Understanding and Managing Menstruation

A Reader for learners
2013
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Acknowledgement
Government of Uganda appreciates the role played by various stakeholders to enable girls’ access education, stay in school, and complete their education and contribute to the development of this country. This is also in line with the attainment of the EFA & MDG Goals to which Uganda is signatory.

This reader is a Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) initiative to provide information to pupils on understanding of menstruation and managing it well, particularly to beginners. Action research on menstrual management in 120 primary schools in 6 districts in Uganda by SNV indicated that one of the key challenges for girls’ school absenteeism was found to be the start of menstruation and limited or no knowledge on management of the same. Thus the development of this book was timely, and it is hoped that it will go a long way in reversing the current trend.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EFA</td>
<td>Education for All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MoES</td>
<td>Ministry of Education and Sports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td>Community Based Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK-AID.</td>
<td>United Kingdom- Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACFODE</td>
<td>Action for Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAWEU</td>
<td>Forum for African Women Educationalists in Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEM-U</td>
<td>Girls' Education Movement Uganda</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIASCY</td>
<td>Presidential Initiative on AIDS Strategy for Communication to Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV/AIDS</td>
<td>Human Immunodeficiency Virus/ Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMCs</td>
<td>School Management Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWT</td>
<td>Senior Women Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Senior Male Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LCs</td>
<td>Local Councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EPPAD</td>
<td>Education Planning &amp; Policy Analysis Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIET</td>
<td>Teacher/Tutor Instructor Education &amp; Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGM</td>
<td>Female Genital Mutilation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SRH</td>
<td>Sexual Reproductive Health</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Message from UN Resident Coordinator, United Nations in Uganda

Dear Children,

This booklet was put together for the boys and girls to read and learn about the changes that happen to all girls as they grow up, and especially about menstruation. Menstruation is a natural part of growing up for girls that we all need to understand.

The UN cares about all boys and girls and works to help them achieve their rights and enable them to grow, be healthy, learn and be safe at school and at home.

This booklet is for boys and girls in primary schools to refer to, help them understand what menstruation is and, why it happens, how to manage it and who to talk to about it.

Ahunna Eziakonwa-Onochie

UN Resident Coordinator, United Nations in Uganda
Message from the Minister of Education and Sports.

Dear children,

It is my pleasure to talk to you through this Reader.

When I was still young, I was supported by my parents, teachers and the community to “Understand what Menstruation is, how it happens, why it happens, how to manage it and where to seek correct information”. We had books in our school like this Reader, which I used together with the help I got from the people around me to understand better what Menstruation is, why and how it happens.

I am happy to tell you that I never missed school, I participated in all school activities, and I was able to complete my education. I am now the Minister of Education and Sports. I know you also can make it.

Use this Reader; it will help you understand all the facts about menstruation.

I wish you good luck in your education.

Maj. (Rtd) Alupo Jessica Rose Epel (MP)

MINISTER OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS
Message from Sara

Hello friends,

My name is Sarah. I come from Uganda and I am now in P5. I have 2 sisters and 3 brothers. I like to learn new facts and skills and also new things about myself as I grow and change.

One of the most important changes girls go through is starting menstruation. This is a natural and normal change that all of us girls go through. This reader will tell you all about menstruation, why it happens, what to do to manage it and who to talk to for support and help.

This reader has three (3) parts, which you can read at once or in parts. Use this reader to learn more about menstruation and the commonly asked questions.

This reader is for both girls and boys to learn about this important part of a girl’s life. You can read it and share the information with your friends.
PART 1: Things I need to Know about Menstruation.

What is menstruation?

The teacher says it is a change during puberty! These changes occur in boys and girls as they grow up.
**Facts about Puberty**

Puberty:

Is a period in children’s lives when they experience physical changes by which their bodies eventually become adult bodies. It is also the stage when a boy or girl becomes sexually aware or mature and can have a baby. Puberty usually starts sometime between age 7 and 13 in girls and 9 and 15 in boys. Some people start puberty a bit earlier or later. Each person is different, so everyone starts and goes through puberty on his or her body’s own schedule. This is one of the reasons why some of your friends might still look like kids, whereas others look more like adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes in Girls</th>
<th>Changes in Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Development of breasts</td>
<td>a) Their voices break and deepen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Breasts enlarge in size; become tender</td>
<td>b) They start to develop beards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) The hips become wide.</td>
<td>c) They start showing muscular features – shoulders widen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Girls start Menstruation</td>
<td>d) Boys begin to have wet dreams</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) The penis increases in size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) The testicles begin producing semen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These are changes that happen to both girls and boys

1. They develop pimples
2. Boys become attracted to girls and girls become attracted to boys
3. Hair grows around the pubic area, and under the armpits
4. They want to look good and be recognized and seen as mature persons
5. Sweat glands become more active.
When a girl starts developing the above signs, that means, she is ready to start Menstruation.

Body changes for girls and boys
What is menstruation?

It is a natural body change a girl goes through when she is growing up. It is the monthly flow of blood from the uterus through the vagina in all girls and is normal and natural. The first monthly flow normally happens to girls between 9 and 15 years and this can last for 3 to 7 days.

Menstruation is sometimes referred to as periods or Menstrual period (MP). Please note that:

a) All girls of this age experience menstruation.

b) When menstruation starts, it will go on up to old age.

c) You will have to learn how to live with it and manage it well.

d) Menstruation is irregular for the first 1-2 years until the body adjusts to all the changes. Therefore you should not worry if you miss some months as long as you have not had sex with a boy or man.
So, how will I know when I might start menstruating?

No one can exactly know when this will happen. However, common signs for most girls are: Breast development, pimples....
There are many menstrual signs you will feel, like, some girls get tired, breasts become swollen or painful, some girls feel like vomiting, some girls feel sleepy, some girls get abdominal pain and general discomfort.
Some girls do not experience any of the above signs.
How does menstruation come about?

The picture below shows the reproductive system of a girl who is ready to start menstruation.

Please note that:

 hann Red Every month, an egg is released from the ovary to the uterus.  
hann Red The egg spends some time in the uterus, then it breaks the walls of the uterus and that is when blood starts flowing through the vagina. That is menstruation.
The menstrual cycle

This is the time between the first day of one period and the first day of the next one. The cycle varies from one person to another. For some it can be as short as 21 days and for others as long as 35 days. The average cycle is 28 days. Menstruation may be consistent on particular dates or it may occur on different dates. Therefore it should not be a worry if one missed some months as long as you have not had sex.

1) It takes about 28 days from one menstrual period to the next and this repeats itself monthly.

2) The flow lasts about 5 days. Some girls may take a shorter or longer period of time.

3) The flow may be much or little.

4) For the first two years, menstruation may not happen every month.
Apart from the changes that happen to you, you can tell the time of the next period by counting the number of days.

This can be done on a calendar. See the one on your right hand side.

A menstrual cycle starts with the first day of monthly period/flow. The last day of the menstrual cycle is the day before the next monthly period starts.

**For example:**

If the monthly period started on July 1, that is the first day of the menstrual cycle. If the menstrual cycle that month was 28 days long, the next monthly period may start on July 29\textsuperscript{th}. If you usually have a 28-day cycle, you can expect monthly period to start again on August 26.

**COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do girls stop being children and become women when they start menstruation.</td>
<td>No, a girl remains a child until they turn 18. Children must not be forced to have sex or be married before 18 years of age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do girls stop going to class on the days they have their menstruation</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They do not have to stop unless the pain is too strong or if they are feeling dizzy. They should exercise, but it should be light sport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How come only girls have menstrual periods</td>
<td>God assigned men and women different roles in making babies. Women have to produce eggs that will be fertilized to make a baby. If this does not happen, then menstruation does. Boys do not carry babies in their stomach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do girls menstruate for the rest of their life</td>
<td>NO, they will stop after they turn 40 and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How long does each Menstrual</td>
<td>Each Menstrual lasts between 2-7 days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do girls have to stop playing sports while in their periods?</td>
<td><strong>NO</strong>, sports actually takes away some of the pain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is the monthly periods dangerous to a girl’s health?</td>
<td>Not usually. The girl's monthly period is not like bleeding that occurs with a cut or wound. However, if a girl bleeds too much every month, it may lead to lack of blood in the body called <strong>Anemia</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it normal when I miss my period for one month?</td>
<td>It is normal for a girl to miss her period for one month, unless the period does not come for a number of months. Each girl is different, do not compare yourselves. Missing a period may also be because of stress, too much exercise, weight loss, or an unbalanced diet. In the absence of a menstrual period for three months or more - please see a doctor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When should a girl see a health care provider for menstruation complaints?</td>
<td>A girl should see a health care provider if:-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a) She has not started menstruating by age 16.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>b) Her monthly period pattern changes suddenly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>c) She has severe pain during her monthly periods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>d) If her monthly flow lasts longer than seven days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>e) She loses more blood than she normally does.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>f) She misses her menstruation more often</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are the common problems which a girl or woman faces during menstruation</td>
<td>Fatigue/tiredness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Irritation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Headache</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of concentration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Some girls even complain of having constipation or loose motion/diarhorrea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can one manage the common problems like pain, vomiting etc. which are usually observed during menstruation?</td>
<td>If anyone has a backache or pain in muscles she should do some exercises. Generally backache or pain in the abdomen occurs due to deficiency of iron and calcium. Take lime and lukewarm water every day till 3 months. In case of vomiting one should avoid taking heavy meals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is heavy or less bleeding during menstruation normal?</td>
<td>Normally menstruation cycle lasts 2-7 days but during the first few days the bleeding may be heavy but eventually it starts reducing. If you need more than 5 sanitary towels a day, go and see a health provider.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can one avoid getting blood stains on her clothes during menstruation?</td>
<td>Buy enough sanitary towels and change them regularly (4 times a day). If you cannot afford the ones in shops- learn how to make or buy re-usable sanitary towels (GEM, PIASCY and health clubs are teaching pupils and community members to make hygiene sanitary towels.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Things to Remember About Menstruation:**

Dear Girls, please remember always that:

- Menstruation is natural and healthy
- The menstrual periods last about 3 - 7 days.
- The average menstrual cycle is 28 days. It’s from the first day of period to the next.
- Visit a health center when you get any problem during menstruation.
- If you are over 16 years and have not had a menstrual period yet, please see a doctor
Thank you teacher. What else do we need to know about menstruation?
PART 2: How to Manage Menstruation

Dear girl, do not fear or worry when you find blood in your pair of knickers, dress or bed. This is normal and part of growing up. It means that you have started your menstruation. Talk to a teacher, a parent/guardian or peers for advice and support.
“Sarah, what have you heard about menstruation?”

“I am hearing so many things about menstruation. I do not know what is right and what is wrong. I am confused.”

Let’s get the right information from this reader.
There are so many things being said about menstruation in our societies and communities. This has resulted into fear, stigma and wrong beliefs.

The table below shows the wrong and true things about menstruation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WRONG THINGS (MYTHS OR MISCONCEPTIONS) ABOUT MENSTRUATION</th>
<th>TRUTH (FACTS) ABOUT MENSTRUATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Big girls are the only ones who menstruate. Wrong.</td>
<td>Girls can start menstruation at 9 years and above. Therefore, the age does not matter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You cannot get pregnant if you have sex during menstruation. Wrong.</td>
<td>You can get pregnant during menstruation. However it is very unhygienic and you can get diseases. Therefore it is important for you to abstain.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You cannot get pregnant before you get your first period. Wrong.</td>
<td>You can get pregnant before your first period. Please ABSTAIN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men with AIDS get cured when they have sexual intercourse with girls before having their 1st period. Wrong.</td>
<td>You can get HIV/AIDS. Sex cannot cure AIDS. Please ABSTAIN.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When you get your first period it means you are ready for marriage. Wrong.</td>
<td>No, you are not ready for marriage, you must continue with your education. The Ugandan law forbids a child less than 18 year of age to be married.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex cures painful menstruation. Wrong</td>
<td>Sex does not prevent Menstrual pains. Menstrual pains are normal, if too painful seek medical help.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menstruation is a curse/disease. Wrong.</td>
<td>Menstruation is not a curse. It is a normal body change in girls and healthy. Girls should look forward to it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you carry a newborn baby during menstruation, it will get a rash and the cord will not dry. Wrong.</td>
<td>Girls in their Menstruation can do all kinds of work including carrying new born babies. In order to carry the baby, you should maintain personal hygiene.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you go to the garden or climb a tree</td>
<td>Menstruation has no relationship with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>During menstruation, crops or fruits will die. <strong>Wrong.</strong></td>
<td>Crops drying or fruits rotting. Girls are as normal as other human beings even when they are menstruating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If you bathe in the river when you are menstruating, you will menstruate forever.</strong> <strong>Wrong.</strong></td>
<td>There is no relationship between menstruation and bathing in the river. However you should never bathe in the river because it is a water source; you should fetch water and use a basin for bathing in order to reduce disease.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If you use the latrine when you are menstruating, you will become barren.</strong> <strong>Wrong.</strong></td>
<td>Using a latrine is a good healthy practice; always make sure you keep it clean.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>If you sit on a stone when you are menstruating, it will reduce the blood flow.</strong> <strong>Wrong.</strong></td>
<td>Sitting on a stone when menstruating does not reduce the menstrual flow. Use sanitary pads during menstruation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practices for menstrual hygiene management**

- 🌿 A girl needs to wash her used re-usable sanitary pad every day for further use.
- 🌿 Always dry yourself well and put a fresh pad on your knickers, or remember to change the re-usable pad every 4 hours to avoid soiling your clothes.
Dear girls:

There are good materials you can use during menstruation and the bad materials you should not use at all.

**GOOD MATERIALS**  
Use these materials while wearing clean, well-fitting knickers

- Manufactured pads (e.g. Always, Maka pads, Secrets, Stay free and Feathers, etc.)
- Manufactured reusable pads (e.g. AFRIpads)
- Cotton wool wrapped in gauze or a clean piece of cotton cloth
- Homemade reusable pads (e.g. “local pads”)

**BAD MATERIALS**

- Toilet paper not wrapped in a clean piece of cotton cloth.
- Plain cotton wool - Bad pads
- Non-absorbent materials
- Sitting on sand
- Sitting on stones
- Sponge/mattress
- Newspapers
- Banana fibers
- Leaves/grass
- Polythene paper (buvera)
- Rough dirty piece of cloth

**Note:**

✅ Good materials take in (absorb) the blood, they help you maintain good hygiene, and they are soft on the skin.

❌ Bad materials do not take in (absorb) the blood, they irritate and burn the skin, and can cause fungal and bacterial infections.
Types of sanitary pads

There are two types of sanitary pads:

1) Disposable pads
2) Re-usable pads

Disposable pads

These are manufactured pads sold in supermarkets and shops. They have different brands e.g Always, Seven days, Princess, Stay free, Feathers, Secrets etc.

Re-usable pads

These are washable fabric/pad worn by girls during monthly menstruation and not thrown away but are instead washed, dried properly used again. Re-usable pads have the capacity to hold the flow of menstruation and can be used for a year. They should be soaked and washed in clean water and soap. Re-usable sanitary pads should be properly washed and left to dry under the sun but must be hanged on the line. They are cheap and affordable.

There are two types of re-usable sanitary pads:
a) Homemade re-usable pads
These are pads made at home using locally available materials including cloth and cotton.

b) Factory made re-usable pads
These are pads made in the factory
**Disposable pads**

A disposable pad is a sanitary napkin of absorbent material won by girls and women during menstruation and thrown away after use. They should never be thrown in the toilet after use because they block the toilet leading to delayed decomposition. After use a disposable pad should be wrapped in a newspaper or waste paper and put in a sanitary bin.

It is important to dispose the content of the sanitary bin into an incinerator where it is burnt because if it is left in the sanitary bin for a long time then it will contaminate the environment and create a bad smell.

Disposable pads can also be burnt at home in a private corner in the absence of an incinerator.
How to make a homemade re-usable pad “local pad”

In order to make a home re-usable pad, you need the following materials:

1) Cotton cloth.
2) Cotton wool.
3) Polythene/Kaveera.
4) Scissors/razorblade.
5) Threads and needles.

Steps in making and using a homemade re-usable pad

1) Out of the big material of cotton cloth, cut two small pieces of cloth of 16 by 7 cms.
2) Sew the two pieces of cloth leaving an opening at the top cut two or 4 small strings from the cloth to hold the pad.
3) Sew the strings to either side of the pad :to tie under the pair of knickers
4) Cut a strong polythene sheet to the shape of the pad and insert it at the bottom of the pad.
5) Get some small pieces of cotton cloth and push them inside the sewed piece on top of the polythene sheet.
6) Insert the old pieces into the sewed old cloth to make it absorbent.
7) Now your home made sanitary towel is ready for use.

8) Each time you finish using a pad make sure you wash it very clean. Remove and wash the inside materials separately from the outer material using soap and enough water. Dry all the materials under the sun on the line and leave them to dry completely.

**Directions for use, cleaning and care of reusable pads**

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**DIRECTIONS FOR USE, CLEANING AND CARE**

1. **BEFORE USE**
   Before the first use, wash all the pieces with soap 2 to 3 times, this makes the fabric more absorbent. Dry after.

2. **SLIP**
   Slip pad under the ribbon of the holder, with the soft side facing up.

3. **PLACE**
   Place pad and holder on knicker with pad facing up.

4. **WRAP**
   Wrap the wings of the holder around the knicker and button underneath. It’s now ready for use.

5. **CHECK**
   Check regularly to see if the pad needs changing. When dirty, replace with clean pad.

6. **ROLL**
   Roll the used pad from the ribbon and put in the bag if you cannot wash immediately.

7. **SOAK**
   Soak the pads in clean, cold water with detergent for 15-20 minutes. This helps the blood come out.

8. **WASH**
   Pour out dirty soaking water. Use clean water and soap or detergent to wash your pads thoroughly. Rinse with clean water.

9. **DRY**
   Hang the pads to dry outside on a cloth line using knicker pegs or safety pins. Or dry inside in a ventilated area.

10. **RE USE**
    After drying, the pads are ready to be used again.

---

**CAUTION!**

A. DO NOT share your AFF|pads with anyone else.
B. DO NOT use your AFF|pads because of the plastic layer.
C. DO NOT wash your AFF|pads in hot water.
D. DO NOT wear your AFF|pads if they are still wet or damp.
E. DO NOT dry your AFF|pads in a bone or under the sun.

---

**Courtesy of AFF|pads**
Tips:

- Change your pad every 3 to 4 hours for normal flow. If the menstrual flow is heavy, change your pad every 2 hours.
- Always carry a spare pad(s) for changing while at school.
- Always carry a plastic bag/polythene bag to wrap your dirty re-usable pad for washing at home.
- Never dry your reusable pads and knickers under your bed. Always dry your re-usable pads and pairs of knickers/underwear in the sun, covered under a piece of cloth.
- Never hide dirty knickers in or under the mattress. Always wash and dry them. Menstrual flow is a natural body fluid that can be washed out with soap and cold water. You can add a little salt in the water to avoid staining.
- Always dispose of old and loose pair of knickers by burning to avoid discomfort and infections.
- Dispose old reusable pads when worn out by burning. Each time you finish using a reusable pad wash it clean. Remove and wash materials separately from the outer material using soap and water to ensure cleanliness.
- Hang on a line or pant peg under the sun for complete drying because if not dry may cause infections in and around private
Avoid drying underwear on the grass. Always store your pads in a clean and dry place.

**NB:** *DO NOT SHARE YOUR RE-USABLE PADS.*

**Good Hygiene/cleanliness and sanitation during menstruation (personal and environment)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONAL HYGIENE</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANLINESS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓ Wash your entire body with clean water and soap at least in the morning and evening paying special attention to the pubic area.</td>
<td>✓ Be careful whenever using the latrine; always check to make sure there is no drop of blood on the floor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Change pads often and always wash your hands with soap.</td>
<td>✓ Throw used sanitary pads in the <strong>incinerator</strong> for burning or collect and burn used pads in a private corner at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Drink a lot of water. It reduces pain.</td>
<td>✓ Do not bathe directly in the river/lake/well/swamp because it will make the water dirty. Always collect the water from the water source and bathe at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Iron the cotton pieces of cloth on the <strong>homemade</strong> re-usable pads to kill germs.</td>
<td>✓ Do not urinate in the bathroom, because this spreads diseases from one person to another.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓ Eat plenty of fruits, greens and vegetables to replace lost body nutrients</td>
<td>✓ Urinating in the bathroom causes a bad smell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Menstruation Do’s and Don’ts

Can I share my re-usable pads with my friend?

No. Sharing your pad, towels and pairs of knickers is bad, it can spread bacteria and infections like candida.

Do you go to school when menstruating?

Yes. Menstruation is normal and should not stop you from going to school.
"I'm having my period, so I'm not going to school" ×

I'm having my period. I need to wash up quickly and run to school! ✓
# Coping with challenges during Menstruation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGE</th>
<th>SOLUTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Pain                    |   ✔ If at home, a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel can be placed on the area of pain.  
|                         |   ✔ If at school, do not miss Physical Education (PE) because exercise can reduce the menstrual cramps.  
|                         |   ✔ Pain killer like panadol or local herbs commonly used in your community (e.g ebombo in Central Uganda) can help reduce the pain.  
<p>|                         | <strong>TIP:</strong> for unbearable pain please visit a health center.               |
| Feeling tired/general body weakness |   ✔ Eat lots of fruits                                                   |
|                         |   ✔ Drink lots of fluids, especially water                                |
| Anemia                  |   ✔ Eat plenty of greens, vegetables and fruits.                         |
|                         |   ✔ Drink a lot of safe water and fruit juice.                           |
| Mood swings             |   ✔ Be careful and control yourself when talking and playing with others |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acne/pimples</td>
<td>✓ Control consumption of foods with fats &lt;br&gt;✓ Drink a lot of water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nausea (feeling like vomiting)</td>
<td>✓ See a health care provider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dizziness</td>
<td>✓ Drink a lot of water and eat green vegetables.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>✓ Wear appropriate sportswear to avoid embarrassment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bad odour [bad smell]</td>
<td>✓ Bathe at least twice a day; avoid soiling underwear, change pads regularly. Schools should provide a private washroom for adolescent girls.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
And finally......

Yes! Now I know how to manage menstruation. I will not miss school and will participate in all school activities.

Oh yes, Sarah there are many people who can help you manage menstruation and complete school.
Part 3: Helping Girls to Manage Menstruation

This part provides you with information on where you can get help on what to do to stay healthy and safe during menstruation.

CHALLENGES THAT COME WITH MENSTRUATION

Menstruation is a beautiful thing, the gateway for girls to adulthood. However every good thing comes with responsibility. Menstruation if not managed well can lead to suffering for the girl and her family. This is the important stage of puberty and therefore many changes accompany menstruation - for example the body changes make the girl attractive to the opposite sex.
**SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND DEFILEMENT**

Men may imagine that she is ready for sex and marriage. A child [whether boy or girl] under 18 years of age cannot consent to sex by law. They are too young to make such an important decision. But men may induce or force her into having sex. This may lead to unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases [venereal diseases] and worst of all HIV and later AIDS.

**SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED DISEASES**

These are diseases that are a result of having sex with someone who is infected and they pass on the disease. Diseases such as gonorrhea, which interfere with a girls’ or even boys’ reproductive health may lead to infertility [failure to have a baby] and other complications. HIV the cause of AIDS is one of such infections - this one disorganizes the body immune system and has no cure; leading to numerous infections. Therefore sexually transmitted diseases must be guarded against.

**EARLY PREGNANCY AND MARRIAGE**

Many girls become pregnant before they turn 18 years. Teenage pregnancy is a major cause of school dropout and health complications. All children must be protected from sex and marriage before they reach their 18th birthday.
WHAT YOU CAN DO TO IMPROVE YOUR SEXUAL MATURATION MANAGEMENT

Children, especially girls need information, guidance and protection from the consequences of poorly managed puberty and specifically menstruation. Seek information from resources in the school - Science books, PIASCY materials, HIV Readers and other resources for information and tips on how to manage menstruation and general growing up better.

Consult your teachers, parents and other trusted people in your community.

Avoid bad groups and keep company of well behaved and informed friends. Avoid risky places and situations - read all the HIV Readers [if you still have them in your school] for tips on how to manage the adolescent stage.

The chart below shows the different people in your community who can be of help to girls during menstruation.
Stakeholders

Responsibilities of the Girl-Child

The Girl-Child

The Role of Support Systems:
Development Partners, NGOs, Line Ministries, Private sector and the media

Parents

Religious Leaders

Cultural Leaders

Community

School

Peers

The boy-child

The Girl-Child

Menstruation is Natural & Normal

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I am a girl!

1) (a) I am responsible for my body and I know that menstruation is natural and healthy.

2) (b) I look for correct information about menstruation.

3) (c) I use good materials during menstruation (e.g. sanitary pads, clean knickers etc).

4) (d) I love and respect my culture but some bad practices hurt me e.g. FGM (Female Genital Mutilation).

5) I must keep my body clean and health.

6) I wash my panties every day.

7) I have a duty to keep the environment clean.

8) I need privacy and access to sanitary facilities

9) I safely keep my used pads and later safely dispose or burn them.

10) I don’t miss school during menstruation.

11) I carry 2 sanitary pads, a handkerchief and an extra pair of knickers in my bag/pocket.

12) I participate in all school activities.
1) **As parents/Guardians, we:**

a) Know that our children go through a stage of body changes.
b) We value the body changes that our children go through, and we support them to cope.
c) We seek and share correct information about body changes with our children.
d) We provide nutritious meals; rich in iron, and vitamins e.g. millet and vegetables.
e) Teach our children personal hygiene.
f) Make sure children do not miss school.
g) Provide sanitary pads, knickers and handkerchiefs.
h) Help girls to manage menstruation.
i) Teach girls how to make and use sanitary pads.
j) Encourage girls to drink plenty of water, eat fruits and vegetables.
k) Take girls for medical treatment in case menstrual problems persist.
As a boy child

a) I need to appreciate the body changes that both I and my Sister and I go through so that I develop a positive attitude towards others.

b) I respect the positive choices girls make.

c) I need to understand menstruation so that I support my sisters.

d) Every girl is my sister; I do not leave her at home during school time.

e) I do not tease the girls because I respect them.

f) I do not peep in the girls' wash rooms because it is disrespectful.

g) I need to understand menstruation and my own body changes.

2) As a school

a) Create a safe environment for both boys and girls.

b) Provide SHR training for staff.

c) Provide for boys and girls on girls and sexual reproductive health.
d) Provide training for learners on how to make home re-usable pads.

e) Provide role models for girls.

f) Encourage and support clubs for empowering girls in life skills.

g) Ensure we have child friendly SWT & SMTs

h) Provide special attention for girls with special needs

i) Provide a changing uniform for girls

j) Provide clean sanitary facilities.

k) Conduct talk shows on understanding and managing menstruation.

l) Provide safe drinking water.

m) Provide water, soap, clean washrooms and changing rooms.

n) Provide emergency changing dresses, pairs of knickers and sanitary pads.

o) Make talking and green environments.

p) Provide guidance and counseling to both girls and boys.

q) Have senior woman teacher (SWT) and a senior man teacher (SMT).
r) Sensitize SMCs, SWT and SMT on understanding and managing menstruation.

s) Provide space for guidance and counseling.

3) As Cultural leaders we:

a) Explain the good cultural practices e.g. using a pit latrine rather than going to the bush.

b) Discourage the bad cultural practices e.g. washing in the river/water source

c) Break myths around menstruation.

d) Protect the girl child from sexual abuse and marriage.
4) **As Opinion Leaders, we:**

a) Explain myths and wrong beliefs on menstruation and its management.

b) Advocate for children’s rights in the community e.g. a right to education, privacy, health and parental care among others.

c) Protect girls from defilers and rapists.

5) **As Religious leaders**

a) Correctly interpret religious writings on menstruation.

b) Sensitize the followers about proper management of menstruation.

c) Guide and counsel the followers on menstruation and its management.
6) **As a community (LCs, SMCs, Police, villagers, health providers)**.

   a) Interpret and disseminate government policies that protect children, especially girls.
   
   b) Ensure that budgets address gender concerns
   
   c) Clear bushes and dangerous pathways for the children’s safety.
   
   d) Guard against destruction of school property (e.g. water tanks, latrines, washing facilities).
   
   e) Mobilize resources for **incinerators**, washrooms, hand washing facilities etc.
   
   f) Organize meetings for community awareness on understanding and managing menstruation.
   
   g) Make sure that children reach school/home safely and on time.
   
   h) Participate in school activities.

7) **Support Systems**

   These include: Development Partners, NGOs, Line Ministries, CBOs, Civil Society Organizations, the media and Private sector.
Their roles include:

a) Provide necessary and user-friendly information on menstruation management to the girl-child.

b) Provide low cost sanitary materials to manage menstruation.

c) Create awareness on how to use and dispose of sanitary materials.

d) Look for the necessary resources.

As Peers and friends we:

a) Share information about menstruation with friends.

b) Encourage friends not to miss school when menstruating.

c) Advise our friends on personal hygiene.

d) Support friends when they get menstrual problems.
Girls and boys, I hope you have enjoyed reading this book and you have learned new facts about menstruation. I hope that none of us will miss school again we should not feel uncomfortable about participating in any school activity, and I hope we shall all complete our education.

Good bye
Sarah says, **Menstruation is natural and normal**