

Menstruation issues among adolescent girls in Jaipur district

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■ **ABSTRACT :** Menstruation is a natural phenomenon occurring during adolescence. Due to the different taboos, cultural and social restrictions, adolescent girls remain ignorant about the scientific facts of menstruation and suffer silently. This study was conducted to assess the knowledge, practice and cultural taboos regarding menstruation among adolescent girls. Study was conducted among 161 adolescent girls of government residential schools (Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidhyalaya (KGBV)) situated in different blocks of Jaipur, Rajasthan with the help of self-designed questionnaire. Out of 161 respondents, 53 per cent girls were partially aware about menstruation before menarche, friends were the main source of information in case of 73 per cent girls. Almost entire sample was ignorant regarding knowledge about basic physiology and hygiene maintenance during menstruation was very poor. Regarding practices, old cloth was found to be the most common absorbent material at home and only 4 per cent girls were using sanitary napkin at home. Almost entire sample believed in the prevalent cultural taboos followed during menstruation. Menstrual hygiene still remains a risk factor for RTI and hence it is recommended that menstrual hygiene management should become an integral part of girl's education. Teachers should be equipped with the basic knowledge and correct hygiene practices. Provisions should be made in the education system to disseminate it through life skill education or special health programmes.

■ **KEY WORDS :** Menarche, Reproductive health, Menstruation, Menstrual hygiene management

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Menstruation is a natural biological phenomenon that occurs throughout the reproductive years of women's life. Menarche is the important landmark in the process of growth and maturation.. Besides knowledge, it demands materials and facilities that enable hygienic practices and gives girls privacy and dignity they deserve. Inadequate knowledge about menstruation and hesitation results into raising queries among girls which often remain unanswered. Due to lack of information on this natural phenomenon and culturally divergent beliefs and practices, rural adolescent girls often manage menstruation in unsafe manner that leads to reproductive tract infections (Khanna *et al.*, 2005).

Various studies have been conducted on different issues of menstruation in and outside the country, but in the vast state of Rajasthan, there are few anecdotal evidence around this issue. This calls for immediate attention as menstruation

hampers the fulfillment of UN agreed Millennium Development Goals-2 and 3 that is universalization of elementary education and to promote gender inequality and empower women. According to statistics published by Directorate of education (Rajasthan Development Report, India), 60 per cent of children in Rajasthan drop out before class 5th among this majority are girls and one of the reasons is lack of toilet facilities. In the state, 61 per cent of women in the age group 15-49, years are illiterate and the proportion of women aged 15-19 years, bearing child is more than twice as high in rural areas (19%) as in urban areas (9%) (NFHS-3). Above all, early child marriages and child bearing accompanied by a strong son preference in the community prove detrimental to a young girl who does not understand the scientific fact behind menstruation and manages it in a quite unhealthy manner.

However, urban adolescent girls have better exposure and dialogue with others on this issue compared to their