeep Kumar Kasar, Rajesh Tiwari

Department of Community Medicine, NSCB Medical College, Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh, India.

Correspondence to: Shubhangi Nayak, E-mail: shubhangi3188@gmail.com

Received April 23, 2016. Accepted May 13, 2016

Abstract

Background: Adolescence in girls is a phase of transition toward womanhood and its beginning is marked by menstruation. But unfortunately most of the adolescent girls do not maintain proper hygiene during menstruation because of ignorance, which in turn increase their risk of developing genital infections in future.

Objective: To assess practices regarding menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls of urban areas of Jabalpur district, Madhya Pradesh, India.

Materials and Methods: We conducted a cross-sectional study and 200 adolescent girls were randomly selected from the area under study.

Result: A total of 70.2% of the girls used sanitary pads but the rest used cloth and the practice of reusing without washing properly was seen commonly among girls. A total of 74.4% of the girls reported pain in abdomen, 57.7% reported lower back pain, and 29% experienced pain in breast and tiredness during menstruation.

Conclusion: This study showed that some adolescent girls had poor information about the hygienic practices during menstruation.

KEY WORDS: menstrual hygiene, adolescent

Introduction

Adolescence is defined as life between 10 and 19 years of age. In girls, it is a phase of transition from girlhood to womanhood. In females, menstruation marks the beginning of adolescence, but they are not prepared and there is a lack of knowledge about menstruation among adolescent girls. Menstrual hygiene management is limited by various cultural, social, and economic factors. Infections because of poor menstrual hygiene during menstruation have been reported in many studies.^[1,3] Problems such as lack of water and

bathroom facilities, lack of private rooms for changing sanitary pads, and ignorance because of lack of education are some of the factors responsible for poor menstrual hygiene, which in turn poses many reproductive health problems in future. It was, therefore, felt as a need to assess the menstruation-related hygienic practices among the school-going adolescent girls. Hence, this study was carried out.

Materials and Methods

The study was based on a cross-sectional study design. The study was conducted from June 1, 2014 to October 31, 2014. Multistage random sampling technique was used and 200 adolescent girls aged 10–19 years were selected as study subjects randomly from urban areas of Jabalpur district. A pretested, self-administered questionnaire was used for data collection.

Statistical Analysis

Frequency distribution tables were prepared based on the observations using SPSS for windows version 20.0.

Access this article online	
Website: http://www.ijmsph.com	Quick Response Code: 
DOI: 10.5455/ijmsph.2016.23042016483	

International Journal of Medical Science and Public Health Online 2016. © 2016 Shubhangi Nayak. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), allowing third parties to copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format and to remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially, provided the original work is properly cited and states its license.

Result

Among the 200 adolescent girls under study, 168 girls had attained menarche.

Age at menarche: Average age of menarche in adolescent girls was 13.13 ± 1.046 years with the range of 10–16 years.

The type of absorbent material which is used could be a major cause for genital infections if it is not cleaned properly and used again. Table 1 shows that in urban areas majority of the girls (70.2%) used sanitary pads.

Table 1 shows that in urban areas, majority of the girls (70.2%) wrapped the used cloth pieces or sanitary pads in a paper bag and threw it off. The other practices of disposal of used cloth pieces was by burning them (13.7%) or washing and reusing them (16.1%) and then throwing them after using it for a few months.

Table 1 shows that 55.5% girls in urban areas dipped the cloth in antiseptic solution before reusing it.

Table 1 shows that during menstruation, 74.4% of the girls reported pain in abdomen, 57.7% reported lower back pain, and 29% experienced pain in breast and tiredness. Other problems faced were irritation, heavy bleeding, swelling on face and body, constipation, and so on. Mean cycle length was of 29.5 days, the range was from 20 to 60 days.

Table 1: Distribution of adolescents according to the menstrual hygienic practices

Parameters	No.	%
Type of material used		
Sanitary pads	118	70.2%
Cotton and gauze	7	4.2%
Clean cloth	43	25.6%
Total	168	100%
Disposal of used material		
Throw it off	118	70.2%
Burn it	23	13.7%
Bury it	0	0%
Wash it and reuse it	27	16.1%
Total	168	100%
Anti-infective treatment		
Dip in antiseptic solution	15	55.5%
No special care	12	44.5%
Total	27	100%
Problems faced during menstruation		
Pain in abdomen	125	74.4%
Pain in lower back	97	57.7%
Pain in breast	49	29.2%
Swelling on face and body	27	16.1%
Tiredness	50	29.7%
Irritation	74	44%
Constipation	20	11.9%
Any other (heavy bleeding, irregular cycle, etc.)	10	5.9%

Discussion

Mean age of menarche in adolescent girls was reported to be 13.13 ± 1.046 years with the range of 10–16 years.

Kotecha *et al.* and Kushwah and Mittal^[4,5] also observed the similar age of menarche among girls, that is, 13 years. As per a Nigerian study, the mean age at menarche was 14.2 years with a range of 10–17 years^[6] whereas Dasgupta and Sarkar^[7] and Thakre *et al.*^[8] reported it as 12.8 years. These findings were quite similar to our study.

The type of absorbent material used is important, as it could lead to infections if used under unhygienic conditions. In urban areas, majority of the girls (70.2%) used sanitary pads. Different studies have shown different findings regarding the use of absorbent material during menses.

Dasgupta and Sarkar^[7] conducted a study on menstrual hygiene in Kolkata and observed that 51.25% of the girls did not know about the use of sanitary pads. A total of 11.25% of the girls used sanitary pads, 42.5% and 6.25% of the girls used old and new cloth, respectively, during menstruation.^[7]

A study by Shubhakar *et al.* revealed that 45.74% of the girls used old cloth during menses.^[8] Other researchers, in their studies, also reported that more than 75% of the girls used cotton clothes and reused them after washing.^[9,10]

Narayan *et al.*^[11] showed in his study that 57.36% of the girls used sanitary pads as a menstrual absorbent.^[11]

The table shows that majority of the girls (70.2%) wrapped the used cloth pieces or sanitary pads in a paper bag and disposed it off. But others used cloth pieces and disposed them by burning or reusing and throwing them after few months.

As per a study by Dasgupta *et al.*,^[7] 73.75% of the girls reused cloth pieces and 57.5% of the girls disposed the cloth pieces or sanitary pads used in a proper way.^[7]

In a study by Shubhakar *et al.*,^[8] 41.86% of the girls used cloth material but did not clean it properly. Most of the rural girls used old clothes and reused them after washing with soap and water and threw it in waste or burnt it.^[8] The same findings were reported by other studies.^[1,7,9,11]

The table shows that 55.5% of the girls dipped the cloth in antiseptic solution before reusing it.

In a study by Dasgupta *et al.*^[7], 97.5% of the girls cleaned using soap and water.

Other studies reported that most of the rural school girls who used old clothes, reused it after boiling and drying.^[10,11] These practices offered some protection against infections.

The proportion of the girls using sanitary pads was higher in our study as compared with other studies, which could be attributed to better education in urban areas as compared with rural areas.

During menstruation, 74.4% of the girls reported pain in abdomen, 57.7% reported lower back pain, and 29% experienced pain in breast and tiredness. Other problems faced were irritation, heavy bleeding, swelling on face and body, constipation, and so on. Mean duration of menstrual cycle was 29.5 days, ranging from 20 to 60 days.

As per the Nigerian study, the average menstrual cycle duration was 29.9 days, the range was 20–36 days and 9% had irregular cycle. Dysmenorrhea was reported in 60.5% of the students and 12.5% of the respondents reported that the pain interfered with their academic activities. A total of 29.0% were aware of menstrual abnormalities as problem and 10.8% decided to seek medical care.^[6]

Strengths and Limitations

This study reflects the inaccurate information about menstrual hygiene practices leading to increased risk of infections among adolescent girls.

The limitation of the study is that the study shows that menstrual hygiene is associated with reproductive tract infections based on the symptoms but the risk of infection could not be assessed.

Conclusion

This study has shown that some adolescent girls had poor information about the menstrual hygiene practices. There is a need to impart them accurate and adequate information about menstruation and how to maintain proper hygiene during menstruation. Many social taboos and misbeliefs are prevalent in the society, which need to be corrected. Mothers, sisters, teachers, and friends could help in discussing their problems and give them proper advice regarding menstrual hygiene.

References

- Mudey AB, Keshwani N, Mudey GA, Goyal RC. A cross-sectional study on the awareness regarding safe and hygienic practices amongst school going adolescent girls in the rural areas of Wardha district. *Global J Health Sci* 2010;2(2):225–31.
- Bhatia JC, Cleland J. Self-reported symptoms of gynecological morbidity and their treatment in south India. *Stud Fam Plann* 1995;26(4):491–5.
- Mehara S. (Ed), *Adolescent Girl: An Indian Perspective*. Saket, New Delhi: MAMTA Health Institute for Mother and Child, 1995. pp. 75–8.
- Kushwah SS, Mittal A. Perceptions and practice with regard to reproductive health among out-of-school adolescents. *Indian J Community Med* 2007;32:141–3.
- Kotecha PV, Patel SV, Mazumdar VS, Baxi RK, Misra S, Diwanji M, et al. Reproductive health awareness among urban school going adolescents in Vadodara city. *Indian J Psychiatry* 2012;54(4):344–8.
- Esimai OA, Esan GO. Awareness of menstrual abnormality amongst college students in urban area of Ile-Ife, Osun State, Nigeria. *Indian J Community Med* 2010;35:63–6.
- Dasgupta A, Sarkar M. Menstrual hygiene: how hygienic is the adolescent girl? *Indian J Community Med* 2008;33(2):77–80.
- Thakre SB, Thakre SS, Reddy M, Rathi N, Pathak K, Ughad S. Menstrual hygiene: knowledge and practice among adolescent school girls of Saoner, Nagpur District. *J Clin Diagn Res* 2011;5(5):1027–33.
- Khanna A, Goyal RS, Bhawsar R. Menstrual practices and reproductive problems: a study of adolescent girls in Rajasthan. *J Health Manage* 2005;7(1):91–7.
- Quazi SZ, Gaidhane A, Singh D. Beliefs and practices regarding menstruation among the adolescent girls of high schools and junior colleges of the rural areas of Thane district. *J DMIMSU* 2006;2:76–71.
- Narayan KA, Shrivastava, DK, Pelto PJ, Veerapmmal S. Puberty rituals, reproductive and sexual health of adolescent school girls of south India. *Asia Pac Popul J* 2001;16(2):225–38.

How to cite this article: Nayak S, Toppo NA, Tomar SP, Kasar PK, Tiwari R. A study on practices regarding menstrual hygiene among adolescent girls of urban areas of Jabalpur District. *Int J Med Sci Public Health* 2016;5:2355-2357

Source of Support: Nil, **Conflict of Interest:** None declared.