

# Talk About It. Period.

by global\_glow

A global call for action to stop the cycle and end **period stigma**

When it comes to periods, **there's a whole lot to talk about** – and in 2022, the conversation is even more pertinent because of the drastic effect COVID-19 has had, and continues to have, on menstruators. Before the pandemic started, more than **500 million menstruators worldwide did not have what they needed to manage their period in a healthy, dignified way**, and this number has only increased in the last two years.

Period inequities that exist around the world are often a direct result of period stigma -- and the best way to create change for the next generation of girls is to use your voice to normalize menstruation, stop the spread of dangerous misinformation, and help menstruators feel confident about their periods. **When it comes to ending period stigma, you can make a difference.**



## WHAT IS PERIOD STIGMA?

In the most general sense, period stigma is the discrimination faced by people who menstruate. Across the globe, this manifests in many ways, ranging from lighthearted jokes to negative assumptions and dehumanization. Harmful myths that are associated with menstruation include:

- Periods are dirty and impure and therefore menstruators should not touch holy books, enter holy temples or even handle food (*India*)
- Sharks will attack people on their periods (*United States*)
- Disposal of menstrual pads with other garbage can lead to sickness or cancer (*Bolivia*)
- Menstruators have “cooties” that can make others sick (*Nepal*)
- Using a tampon will cause a menstruator to lose their virginity (*United States*)
- Talking about menstruation is taboo

These myths come as a result of cultural and societal norms, and perpetuating them directly contributes to period poverty and other inequities experienced by menstruators around the world.

Period poverty is an important, yet often overlooked public health crisis that occurs both in the United States and abroad. The consequences of period poverty are dire; from keeping girls out of school to negatively impacting their physical and emotional health. The phenomena of being unable to afford products such as pads, tampons, or liners to manage menstrual bleeding results in people being forced to use unhygienic items like rags, paper towels, toilet paper, leaves, socks and plastic bags. Period poverty also encompasses inadequate access to toilets, hand washing receptacles, and hygienic waste management.

Many people are aware that a luxury tax is often applied to period products (referred to as “period tax” or a “tampon tax”), but it is also important to note that menstrual products are not eligible for coverage under government assistance. This means that people are left to choose between buying necessities like food for their families and purchasing sanitary supplies.

## A SNAPSHOT OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF PERIOD STIGMA AROUND THE WORLD

- 🔴 United States: 1 in 5 menstruators miss school due to a lack of period products
- 🔴 Nepal: Menstruators are put in isolation while on their periods and are not allowed in the classroom
- 🔴 Afghanistan: Menstruators who use cloth pads are ashamed to hang them to dry outside after washing them, and often hide and wear them too long, resulting in dangerous infections
- 🔴 Kenya: School age girls engage in “transactional sex” with men in trade for money to buy menstrual products
- 🔴 Iran: A staggering 48% of girls believe that menstruation is a disease

Given these stats, it is no surprise that period stigma results in a loss of self-worth, poor performance in school and the inability for menstruators to advocate for themselves. In addition, workplace policies that perpetuate stigmas, poor working conditions and unsupportive labor laws also negatively impact economic opportunities for menstruators.

### MENSTRUAL HEALTH IN THE ERA OF COVID-19

In a time of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, period inequities are exacerbated. According to Global G.L.O.W. partner Jamuna Shreshta of NICE in Nepal, lockdown measures in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 has made it much more difficult to get supplies and maintain healthy practices since menstruation is considered impure or shameful. And, with so many out of work due to the pandemic, even more people are unable to afford menstrual supplies.

## BETTER HEALTH EDUCATION IS NEEDED

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) remains an issue for women and girls around the world as they continue to have limited access to the resources they need for proper MHM. Through our Healthy GLOW program, we are working alongside girls to ensure they have the information they need to stay healthy and in school. The ultimate goal of Healthy GLOW is to give girls what they need to have the confidence to advocate for their health and wellness needs and to make positive choices for their futures. Proper education ensures all menstruators have greater access to period products, education about their bodies, and a caring and safe adult to ask questions of and confide in.

## HOW YOU CAN TAKE ACTION

- 🩸 Educate yourself! Learn about period stigma and period poverty and their devastating impact on girls; their well-being, gender equality, education and rights
- 🩸 Be proud! If you are a menstruator, your body is powerful and worthy of pride
- 🩸 Speak out! The first step to ending period poverty is to destigmatize the topic of menstruation. We must all continue to use our respective platforms to educate one another and create change. This also means talking openly about your own period and ending the practice of hiding pads and tampons in your sleeve when going to the bathroom
- 🩸 Contact elected officials in your local community to discuss legislation that can help end period poverty. This can include things like:
  - Abolishing the tax on menstrual supplies in the United States (often referred to as the “Tampon Tax”)
  - Providing free menstrual hygiene supplies in schools (currently only 4 U.S. states require schools to provide them)
  - Better workplace policies for women and menstruators of all genders
- 🩸 Research and support local, national and international organizations (like Global G.L.O.W.) working to provide girls and women the education to address menstrual-related shame, sanitary supplies, and water and sanitation facilities, particularly in schools

### JOIN US ON MAY 28: MH DAY 2022

  
**Talk  
About It.  
Period.**

May 28 marks **MH Day** around the world: An important opportunity to raise awareness for persisting period taboos and stigma, limited access to menstrual products and poor sanitation infrastructure that undermines the educational opportunities, health and overall social status of menstruators.

Join Global G.L.O.W. and help us Talk About It. Period. We call on our community to leave a box of period products (tampons or pads) in a public restroom with a note that reads: Take what you need. #talkaboutitperiod. Snap a photo or take a video and tag us (@global\_glow on Instagram and TikTok) so we can record your location on the map on our landing page

We also invite you to click the link below to download assets that you can post to your social media platforms using the hashtag #talkaboutitperiod. Remember, just one voice can make a difference when it comes to ending period stigma.

[Download Assets](#)

### WE ALSO INVITE YOU TO JOIN THE CONVERSATION ON THE GLOBAL G.L.O.W. SOCIAL CHANNELS ALL MONTH LONG:



#### SOURCES

- “[Menstruation Related Myths in India: Strategies for Combating It](#)” National Institute of Health
- “[10 Surprising Myths About Periods That We’re Setting Straight](#)” Global Citizen
- “[Infographic: End the Stigma. Period.](#)” by UN Women
- “[Changing the Cycle: Period Poverty as a Public Health Crisis](#)” University of Michigan School of Public Health