

Knowing about periods is NOT enough

Abstract

Understanding menstruation is confused with knowledge about menstruation. Many girls know the basics about menstrual hygiene, but rarely are they provided information about what is normal, either irregular menses, amenorrhea, or other changes induced by stress or diet. This lack of information vs. understanding may cause fear and uneasiness, specially when questions remain unanswered. Via a personal reflection, this essay points to the importance associated with a straightforward conversation to dispel misunderstandings. Menstrual health instruction has to go past products information towards honest communication aimed at fostering self-confidence, dignity, and body trust.

A Missed Period and Many Questions

“Mum, I think I might be pregnant...” were the words of my teenage self when I didn’t menstruate the next month after my first period. I was confused and relied on the little I knew that missing a period could mean pregnancy. Innocently, I approached my mother to see if she confirms my assumptions; I was anxious. My mother calmly guided me through it, explained how it’s normal for girls to miss their period for few months after the first cycle, unless it’s accompanied by health problems or the gap period extends beyond five to six months; this brought clarity and I was finally calm.

You see, lack of awareness invites anxiety and confusion, often leading to false assumptions whereas, proper information brings clarity. Not all of our girls have access to such clarity and reassurance which is why awareness programs by NGOs, educators and healthcare professionals in schools are so important.

Gap between Information and Understanding

Many girls are told what to do when they get their period, they learn about pads, cleanliness, and basic DO’s and DON’Ts. While this information is important, it’s often incomplete. What’s missing is an understanding of ‘what is *normal*’. Irregular cycles in the first few years. Delays. Missed periods due to stress, nutrition, or hormonal changes. These are rarely explained clearly, and when information is partial, silence fills the gaps with fear and assumptions.

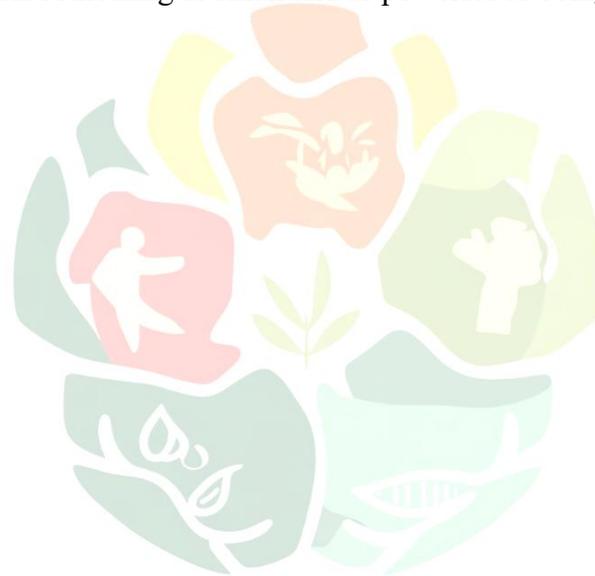
Fear around periods does not always come from extreme taboos or harsh restrictions. Sometimes, it comes quietly from half-truths and unanswered questions. A single, calm conversation spared me weeks of anxiety. But not every girl has someone she feels safe asking. Not every household treats these questions with ease, and not every school creates space for open conversations about menstrual health.

Menstrual hygiene is more than products

Menstrual hygiene is often discussed in terms of access to pads, toilets, water, and disposal systems. These are critical needs, especially in schools and underserved communities, but awareness and reassurance are also essential. It includes knowing when to worry and when not to. Menstrual health education works best when it goes beyond instructions and enters conversations. These conversations don't need to be dramatic or uncomfortable. Often, they are most effective when they are simple, honest, and reassuring, like the one I had.

Creating dignity through understanding

Periods are a normal part of growing up. They should not be a source of fear, confusion, or quiet distress. When menstrual hygiene education includes clarity, context, and compassion, it gives girls more than just information. It gives them confidence in their own bodies. And sometimes, that confidence begins with something as small and as powerful as being told, "*It's normal.*"



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