

Menstrual Hygiene Day

May 28th, 2022

Poor menstrual hygiene caused by a lack of education on the issue undermines the educational opportunities, health and overall social status of women and girls around the world. As a result, millions of women and girls are kept from reaching their full potential. Bringing awareness to the persisting taboos and stigma, limited access to hygienic menstrual products and poor sanitation infrastructure is paramount in ensuring girls and women around the world have the information needed in order to take charge of their sexual health.

May 28th, Menstrual Hygiene Day (MH Day) is a global advocacy platform that brings together the voices and actions of non-profits, government agencies, individuals, the private sector and the media to promote good menstrual hygiene management (MHM) for all menstruators. More specifically, MH Day:

- breaks the silence, raises awareness and changes negative social norms around MHM, and
- engages decision-makers to increase the political priority and catalyse action for MHM, at global, national and local levels.

Global G.L.O.W. Outcomes referenced: Self Advocacy, Healthy Choices, Positive Future Outlook

CASEL Competencies referenced: Self Management, Self Awareness, Social Awareness





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Menstrual Hygiene Day

WHY WE CELEBRATE

Menstrual Hygiene Day is celebrated to inform club and community members on the importance of understanding menstruation and the impact having a period has on girls and women across the world. Though menstruation is totally natural, it is often met with harmful stigmas, negative assumptions, and dehumanization. We want to provide an environment where girls are proud to menstruate and are uplifted by those surrounding them, when doing so.

Celebrating Menstrual Hygiene Day this year is even more pertinent, because of the drastic effect COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on those who menstruate. Each day, an estimated 300 million women and girls menstruate. Being able to manage menstruation safely, hygienically, with confidence and with dignity is critical for their health, education, human rights, economic development and overall gender equality. Before the COVID-19 pandemic started, more than 500 million women worldwide did not have what they needed to manage their menstruation. The current pandemic highlights and further exacerbates the menstruation-related challenges many women and girls face around the world.¹

Program Overview

WHAT

Menstrual Hygiene Day is an opportunity for club members to learn more about their bodies and menstrual cycles and how having periods is viewed in broader society. This celebration is created to connect participants to one another through shared learning, self expression, and unity.

WHO

This Global G.L.O.W. celebration is designed to fit into a normal club session for club participants. Partners are welcome to celebrate in other ways if they so choose.

WHEN

The event should take place on or around **Saturday, May 28, 2022 – Menstrual Hygiene Day**. The 28th was selected to acknowledge that 28 days is the average length of the menstrual cycle.

WHERE

These activities can be done at your regular club location during club time. A few special materials are required and are listed in this packet.

¹ <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/materials/2020campaign-materials/>



Materials List

This is a full list of supplies needed for this program. A list of specific materials will be listed with each activity.

MATERIALS

- Paper or Journals
- Pens/Pencils
- Markers/Crayons/Colored Pencils
- Chart paper
- Tape
- Blank sheets of paper
- Period Problems Comic Strip
- Menstrual Health Complications Fact Sheet
- Girls For School Project Guide

SESSION PREPARATION

- Have the Menstrual Health Complications Fact Sheets printed for you to reference throughout the session
- Make sure the Period Problems Comic Strip worksheets are printed for each member to complete
- If possible, have a sample comic strip available to show members
- Have a large sheet of chart paper posted on a wall with the words “Anatomy Word Wall”
- Review the Menstrual Health Complications Fact Sheet located in the Appendix. If you have time and/or would like more knowledge on any of the conditions listed, consult the following information:
 - [Anemia](#)
 - [PCOS](#)
 - [Endometriosis](#)
 - [PMS](#)
 - [PMDD](#)



Celebration Overview

WELCOME & COMMUNITY-BUILDING ACTIVITY (15 MIN)

Welcome Message (5 mins)

Welcome the club members and begin by saying that today they will take part in something a little different from their normal club session. You can explain that girls just like them from around the world will be participating in the same activities they are to commemorate Menstrual Hygiene Day. This year, they will listen to a story written by a Partner Coordinator from Art of a Child in Uganda.

Anatomy Word Wall (10 mins)

Participants will collaborate on a word wall about the importance of correct terminology for our bodies when speaking with family, friends, and medical practitioners. The participants will have time to get comfortable using these terms for the rest of the session. .

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE DAY (MH DAY) CELEBRATION ACTIVITIES (75 MIN)

Period Problems Comic Strip (60 mins)

This activity is a fun and interactive way for participants to learn about the different health complications people who experience menstruation may experience by creating a comic strip of a scenario regarding a health risk associated with menstruation. This activity will teach the participants about anemia, Hormonal Imbalances, PCOS, and Endometriosis. This activity will allow members to learn more about what can happen to their bodies during their periods and how girls and women can take charge of their sexual health.

Reflection and Closing (10 mins)

Use this time to reflect on the day as a whole. The goal here is to help participants form connections between the material covered today and their own lives. This will also be a moment to reflect on this past year of the pandemic and how COVID has made an impact on menstrual hygiene and management.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE!

Global G.L.O.W. would love to know about your experience with the Menstrual Hygiene Day Celebration! We encourage you to take photos of your celebrations and share them in our WhatsApp group and also post them to your organization's social media pages using **#GlobalGirlsGLOW** and **#MHDAY2022** and please tag Global G.L.O.W. in your posts!

**Your club members can now join the new private
Facebook group for Global G.L.O.W. girls at facebook.com/groups/GlobalGLOWGirl**



Program Activities Lesson Plan

OPENING / WELCOME / CHECK-IN (5 MINUTES)

1. Use this time to welcome participants to GLOW club for the day and to make any announcements or reminders that club members will need to know.
2. Begin by saying that today they will take part in something a little different from their normal club session. Explain that girls just like them from around the world will be participating in the same activities they are to commemorate Menstrual Hygiene Day.
3. Next, read the brief statement below aloud to the group. Explain that this was written by **a program coordinator from Global G.L.O.W. partner organization Art of a Child in Uganda**. She was the inspiration behind this year's Menstrual Hygiene Day curriculum because of a recent experience she overcame regarding menstruation. She shared:

"Anemia is the worst experience I have had in my entire life because it leaves you weak, slow at tasks, dizzy, light headed most of the time, plus it takes a long time to recover from it. It normally takes 3 to 6 months to fully recover.

I went to see a doctor because the dizziness had intensified to the extent where I felt confused due to low supply of oxygen to the brain. The doctor suggested we take a full blood count test to see the depth of it. It was so terrible when the results came back that my Hemoglobin levels were as low as 8, the normal one is 12 to 15. I was given 4 emergency IVs of Iron to help boost my iron levels for a week. I also did medical tests to rule out parasites, malaria, fibroids and I was diagnosed with hormonal imbalance for which I got medication and it was corrected."

[Pause here to make sure participants understand. Answer any questions they may have before moving on.]

"The heavy menses made my life uncomfortable, I would not move or travel on day 2 of my periods in order to avoid soiling in public. I think it is important for young girls to be cautious of heavy menses. Heavy menstrual bleeding is not normal at all because it may be a sign of underlying medical conditions like cysts, hormonal imbalances, fibroids among others.

When you see heavy periods, lightheadedness, confusion, general body weakness seek medical attention, and when diagnosed with anemia, make sure to cure the cause of the anemia in order to heal well from it. Have a balanced diet rich in iron or take supplements and engage in sports or activities that help your body take out excess toxins and hormones. Girls need more iron intake because they lose iron every month and therefore be sure to have a diet full of beetroots and green leafy vegetables."

4. Take a moment to reflect on her words with the group. What were their thoughts and feelings after listening to her experience? Were there any words in the story that they didn't know? Ask for club members to share with the group before transitioning to the next activity.

Mentor Note: Remind participants that everyone has a different body and what may be a longer or heavier period for one person may not be for another. It is important to learn what is normal for



your own body. Remember to listen to your body and if you feel dizzy, sick, or ill in any way, you can always speak to a doctor, nurse, or trusted adult.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING ACTIVITY (15 MINUTES)

Activity: Anatomy Word Wall

Instructions:

1. To begin, explain that the group will be doing an activity where they think of ways one can take charge in caring for their body and health. Explain that one of the most important things they can do to take charge is learning the correct terms for their body parts.
2. Direct their attention to the Anatomy Word Wall chart paper that has been hung in the space. Tell the group that they will have **5 minutes** to come up and write down as many words or terms for our reproductive organs, such as vaginas, vulvas, ovaries, etc. that they have ever heard of.

Facilitation Note: It is very possible that participants may write down slang or ‘inappropriate’ terms. This is okay! Remind them it is a safe place, and we are here to learn the proper terminology to use moving forward.

3. Assure them that it is okay if they think or are unsure if a term they have heard is a bad word, they may still write it down during this time.
4. After **5 minutes**, tell the participants to return to their seats and take a moment to read over everyone’s contributions to the wall.

Facilitation Note: If the group is giggly or nervous reading over the terms and phrases, something you can do is tell the group that they can have **10 seconds** to laugh and get all of their giggles out. After 10 seconds have everyone take a deep breath, hold for **5 seconds**, and then release.

5. Take your time reviewing the words that the group has written down, pausing after each to clarify the correct anatomical term that they are referring to. Lead a discussion for about **5 minutes** about the purpose of this activity.
6. After all the terms have been reviewed, explain that it is good practice to use the correct anatomical term when speaking with friends or family, and *especially* when visiting the doctor. This makes it easy for the doctor to understand your symptoms, and helps decrease stigmas surrounding women’s bodies in general when conversing with friends or family.
7. Thank the group for participating and remind them that for the rest of the lesson, you will be using the correct terminology and would like the participants to do the same.
8. Transition to the next activity by telling the group that they will be learning about some of the different health complications menstruation may cause in those with a menstrual cycle, and some ways they can take charge of their health including practicing healthy habits and learning about important sources of vitamins that their bodies need to keep healthy while menstruating.

Facilitation Note: Talking about “health” can be triggering or upsetting for some people. Be mindful of your language regarding healthy diets. Because concepts of health and wellness, especially around nutrition, can be highly culturally influenced, come prepared with suggestions of available local foods that are accessible and have these nutrients.



TEAM TIME (60 MINUTES)

Activity: Period Problems Comic Strip

Instructions:

1. Share with club members the purpose of today's activity and begin with a short discussion about their attitudes towards menstruation. Use the following questions or any others you feel appropriate. You can ask:
 - a. When you think of the terms "menstruation" or "periods", what comes to mind?
 - b. What is the general attitude you have when it comes to menstrual cycles?
2. Invite one member to be a scribe and write down everything shared from the discussion on a piece of chart paper.
3. Responses may include things like "painful", "annoying", "a hassle", etc. You may prompt them further by asking when they began having these general attitudes about periods and how they formed those attitudes.
 - a. Were they influenced by the media (television, movies, music), friends or family?
 - b. If your participants have access to the internet, you can ask them how the internet has affected their thoughts on menstruation.
4. Thank the participants for sharing and invite the scribe to return back to their seat. Explain that today, the group will be learning about some of the different health complications that can occur to those who menstruate. It is important to learn about these complications now so they can be aware in case they have symptoms at some point in their life. Because many people do not learn this information, many women and especially girls are unaware when something may be wrong which can lead to worse health complications if left untreated.
5. Take a moment to reassure the group that today's lesson will contain topics that may be scary to talk about and is not meant to scare them, rather the purpose for today is to inform them about signs and symptoms our bodies may be showing us, and how to advocate for our sexual health.
6. Take a moment to review the following terms with the group. The information below is just an example of what you should write on the board or poster.

Facilitation Note: Refer to the Fact Sheet located in the Appendix to help guide this discussion. Record the information discussed on chart paper or a whiteboard. Leave this information visible for the rest of the session.

- a. Anemia²
 - i. An iron- deficiency. Occurs when our body does not have enough iron which it needs to help carry oxygen through your blood all over your body
 - ii. Can be caused by hormonal imbalances
 - iii. Affects more women than men
 - iv. Common during pregnancy

² <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/iron-deficiency-anemia>



- b. Uterine Fibroids³
 - i. Muscular tumors that grow in the wall of the uterus
 - ii. Almost always benign or not cancerous
 - iii. May or may not cause symptoms
- c. Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)⁴
 - i. A hormonal imbalance and metabolism problems that may affect overall health and appearance
 - ii. PCOS is common and a treatable cause of infertility
 - iii. Affects 1 in 10 women
- d. Endometriosis⁵
 - i. When tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside of the uterus, this can be very painful
 - ii. Is more common in older women
 - iii. Treatment options available to manage the symptoms
- e. Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)⁶
 - i. Combination of symptoms that occur a week or two before your period starts
 - ii. Very common in women however may be more severe for different bodies
 - iii. Symptoms can be managed
- f. Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)⁷
 - i. More severe form of PMS
 - ii. Causes severe anxiety, irritability, and depression a week or two before your period starts
 - iii. Symptoms go away a few days after your period starts
 - iv. Symptoms can be managed
- g. Amenorrhea⁸
 - i. The absence of menstrual periods before menopause
 - ii. Haven't had a period for three months in a row
 - iii. Haven't had your first period by age 15
 - iv. Could mean that your ovaries stopped making normal amounts of the hormone estrogen

³ <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/uterine-fibroids>

⁴ <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/polycystic-ovary-syndrome>

⁵ <https://www.womenshealth.gov/a-z-topics/endometriosis>

⁶ <https://www.womenshealth.gov/menstrual-cycle/premenstrual-syndrome?from=AtoZ>

⁷ <https://www.womenshealth.gov/menstrual-cycle/premenstrual-syndrome/premenstrual-dysphoric-disorder-pmdd>

⁸ <https://www.womenshealth.gov/menstrual-cycle/period-problems#references>



7. Answer any questions the group may have about these terms, or if they would like to add to the list.
8. Start a brief for about discussion for about **10 minutes** about the importance of advocating for ones sexual health. Share that unfortunately, women's pain is often minimized and dismissed in medical settings. This gender, and even racial, bias can make it very difficult for women and girls to get access to medication that will help manage their symptoms, especially pain.
9. Ask the group to think of ways someone can avoid developing any of the health complications they just learned about, record their responses on a piece of chart paper or whiteboard.
10. Be sure that responses include the following:
 - a. Healthy diets that contain important sources of nutrients their bodies need while one is menstruating (especially iron!)
 - b. Tracking their cycle
 - c. Checking in with their bodies
 - d. Regular doctor check ups
 - e. Stress management.
11. Introduce the next activity by distributing the blank Period Problems Comic Strip worksheet to each participant.
 - a. Explain that they will each get to choose a health complication and draw or write a scenario in which someone notices the symptoms, makes an appointment, and speaks to their doctor.
 - b. Club members can use the Fact Sheet found in the Appendix to help them complete their comic strips.
12. Give the group **30 minutes** to complete. If members would like to work in pairs, they can do so. Worksheets can be found in the appendix.
13. Once completed, ask for volunteers to show and read their comic strip to the group.

Facilitation Note: Please share some of your comic strips with Global G.L.O.W.! We love to see the creative work of your club members!

END OF DAY REFLECTION (10 MINUTES)

Use this time to reflect on the day as a whole. The goal here is to help participants form connections between each of the activities done that day, Module sessions before this one, and sessions that are upcoming. You may reflect as a large group, or you may choose to have members write out their thoughts and then share with each other.

Discussion Prompts: Some suggested discussion questions are below, please feel free to ask these or others based on the specific needs of your group.

- What is one new thing you learned about menstruation today?
- What surprised you the most? What didn't surprise you at all?



- What is one way you can advocate for your health if you feel like you are not being taken seriously, your pain is being minimized, or you're not getting the treatment you deserve?
- How did it feel to learn about the different health complications one may experience?
- What do you think you need to manage your period in a safe and healthy way?
- What can you do to inform others in your community about the importance of paying attention and advocating for your health?

Once complete with the day's activities, please share any learnings, artwork, photos, and any other noteworthy contributions to your G.L.O.W. point of contact.

COMMUNITY CONNECTION - AFFIRMATIONS (5 MINUTES)

Instructions: You will end the day with a moment of community and affirmation as a group. Sit or stand in a circle and have each member give the person to their right a meaningful compliment. Before members affirm their peers, they can take a moment to think about how they want to present their affirmation. Be mindful of the time and remind members that this is a small act of kindness and should not require too much time to create. Members can express themselves verbally, artistically, through written words or in any way they feel comfortable, however, the affirmation should always follow the formula below.

A good formula to follow: (1) choose an action or contribution you observed, (2) tell the person you are complimenting why that action or contribution is valuable, and (3) share with the group how it made you feel. For example:

Mina answered a question today in a very honest and thoughtful manner. In doing that she helped the rest of us in the group feel like we could be honest too.

Mentors should model compliment-giving by giving a few **authentic compliments** to the group or specific participants. After the mentors have given affirmations, ask for volunteers. Encourage personal and meaningful praise.

Mentor Note: You are encouraged to find a Community Connection custom that works best with your specific group, feel free to try different models that include the affirmation formula stated above.

CLOSING (5 MINUTES)

Thank everyone again and remind the group where and when you will be meeting next before you end for the day. Stay in the room until everyone has left, so that you can answer any questions club members might want to ask privately.



Appendix

Menstrual Health Complications Fact Sheets

Anemia

WHAT: Iron-deficiency anemia is the most common type of anemia, a condition that happens when your body does not make enough healthy red blood cells or the blood cells do not work correctly.

Iron-deficiency anemia happens when you don't have enough iron in your body. Your body needs iron to make a type of red blood cell that carries oxygen through your blood to all parts of your body.

SYMPTOMS: Fatigue, weakness, dizziness, headaches, low body temperature, pale or yellow skin, rapid or irregular heart beat, shortness of breath, chest pain, brittle nails

CAUSES: Low iron levels caused by longer or heavier and/or longer periods, digestive problems, uterine fibroids, increased need for iron during pregnancy, not eating enough food that contains iron, problems absorbing iron

TREATMENT: Depending on the cause of the anemia, treatments may vary from antibiotics, iron pills, incorporating iron and vitamin C rich foods into your diet, birth control, to surgery to treat heavy bleeding.

PREVENTION

- Monitor your periods and talk with your doctor if you notice heavy or longer than usual periods
- If you are vegetarian, it may be more difficult to incorporate enough iron into your diet
- Avoid drinking coffee or tea with your meals
- Eating foods rich in Iron and Vitamin C

Iron:

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------|------------------|
| ○ Dark chocolate | ○ Chickpeas | ○ Tuna |
| ○ White beans | ○ Tomatoes | ○ Eggs |
| ○ Lentils | ○ Red meats | ○ Mushrooms |
| ○ Spinach | ○ Nuts | ○ Cottage cheese |
| ○ Tofu | ○ Cantaloup | ○ Milk |
| ○ Kidney beans | ○ White rice | |
| ○ Sardines | ○ Chicken | |
| ○ Oysters | ○ Raisins | |

Vitamin C:

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| ○ Oranges | ○ Bell peppers | ○ Brussel sprouts |
| ○ Lemon | ○ Tomatoes | ○ White potatoes |
| ○ Grapefruit | ○ Broccoli | ○ Green peas |
| ○ Kiwi | ○ Cabbage | |
| ○ Strawberries | ○ Cauliflower | |



Uterine Fibroids

WHAT: Fibroids are muscular tumors that grow in the wall of the uterus (womb). Another medical term for fibroids is leiomyoma or just "myoma". Fibroids are almost always benign (not cancerous). Fibroids can grow as a single tumor, or there can be many of them in the uterus. They can be as small as an apple seed or as big as a grapefruit. In unusual cases they can become very large.

SYMPTOMS: Heavy bleeding, feeling fullness in the pelvic or stomach area, Enlargement of lower abdomen, frequent urination, pain during sex, lower back pain, complications during pregnancy and labor- especially cesarean section (C-section), reproductive problems such as infertility, which is very rare

CAUSES: There is no known cause for fibroids, factors may include hormonal imbalances and/or genetics

TREATMENT: To know if you have fibroids, an ultrasound, cat scans, or X-rays must be performed by a doctor. Surgery may also be required to confirm the presence of fibroids. Laparoscopy and Hysteroscopy are two different types of surgeries that allow doctors to take pictures or see into your uterus and/ or other organs. A laparoscopy requires a small incision in or near the naval, and a Hysteroscopy does not require an incision. Instead the doctor may use a camera to look into the uterus through the vagina and cervix.

Fibroids may be removed through surgery to remove just the fibroids, the entire uterus, or uterine lining. Fibroids can also be frozen or blocked by injecting the blood vessels supplying blood to the fibroid.

PREVENTION

- There is currently little scientific evidence about how to prevent fibroids. It may not be possible to prevent fibroids however, healthy diets and lifestyle choices may decrease your fibroid risk.⁹
- Remember, *fibroids are common* and are very rarely cancerous or require surgery!

Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS)

WHAT: Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS) is a health problem that affects one in 10 women of childbearing age. Women with PCOS have a hormonal imbalance and metabolism problems that may affect their overall health and appearance. PCOS is also a common and treatable cause of infertility.

SYMPTOMS: Irregular periods, too much or thinning body hair, acne, weight gain, darkening of the skin, skin tags, high levels of insulin

CAUSES: High levels of *androgens*, or hormones most commonly found in biological males. Although women naturally produce some androgens, high levels may lead to PCOS. High levels of *Insulin*, or a hormone that helps control how the food you eat is changed into energy

TREATMENT: Although there is no cure for PCOS, you can manage the symptoms. Talk with your doctor to develop a treatment plan that best suits your body based on your symptoms, plans for children, and risk for long-term health problems like diabetes and heart disease.

⁹ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/uterine-fibroids/symptoms-causes/syc-2035428#:~:text=Preventing%20uterine%20fibroids%20may%20not,to%20decrease%20your%20fibroid%20risk.>



Usually a combination of treatments are needed such as weight loss, prescription medication, hair removal or hair growth, and surgery

PREVENTION:

- Although there is no sure way to prevent PCOS, maintaining a healthy diet, weight, and active lifestyle may help in reducing symptoms of PCOS.
- During pregnancy, and while trying to get pregnant, it is especially important to be mindful of these symptoms and ensure you are taking steps to maintain a healthy body

Endometriosis

WHAT: Endometriosis, also called “endo,” happens when the lining of the uterus (womb) grows outside of the uterus, such as on the ovaries, fallopian tubes, outer surface of the uterus, or tissues that hold the uterus in place. Other sites for growth may be in the vagina, cervix, vulva, bowel, bladder, or rectum. This is a common health problem for women.

SYMPTOMS: Pain, bleeding or spotting between periods, infertility, stomach or digestive problems, trouble getting pregnant

CAUSES: No one knows for sure what causes Endometriosis, however, researchers suggest that possible causes may include problems with menstrual period flow, genetic factors, immune system problems, hormone imbalances. You may be more likely to have Endometriosis if you've never had children, have periods that last more than 7 days, a shortened cycle (27 days or less), or a health problem that blocks the normal flow of menstrual blood from your body during your period.

TREATMENT: To be diagnosed, a doctor may need to perform a pelvic exam, ultrasound or MRI, a Laparoscopy, or if your doctor cannot find signs of a cyst during an ultrasound, pain medicine to see if your pain is lessened- if it is, you probably have endometriosis. Several different treatment options can help manage the symptoms and improve your chances of getting pregnant.

PREVENTION

- You cannot prevent endometriosis but you can reduce the likelihood of getting it by lowering the levels of Estrogen in your body. Estrogen helps thicken the uterine lining during a menstrual cycle
- You can lower estrogen levels in you body by talking with your doctor about hormonal birth control methods
- Exercising regularly which helps you have a low percentage of body fat (this helps decrease the amount of estrogen circulating through your body)
- Avoid large amounts of alcohol and caffeine as they raise estrogen levels

Premenstrual Syndrome (PMS)

WHAT: PMS is a combination of physical and emotional symptoms that many women get after ovulation and before the start of their menstrual period. Some women get their periods without any signs of PMS or only very mild symptoms. For others, PMS symptoms may be so severe that it makes it hard to do everyday



activities like going to work or school. PMS goes away when you no longer get a period, such as after menopause. After pregnancy, PMS might come back, but you might have different PMS symptoms.

SYMPTOMS: Different for every person who experiences a period. May include physical and/or emotional or mental symptoms.

Physical Symptoms:

- Swollen or tender breasts
- Constipation or diarrhea
- Bloating or gassy feeling
- Cramping
- Headache
- Backache
- Clumsiness
- Sensitivity to noise or light

Emotional or Mental Symptoms:

- Irritability or hostile behavior
- Feeling tired
- Sleep problems (sleeping too much or too little)
- Appetite changes or food cravings
- Trouble with concentration or memory
- Tension or anxiety
- Depression, feelings of sadness, or crying spells
- Mood swings
- Less interest in sex

CAUSES: Researchers think that PMS happens in the days after ovulation because estrogen and progesterone levels begin falling dramatically if you are not pregnant. May happen more often in those who have high levels of stress, and/ or have a history of family depression.

TREATMENT: PMS symptoms go away within a few days after a woman's period starts as hormone levels begin rising again.

To relieve PMS symptoms at home, you can practice healthy habits such as exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy diet, getting enough sleep, healthy ways to cope with stress, not smoking, and taking over the counter pain relievers.

Prescription medicines may also help if over the counter medicines don't. These include hormonal birth controls, antidepressants, diuretics ('water pills' for bloating and breast tenderness), and anti-anxiety medicines

PREVENTION

- PMS cannot be prevented, however symptoms can be managed
- Some studies show that certain vitamins and minerals may help relieve some PMS symptoms such as calcium, vitamin B6, Magnesium, and omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids.



Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder (PMDD)

WHAT: PMDD is a condition similar to PMS that also happens in the week or two before your period starts as hormone levels begin to fall after ovulation. PMDD causes more severe symptoms than PMS, including severe depression, irritability, and tension.

Physical Symptoms:

- Swollen or tender breasts
- Bloating or gassy feeling
- Cramping
- Headache
- Joint or muscle pain

Emotional or Mental Symptoms:

- Lasting irritability or anger that may affect other people
- Feelings of sadness or despair, or even thoughts of suicide
- Feelings of tension or anxiety
- Panic attacks
- Mood swings or crying often
- Lack of interest in daily activities and relationships
- Trouble thinking or focusing
- Tiredness or low energy
- Food cravings or binge eating
- Trouble sleeping
- Feeling out of control

CAUSES: Researchers do not know for sure what causes PMDD or PMS. Hormonal changes throughout the menstrual cycle may play a role. A brain chemical called serotonin may also play a role in PMDD. Serotonin levels change throughout the menstrual cycle. Some women may be more sensitive to these changes

TREATMENT: Prescription medicines such as antidepressants and birth control pills. Other ways to treat PMDD include over the counter pain medications, stress management, and making healthy changes to your diet by cutting back on salty and sugary foods, increasing foods from all the food groups, as well as increasing your physical activity.

PREVENTION

- PMDD cannot be prevented, maintaining a healthy diet, stress management, and active lifestyle may help in reducing symptoms of PMDD

Amenorrhea

WHAT: The absence of menstrual periods before menopause. Amenorrhea that is not caused by pregnancy or breastfeeding could mean that your ovaries stopped making normal amounts of the hormone estrogen. Missing this hormone can have serious effects on your health.



SYMPTOMS: If you haven't had a period for three months in a row or if you haven't had your first period before the age of 15.

CAUSES: Amenorrhea occurs when your body stops ovulating. Ovulation may stop for different reasons such as weight gain or loss, eating disorders (especially anorexia nervosa), stress, or hormonal problems including problems with the reproductive organs or those caused by health conditions such as polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS).

Amenorrhea can happen if your body fat drops so low that ovulation stops. This can cause periods to be less regular or stop completely. Gaining too much weight or losing too much weight can cause missed periods. Long-term, severe stress can affect the part of your brain that controls reproduction. As a result, ovulation and your period can stop.

TREATMENT: Because it is possible to have Primary Amenorrhea (delayed first period) or Secondary Amenorrhea (sudden stop of periods) there are different treatments for each. Generally, birth control pills may help restart the menstrual cycle, estrogen therapy to balance any hormonal imbalances. Surgery, while not common, may help certain conditions related to amenorrhea.¹⁰

PREVENTION

- Managing stress can help restore normal menstrual cycles
- Keeping a healthy amount of body fat through a healthy diet and exercise
- Monitor your menstrual cycle so you can speak with a doctor if your periods are significantly longer or delayed.

¹⁰ <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/amenorrhea/diagnosis-treatment/drc-20369304>



Period Problems Comic Strip

Description:



Girls for School Project Guide

This year, we are happy to share the **Girls for School Project Guide created by Art of a Child in Uganda** with all of our partners! Club members in Uganda created this project guide to lead a sustainable reusable sanitary pad project that funded scholarships for girls to go to school.

This guide is available for you to download and use in any way you wish. This can be part of your Menstrual Health Day celebration, a supplemental activity at another time during your club, or any other application that makes sense for you. .

[The Girls for School Project Guide Can be downloaded here.](#)