



# **Health And Hygienic Practices During Menstrual Cycle In Puberty Stage: A Study On Urban Areas Berhampur City Of Ganjam District, Odisha**

**Dr. Rita Hansdah<sup>1</sup>, Jyotirmayi Rath<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Namita Mahapatra<sup>3</sup>**  
**P.G. Department of Home Science, Berhampur University, Odisha, India**

**Abstract :** Menstruation is an essential phenomenon of girls life. She undergoes various physiological and psychological changes during this phase of life. Menstruation is considered unclean in India , and young girls are not allowed to undertake home chores or engage in religious or cultural events during their menstruation. The research paper focusses on health and hygienic practices during menstrual in puberty period. The objective of the study was to find the knowledge and hygienic practices regarding menstruation among the puberty girls and to assess the restriction practiced by girls during menstrual. This study was carried out in urban area of Berhampur city of Ganjam district . It is observed from this study that the need to encourage safe and hygienic practices among the puberty period of girls, and bring them out of traditional beliefs, misconceptions, and restrictions regarding menstruation. It was also observed that during menstruation, the majority of girls are still subjected to various restrictions. So, mother should encourage their daughter to maintain personal hygiene practices. It is also essential for the teachers to teach girls about healthy hygienic practices during menstruation period. World Menstrual Hygiene Day is observed on May 28 to educate women about the importance of this hygiene.

**Keynotes: Health, Hygienic, Puberty, Menarche.**

**Introduction:** Menstruation is a significant event in a girl's life and the beginning of her reproductive life. It is important to educate girls and their family members about the normal progression of puberty and menstrual cycle development. This includes understanding that menstruation is a normal part of development, and being instructed on how to use feminine products and that is considered normal menstrual flow. Menstrual cycle is a natural and biological process of female body. It generally starts from the age 10-13 which is called puberty period. It is the main and important matter for female which effect on their whole life. In this period mostly physical, psychological, emotional changes occurs in the body of female. After staring the cycle and ending of the cycle is important factor for female. Mostly women faced social discrimination, gender based in equalities in this time period. It creates dilemma in minds of girls during puberty period, so that nobody wants to diseases this issue openly. So, it leads to so many reproductive health problems among puberty girls, especially in developing and underdeveloped countries. In this age girls are so immature.

Odisha, has a festival called Raja Paraba, or Mithuna Sankranti, that celebrates menstruation and womanhood. The festival is believed to honour the feminine aspects of the earth, which is thought to go through a menstrual cycle and celebrates the first step of a girl into womanhood.

## Puberty stage:

Puberty is the process of physical maturation where an adolescent reaches sexual maturity and becomes capable of reproduction. Generally, puberty is associated with emotional and hormonal changes, as well as physical changes such as breast development in female, pubic hair development and the onset of menstruation(menarche). Puberty processed through five stages, termed Tanner stages, ranging from prepubertal, to full maturity.

Menstruation and its related hygiene practices still considered a taboo. There are so many social and cultural restrictions imposed on women ( Rajagopal S, Mathur K, 2017). Hygiene related practices during menstruation are very important, as an ignorance of various sanitation practices leads to increased susceptibility to reproductive tract infection RTI( DasA, 2014)major reason behind this problem is lack of communication and unawareness about scientific facts. Menstrual hygiene should be an important and integral part of health education for school going girls, so that they develop an attitude of maintain hygiene throughout their life ( Dasgupta M, 2008). Most of the young girls get their firsthand information regarding menstruation and its hygiene related issues from their mothers, teachers, friends, relatives and mass media like television and social media ( Haque SE, et al, 2014). The mothers also lack of awareness and techniques to communicate information to their daughters regarding menstruation and its hygiene, which is a major obstacle to convey scientific information ( Crichton J, et al 2012).due to social cultural pressure, their attitude and perceptions towards menstrual hygiene practices are very negative, that can be reasons of many reproductive health problems among young girls(Zaidi SHN, et al. 2015)in developing countries like India, most of the young girls are affected by reproductive health problems and that may affect the usual life of teenagers(Santhy, K.G. et al 2017). During their menstruation, the first-time flow of blood generates anxiety and fear among young girls because their society and culture have already made their mind negative and discourage them for open discussion (Susila, et al. 2014; Kumar A & Srivastava K. (2011). Ther is a majority of research studies conducted on menstrual health and hygiene in developing of under developed countries.

**Menstrual hygiene:** Menstrual hygiene is as old as humanity but has gained recent importance due to the readiness of the society to accept its challenges. Attaining menarche is a celebrated event across cultures. The physiological and psychological changes that girl faces are also associated with the stress of menstrual hygiene management. Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) at school is very important as well. The WHO [World Health Organisation] and UNICEF[United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund] advice wash facilities at schooltime. water, sanitation and hygiene. In India, the Swachh Bharat: Swachh Vidyalaya campaign has been launched in every school to provide WASH facilities and disposal of menstrual absorbents. MHM has been made an integral part of the Swachh Bharath guidelines. Efforts are being made to provide low- cost sanitary napkin vending machines and incinerators to dispose MHM products at schools. However, the extent to which all these guidelines percolate down to the ground level has yet to be seen. Inadequate facilities at the school may, in turn result in school absenteeism and diminished school performance. Various absorbents have been used during the menstruation. The reusable absorbents are made up of cloth. They need to be washed and dried in sunlight prior to the next use. The nonreusable sanitary pads are made up of cellulose and plastic. They are user friendly. However, they are expensive and they nonorderable. Reusable and nonreusable tampons are also available. Menstrual cups are also used. These have to be inserted in the vagina. Hence, they are not suitable for all adolescents. Nonreusable pads have to be disposed in the dustbins. However cultural beliefs and lack of disposal facility have made certain communities burry or burn the pads. Reusable cloths are to be washed with soap and dried in the sunlight to prevent growth of bacteria. Due to cultural beliefs, the cloths are not properly washed with soap, and many a time, they are kept to dry away from the sunlight and away from the sight of other family members. Such unhygienic practices lead to vaginitis, pelvic infections, and urinary tract infections. Minor ailments during the menstrual period are common. Abdominal pain, lack of concentration, and breast pricking are common complains. These symptoms may require help from the teachers at school. Approachability and sensitive of the teacher are also very important for the girls. Menstruation is still considered as a taboo across various

cultures, and young girls of some communities feel that menstruation is a curse or burden. Women in their menstrual period are considered as fifth, shameful or impure. Many communities restrict menstruating women from various activities such as cooking, touching food, being with family members, attending religious ceremonies, and bathing. Menstruation is a physical process, and such taboos myths should be allayed. This paper is undertaken with the following objectives,

### Objective of the study:

- To find out the knowledge and menstrual hygiene practice among girls in puberty stage.
- To assess the restrictions practiced by girls during menstrual cycle.

### Material & methods:

A cross-sectional study was conducted in Berhampur city of Ganjam district, Odisha, from 1<sup>st</sup> January 30<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

**Data Collection:** This study was carried out among 150 school going girls. The data were collected by questionnaire methods. The questionnaire consisted of sociodemographic details, knowledge about menstruation, menstrual patterns and hygienic practices and restrictions followed during menstruation. At the end of the interview, the girls were educated about cleanliness during menarche. In addition, all their queries were answered satisfactorily.

**Statistical analysis:** data were fed to Microsoft Excel and were analysed to fulfil the objectives,

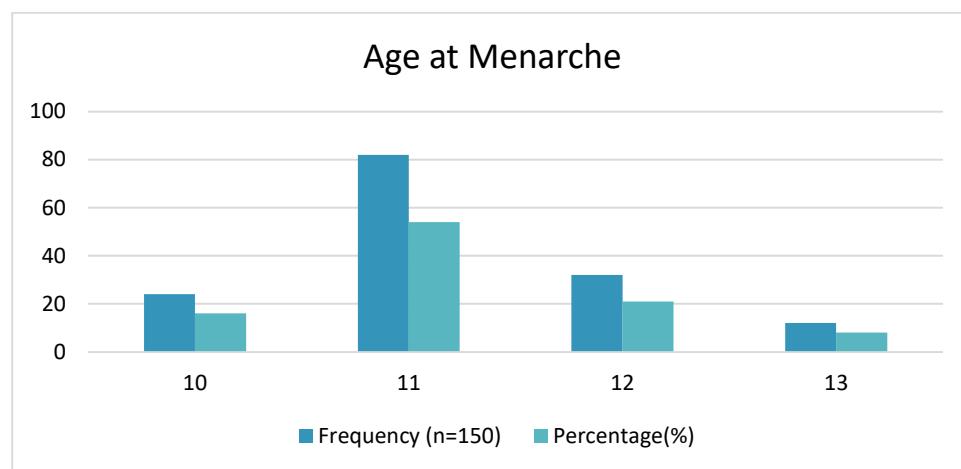
### Result & discussion:

**Table 1 Socio demographical profile of the respondents:**

Variable	Year	Frequency(n=150)	Percentage(%)
Age	10	42	28
	11	40	26
	12	35	23
	13	23	15
Mother Qualification	Matriculation	10	6
	Higher secondary	37	24
	Graduation	53	35
	Above	50	33
Father qualification	Matriculation (10 <sup>th</sup> )	25	16
	Higher secondary	28	18
	Graduation	44	29
	Above	53	35
Mother occupation	House Wife	86	57
	Service	64	43
Father occupation	Business	92	61
	Service	58	39

Age wise distribution showed that majority of respondents were 10 years old(42) rest of the respondents were 11 years(40), 12 years(35),13 years(23).

It was observed that a majority 42% of mother are graduate and 33% of mother are 6% had only matriculation. The majority of 35% of father were above graduate and only 16% had only matriculation. In the above table also shows occupation wise distribution where it is found that 57% of mother had house wife and 43 % of mother were in service area; in the majority of 61 % of father were in service and only 39 % of father were in business field.

**Table 2** Age at menarche among girls

Age at Menarche	Frequency (n=150)	Percentage (%)
10	24	16
11	82	54
12	32	21
13	12	8

It is observed that the average age at menarche was found to be 11 years, maximum number of girls had their menarche at 11 years (54%) which is similar to studies conducted in Andhra Pradesh in 2016 and Madhya Pradesh in 2021. In a study conducted in Karnataka in 2022, the average age at menarche was 12-14 years which is comparable with the present research study, whereas 16% had their menarche at 10 years and 12 years (21%) and only (8%) had their menarche at 13 years of age in present study.

**Table 3** Source of Knowledge of girls on Menstruation

Source of Knowledge about Menarche	Frequency (n=150)	Percentage (%)
Mother	57	38
Friends	23	15
Teacher	38	25
Media	32	21
Knowledge regarding Causes of Menstruation		
Natural	48	32
Disease	23	15
Physiological process	79	52

Table 3 depicts girls understanding and perceptions about menstruation and menstrual hygiene. Knowledge about menstruation is essential since virtually all girls have similar feeling during menarche. 57(38%) of the girls had heard about menstruation through their mother, or other family members. The mass media, such as television, mobile phone and advertisements, play an important role in informing young girls about hygienic practices during menstruation. About 32 (21%) of girls acquired their knowledge from television and mobile

phone, 38(25%) of them had their menarche in school and were informed about it by their teachers, and 23(15%) of girls had heard about menstruation through their friends.

The data revealed that most of the respondents knew about menstruation as physiological process 79(52%) and 48(32%) of respondents knew that menstruation is disease only 23(15%) of respondents were knowledge about the causes of menstruation as a natural process.

### Restriction imposed during menstruation

When a girl is growing, the first menstrual cycle is marked by feeling of fear and curiosity about this normal occurrence (Kundal & Thakur, 2014). Menstruating women are considered dirty or polluted Hinduism (Apffel- Marglin, 2006). In Hindu religion, still negative connotation is given to menstrual cycle. Girls and women are subject to some limitations; they are not permitted to enter temples, water the plants, or use the kitchen or doing any work related to making food, and not to take bath during menstrual cycle (Patil et al., 2011).

*Religious restriction:* during menstrual cycle, a girl is restricted to some religious activity like do not enter the temple, not touch holy book, enter the puja room and not allowed to offer prayer, not attending any religious function ( Borkar et al., 2022).

*Food restriction:* some food like sugarcane, curd, milk, lassi and ingredients are not allowed to eat during the menstrual cycle ( Singh , 2006). They are restricted to a diet ( Patil et al., 2011). Dairy products were prohibited for the vast majority of exiled girls ( 97.4%) (Mukherjee, et al.,2020)

**Table 4 Restriction imposed during menstruation of respondents**

Restriction	Frequency (n=150)	Percentage (%)
Isolation in a separate room	68	45
Not allowed to attend religious function	136	90
Not allowed to go school	24	16
Avoiding eating certain foods	28	18

Table 4 shows that the restrictions imposed on the girls during menstruation. the most important restrictions imposed on the girls during menstruation were not being allowed to attend any religious functions or allowed to go temple 136(90%), whereas 68(45%) girls responded as isolation in separate room in home, only 24(16%) of girls were not allowed to go school and avoiding eating certain foods 28(18%) as restrictions imposed on them.

**Table 5 Hygienic Practices of respondents**

Menstruation is the vaginal bleeding that occurs in adolescent girls as a result of hormonal changes, which occurs once a month in a predictable schedule, and hygiene is the practice of preventing illness and maintain good health ( Banerjee, 2008)

Characteristic	Variable	Frequency(n=150)	Percentage (%)
<b>Materials Used</b>	Sanitary Pad	130	86
	Disposable cloth	20	14
<b>Change Material Regularly</b>	Yes	125	83
	No	25	17
<b>Genital cleanliness</b>	Yes	86	57
	No	64	43
<b>Place of disposal Materials</b>	Anywhere	47	31
	Throw outside	72	48
	Dustbin	58	37

The above table 5 shows that regarding hygienic practices 86% of girls are using sanitary pad and only 14% of girls are using disposable cloth. A study conducted in Karnataka in 2020 showed that 70% of adolescent girls used sanitary napkins when they were menstruating, and a study in Andhra Pradesh in 2016 and a study in Uttrakhand in 2021 showed it to be 78.5% and 79.5%, respectively, whereas a study in Jodhpur, Rajasthan in 2020 showed sanitary pad usage as 85%. In contrast to these findings, sanitary pad usage during menstruation was found to be only 31% in a study in Madhya Pradesh in 2021. The hygienic practice of washing external genitalia every time while changing the pad was followed by 86(57%) and only 72( 48%)3 girls were not aware about genital cleanliness. It also found that majority of 48% of girls throw the used pad outside in landfill and 37% of the girls used proper disposal technique of wrapping the sanitary pad with paper and then throwing it into a dustbin where as 31% of girls were throwing her sanitary pad in anywhere. The correct way to dispose of absorbent materials used in periods, i.e., throwing it in a dustbin, was followed by only 31% of girls in the present study. Better results (60%) were obtained in the studies conducted in Karnataka in 2020.

### Conclusion:

This study was conducted to find out the knowledge & hygienic practices during menstruation among school going girls. The study revealed that menstrual hygiene was satisfactory among girls. It was also observed that during menstruation, the majority of girls are still subjected to various restrictions and taboos. Therefore, proper menstrual hygiene and correct perceptions and beliefs can protect the girl's folk from this suffering. All mothers irrespective of their educational status should be taught to break their inhibitions about discussing with their daughter regarding menstruation much before the age of menarche.

Recently Govt. of Odisha announced that a one day menstrual leave will be granted to women employees which they can avail on the first or the second day of the menstrual cycle. It will be applicable for both the government and private sector employees and also for adolescents girls one day leave for school during menstrual period.

Thus, the above findings need to encourage safe and hygienic practices during menarche puberty stage of girls, and bring them out of traditional beliefs, misconceptions, and restrictions during menstruation period.

In view of the vital role of the mothers, it is very important that the mothers to be armed with the correct and appropriate information on reproductive health, so that that can give this knowledge to their growing adolescent. Mother should encourage their daughter to maintain personal hygiene practices. It is also essential for the teachers to teach skills to impart reproductive health education, including menstrual hygiene to their students.

Schools should be another entry point for improving menstrual health by integrating menstrual hygiene into curriculum, provision of toilets and even supplying sanitary napkins.

### **Suggestion**

The first and foremost strategy is raising the awareness among the school going girls related to, menstrual health and hygiene. Girls at Puberty often grow up with limited knowledge of menstruation because their mothers and other women shy away from discussing the issues with them.

There is need to spread awareness among the school teachers regarding menstruation. Community based health education campaigns could prove worthwhile in achieving this task. Empowerment of women through education and increasing their role in decision making can also aid in this regard. Increasing the education status of women plays an important role in improving the health status of the community at large and overcoming the cultural taboos, in particular. One disposable pad takes 800 years to decompose in landfills. It should be burnt.

### **Steps to be taken to avoid early puberty**

- Ensure enough physical activity—Engaging in activities such as sports, outdoor play, regular walks can contribute to their wellbeing
- Healthy food choices----Take fresh and nutritious foods while avoiding refined sugars and refined foo flour., include a variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and lean proteins in their diet
- Avoid Plastics for storage----To minimize exposure to harmful substances like BPA and phthalates. Similarly, it is best to avoid Plastic wrap and canned foods.
- By sharing these information's as possible we can stop early puberty in future generations

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