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## Menstrual Health and Hygiene

### Why in news?

Menstrual Hygiene Day is observed on May 28<sup>th</sup> to highlight the critical importance of proper menstrual hygiene management and break stigma around it.

### What is Menstrual Health and Hygiene?

- Menstrual health and hygiene (MHH) means the ability to access menstrual products, privacy to change the pads/menstrual cups etc, and access to facilities to dispose of used product.
- **Menstrual products** - Pads (or sanitary napkins), cloth napkins, tampons, menstrual cups, etc.

### What are India's efforts towards MHH?

- India has been a front runner for action on menstrual hygiene but often the focus has often been on India's rural population.
- The National Health Mission 2011 promoted a menstrual hygiene scheme among adolescent girls in rural areas.
- Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) is an integral part of the 'Swachh Bharat Mission' guidelines.
- The Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation also issued MHM guidelines for schools in 2015.
- **Free Napkins** - Different states have their own schemes, but the primary focus of service delivery remains on the distribution of sanitary napkins.
- Kerala and Karnataka governments have been distributing menstrual cups as a sustainable alternative to sanitary napkins.
- Click [here](#), to know more about India's efforts.

### What are India's challenges in MHH?

- **Urban India** - India's rapidly growing urban areas lack accessibility to toilets in many public spaces.
- **Educating Men** - Menstrual health is not a 'women's subject' and it is important to educate boys and men about menstruation.
- Comprehensive and meaningful education on menstrual processes, supportive environments, encouraging participation, and honest conversations make them better understand.

- **Social Taboos** - The social taboos about menstruation limit girls' and women's lives and restricts them at different levels.
- The practice of segregating menstruating girls and women to 'kurmaghars' (period huts) are still found in places like Maharashtra.
- **Accessibility** - Women in informal work (e.g. construction work) often have no access to washrooms, clean water, and to cost-effective hygiene products or their safe disposal.
- **Menstrual Leave** - The 2022 'Right of Women to Menstrual Leave and Free Access to Menstrual Health Products Bill' specified three days of paid leave for women.
- Only Kerala and Bihar currently have [menstrual leave](#) policies for women.

### What are the other issues around Menstruation?

- **Inclusivity** - The menstrual needs of the differently abled, transgender men, and people with other gender identities who menstruate like intersex has to be addressed.
- **Disposal** - Safe disposal of sanitary napkins is often overlooked and has misconceptions around it.
- **Quality** - The quality issues in sanitary napkins distributed could possibly undermine the goal of providing it.
- **Alternatives** - Menstrual cups are a cheap, sustainable, and eco-friendly alternative to sanitary napkins but still women are sceptical.
- **Socio-economic Factors** - these factors limits their choice of menstrual products and disposal mechanisms.

### What need to be done to improve MHH?

- Awareness about periods along with efforts to address harmful social and gender norms.
- Menstrual products, both reusable and disposable, must be more available through various access channels.
- Female-friendly community and public toilets to be built more to provide safe, private, clean facilities to manage periods.
- The provision of dustbins and incinerators in female toilets for waste disposal and management.
- Addressing the needs of menstruating people in urban slums and refugee camps.
- Catering the menstrual needs of formal and informal women workforce and workspaces.

### Quick Facts

#### Menstrual Hygiene Day

- Menstrual Hygiene Day is observed every year on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of the fifth month.
- It is because menstrual cycle averages 28 days in length and people on an average menstruate for five days each month.
- Menstrual Hygiene Day was started by Germany-based NGO WASH United and it was observed for the first time on May 28, 2014.

## References

1. [The Hindu - Menstrual health is a public health issue](#)
2. [The Hindu - What are India's challenges in Menstrual Hygiene?](#)
3. [Hindustan Times - 5 consequences of poor menstrual hygiene management](#)



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