

PERIODS, PADS, PUBERTY: WHAT WE KNOW AND DON'T KNOW

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Period.

- Every 28 days, adolescent girls & women bleed
- This is true in every part of the world
- Women have been "managing" their menses for centuries
 - Some ways healthy/clean/modern; others not so
- Millions of adolescent girls and young women lack appropriate, affordable, menstrual supplies

Menstruation and its Meaning

- 1000's of euphemisms for menstruation spanning time and geography
- Social significance powerful, but valiance differs by culture
- Biological marker signaling fertility and transition from childhood to womanhood

MENSTRUAL STIGMA: Does it exist ? Does it Matter?

Discomfort – associated with sexuality & reproduction

Shame/embarrassment due to inability to manage effectively

Exclusion – associated with dirt & pollution

Hinders ability to carry out every day activities (food preparation, prayer, washing) in some cultures

May alter sexual relations (+ and -)

V Chandra-Mouli, S V Patel, M Sommer. Systematic Review: Knowledge and Understanding of Menarche, Menstrual Hygiene and Menstrual Health among Adolescent Girls In Low- and Middle-income Countries. Submitted to Journal of Adolescent Health.



What We Want: Physically Active, Confident, Secure Girls





A resource and action plan for Very Young Adolescents (VYAs)

- Illuminates health and social dimensions of lives of VYAs
- Identifies puberty as critical moment for intervention
- Offers suggestions for program experimentation
- Recommends areas for research

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Not New News, Making News



What is New.....

- Efforts to drive down price of sanitary pads; reduce or eliminate sales or "luxury" tax
- Product development --- new designs, local sourcing /production underway
- Greater attention to menstrual hygiene, puberty education, body awareness
- *Period Perception Study* -on-line survey
- Research – RCT in Kenya with ZanaAfrica and Population Council underway

Some Evidence, More Needed

- Perceptions and understanding of menstruation
- Days lost from work
- Days lost from school

- Does this result in decreased productivity and lost wages for women?
- Does access to sanitary supplies improve school retention and progression?
- How do we normalize, not problematize?

Ideas. Evidence. Impact.



The Population Council conducts research and delivers solutions that improve lives around the world. Big ideas supported by evidence: It's our model for global change.