

# DIGNITY FOR GIRLS

Engaging faith groups in Uganda on menstrual health



**MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT  
TRAINING MANUAL FOR GIRLS' WORKSHOPS IN  
CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

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For more information, and to download a copy of this manual, visit [www.faithinwater.org](http://www.faithinwater.org) or email [info@faithinwater.org](mailto:info@faithinwater.org).

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## MHM TRAINING MANUAL FOR GIRLS' WORKSHOPS

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“It is a moral obligation for us to provide an environment that enables children to fully explore their innate potential with human dignity.”

– Global Network of Religions for Children,  
a global network made up of the world’s major faiths

## INTRODUCTION

This Menstrual Hygiene Management training guide was developed in 2018 by UK-based NGO Faith in Water for its Dignity for Girls programme working with faith groups in Uganda to improve girls’ education through good menstrual health. It is aimed at facilitators of workshops for girls in Christian and Muslim primary schools.

There has been growing recognition globally in recent years that many girls experience difficulties in managing their menstruation after they reach puberty, and that these difficulties affect their health, wellbeing and education. In Uganda, studies show that MHM is a major challenge for girls. Poor MHM is a significant factor in preventing girls from achieving their full potential at school and causes some to drop out of school altogether. Girls’ difficulties include lack of information, the poor condition of school toilets, sense of shame and stigma, and lack of access to menstrual products or inability to afford them.

### Dignity for Girls

The Dignity for Girls programme was launched in 2018 and works with faith leaders, heads and teachers in faith schools, faith-based women’s groups and youth groups as well as, of course, schoolgirls. It is the first initiative to engage Uganda’s three major faith groups – the Catholic Church, the Church of Uganda and the Uganda Muslim Supreme Council – on this issue. The main aims of the Dignity for Girls programme are:

- to enable more girls to stay in education, thus improving their future economic prospects as well as their health and wellbeing;
- to help faith groups develop MHM policies and practices for their schools, thus supporting the Ministry of Education and Sports’ priorities and initiatives and potentially impacting the lives of thousands of Ugandan schoolgirls;
- reduce stigma and ignorance about menstruation in the wider faith community, resulting in significant long-term benefits for girls and women.

All three faith groups are not only major providers of education (together they are involved in more than 11,000 schools in Uganda) but also play a significant role in influencing opinion and behaviour in the wider community. Moreover, all three faith groups share a number of core values, such as dignity of the human person, respect, integrity, compassion for the vulnerable, hope, accountability and care of God’s creation, that should inform and guide attitudes and teaching on this issue.

## About this training guide

This training guide is aimed at facilitators delivering MHM training to girls in Christian and Muslim primary schools. The training consists of four modules and is expected to take a minimum of half a day, including break and refreshments. By the end of the training, the girls should:

- have acquired information about puberty and menstruation
- know how to manage their periods confidently and with dignity
- have an understanding of personal hygiene during menstruation
- feel more confident about talking about menstruation

This training is intended to be accompanied by separate training sessions for heads and teachers of faith schools, local faith leaders and parents. While the main focus of this training is on the girls, it is also important to help the boys acquire correct information about puberty and menstruation, and become more supportive of girls.

## Creating the right atmosphere

It is very important to make the girls feel relaxed so that they will be more comfortable talking about this sensitive subject. Most girls are very shy about talking about their periods in public; many feel a crippling sense of stigma and shame about menstruation.

Facilitators should establish a warm and friendly atmosphere and should also strive to make the workshop fun and enjoyable for the girls. This is not an exam! For this reason, we have incorporated games and activities into the training and facilitators might also want to use small treats, such as occasionally distributing sweets, to lighten the atmosphere.

Before the workshop begins, the facilitators should introduce themselves and where they come from, and explain what the training will be about. If one of the facilitators is male, it is very important to reassure the girls that they should not be worried about this. Acknowledge that they might feel awkward discussing this subject with a man but emphasise that menstruation is natural, normal and nothing to be embarrassed about. We need to bust the myth that menstruation is just for girls and women; men and boys also need to be engaged on this subject so that they can support girls and women properly.

Part of creating the right atmosphere involves ensuring the location is right. The workshop contains a number of activities, games and group discussions. If the school classrooms are too small or very overcrowded, or if you feel using school premises would be detrimental to the success of the workshops for whatever reason, choose an alternative venue.

Consent will have been obtained through the school for these workshops. Nevertheless, it is important that consent is also obtained from the girls. After explaining what the workshop is about, ask them if they are happy to take part and assure them that no one will be criticised or punished if they do not want to do so. Collect signatures of those giving their consent.

# WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Modules one and two

## MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION

No	Activity	Description	Equipment	Time
1.1	Introduction	Facilitators introduce themselves and what the workshop is about Signing of consent forms	None	10 mins
1.2	Ice breaker: Open Private Secret	A game to assess how comfortable people are talking about menstruation	Flip chart paper, coloured stickers	10 mins
1.3	Dot Game 1	A game to assess girls' understanding of menstruation and test the baseline assessment	Flip chart paper, sticky dots	10 mins

Total: 30 mins

## MODULE 2: PUBERTY AND MENSTRUATION

No	Activity	Details	Equipment	Time
2.1	What is puberty?	Physical changes Emotional changes	Puberty handouts	10 mins
2.2	What is menstruation?	Menstruation is normal, natural and a sign of good health How menstruation works The menstrual cycle	Menstruation handouts	20 mins
2.3	Truth and myths	A quiz looking at common myths about menstruation	Truth & myths handout	5 mins
2.4	Q&A	An opportunity for girls to ask questions or make comments	None	5 mins

Total: 40 mins

## BREAK: SNACKS AND DRINKS

Total: 30 mins

# WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

Modules three and four

## MODULE 3: MANAGING MENSTRUATION

No	Activity	Details	Equipment	Time
3.1	Biggest challenges: Dot Game 2	An exercise to identify girls' biggest challenges on menstruation	Flip chart paper, sticky dots	10 mins
3.2	Managing your periods	Using sanitary pads or cloth Different types of pad Personal hygiene Being prepared Staying active	Managing your period handouts	25 mins
3.3	Period problems	Managing discomfort/pain Health issues	Pads, knickers, hot water bottle	5 mins
3.4	Q&A	Questions and comments	None	5 mins

**Total: 45 mins**

## MODULE 4: ATTITUDES TO MENSTRUATION

No	Activity	Details	Equipment	Time
2.1	The faith view	What do faiths say about menstruation? Faith values Challenging stigma and shame Class discussion	Word search Flip chart paper, sticky notes	20 mins
2.4	You are precious	Responsibilities of growing up Looking after yourself	None	10 mins
2.5	Pads distribution	Distribution of sanitary pads, soap and knickers to each girl	Sanitary packs, knickers and soap	10 mins

**Total: 40 mins**

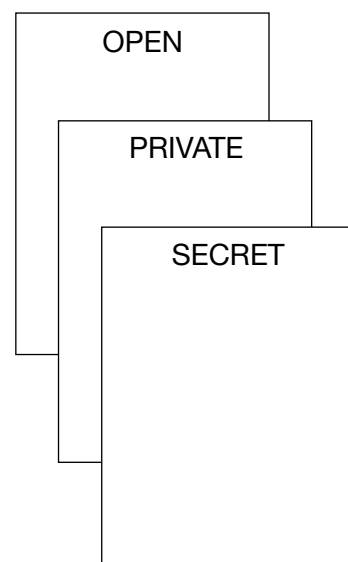
# MODULE 1: INTRODUCTION

Purpose: To establish rapport and the right atmosphere  
To understand different attitudes towards menstruation

No	Activity	Description	Equipment	Time
1.1	Introduction	Facilitators introduce themselves and what the workshop is about Signing of consent forms	None	10 mins
1.2	Ice breaker game: Open-Private-Secret	This game looks at how comfortable people are about talking about menstruation	Flip chart paper, coloured stickers	10 mins
1.3	Dot Game 1	A game to assess girls' understanding of menstruation.	Flip chart paper, sticky dots	15 mins

## BEFORE THE MODULE

- Hand out consent forms (see Appendix 1), notepads and pens to each girl
- Prepare three flip chart papers for the Ice Breaker Game: One says OPEN at the top as shown on the right, one says PRIVATE, and one says SECRET.
- Prepare flip chart papers for the Dot Game (see Appendix 2)
- Hand out three coloured stickers – one **GREEN** sticker, one **PINK** sticker and one **ORANGE** sticker – for the Ice Breaker Game
- Hand out FIVE sticky dots for the Dot Game (any colour)



## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

- Facilitators introduce themselves and explain what the workshop is about.
- Explain that this is meant to be fun and enjoyable, not a test.
- Read through the consent form to the girls.
- Explain that no one needs take part if they don't want to; they won't get in trouble if they don't. If they are happy to take part, ask them to sign the consent form.
- Collect the forms.



## 1.2 ICE BREAKER: OPEN-PRIVATE-SECRET GAME

- Explain that they are about to play a game called OPEN-PRIVATE-SECRET.<sup>1</sup> Talking about menstruation in public is not always easy. This game shows how different people have different attitudes towards it.

### PLAYING THE OPEN-PRIVATE-SECRET GAME

We can think of topics of conversation as either **OPEN**, **PRIVATE** or **SECRET**. For example:

- The weather is a topic of conversation that can be considered **OPEN** - ie, we would discuss it with anyone, including strangers.
- A serious health problem might be considered **PRIVATE** - ie, we would not discuss it with everyone but instead with a few close people, such as our family members.
- If we had cheated in an exam, or stolen some money, or killed someone, that would be a **SECRET** – ie, we would never tell anyone.

Point out the three flip chart papers on the wall - one labelled **OPEN**, one **PRIVATE** and one **SECRET**. Explain that everyone has three coloured stickers: a **GREEN** sticker, a **PINK** sticker and an **ORANGE** sticker. Tell them:

- Using your **GREEN** sticker, how do **PEOPLE** in Uganda generally feel about discussing menstruation? Take your **GREEN** sticker to the **OPEN**, **PRIVATE** or **SECRET** flip chart papers on the wall and choose which paper to put it on.

When everyone has returned to their seat, tell them:

- Using your **PINK** stickers, how do **GIRLS** in Uganda feel about discussing their menstruation?

Finally:

- Using your **ORANGE** sticker, how do **YOU yourself** feel about discussing your own menstruation?

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- What do the charts tell us about feelings about discussing menstruation among
  - people generally in Uganda?
  - girls?
  - girls in this room?
- Why is this important to know?  
**NOTE:** It helps us appreciate that different people have different attitudes and we need to respect those different attitudes
- When something is considered secret, it is usually deeply shameful. Does it matter if girls feel shameful about menstruation?  
**NOTE:** If girls feel shameful, they will be reluctant to talk about menstruation. Keeping this a secret can lead to misinformation, stigma, fear and exclusion.

<sup>1</sup> This is a simplified version of the Johari Window, a psychological tool developed in 1956.

### 1.3 THE DOT GAME 1: Knowledge & attitudes

- Explain that this game is intended to get an idea of their understanding and attitudes towards menstruation. It is not a test (no names are being taken) but will give us an idea of what they think.
- Point out the Dot Game flip chart papers on the wall, with the statements (listed below).
- Read the statements to the girls, ensuring that they understand them.
- Then remind them that they have five sticky dots: ask them to come up to the papers and place one dot next to their answer for each question.
- Collect the Dot Game papers for analysis afterwards.



Girls playing the Dot Game

#### QUESTIONS FOR DOT GAME 1: KNOWLEDGE & ATTITUDES

**1. Which of the following sentences best explains what menstruation is?**

- a. Menstruation is a sickness that makes women bleed every month.
- b. Menstruation is a natural biological function of the female body that is part of the female reproductive system.
- c. Menstruation is a sign that girls have done something wrong or bad.

**2. Has someone talked to you about periods? Who is the MAIN PERSON?**

- a. Yes, some one in my family (my mother / sister / aunt / grandmother)
- b. Yes, my teacher
- c. Yes, my friend
- d. No one

**3. How difficult is managing your menstrual periods?**

- a. I find managing my menstrual periods is **ALWAYS** difficult.
- b. I find managing my menstrual periods is **SOMETIMES** difficult.
- c. I find managing my menstrual periods is **NEVER** difficult.
- d. I have not started my menstrual periods yet.

**4. How confident do you feel about managing your menstrual periods?**

- a. I am **VERY** confident about managing my menstrual periods.
- b. I am **A LITTLE** confident about managing my menstrual periods.
- c. I am **NOT AT ALL** confident about managing my menstrual periods.
- d. I have not started my menstrual periods yet.

**5. Do boys in your school tease girls about menstrual periods?**

- a. Yes, they tease them often
- b. Yes, they tease them sometimes.
- c. No, they never tease them

# MODULE 2: PUBERTY AND MENSTRUATION

**Purpose:** To understand the changes that occur in puberty and menstruation  
 To understand that these changes are normal and healthy  
 To dispel myths and misunderstandings

No	Activity	Description	Equipment	Time
2.1	What is puberty?	Physical changes Emotional changes	Puberty handout	10 mins
2.2	What is menstruation?	Menstruation is normal, natural and a sign of good health How menstruation works The menstrual cycle	Menstruation handout Diagram of the uterus	20 mins
2.3	Truth and myths	A quiz looking at common myths about menstruation	Truth & myths handout	5 mins
2.4	Q&A	Questions and comments	None	5 mins

## BEFORE THE MODULE

- Have the following handouts ready to give the girls
- Puberty handout (see Appendix 3)
- Menstruation handout (see Appendix 4)
- Menstrual cycle (see Appendix 5)
- Diagram of the uterus (see Appendix 6)
- Truth & Myths handout (see Appendix 7)

## 2.1 WHAT IS PUBERTY

- **GROUP WORK:** Divide the girls into groups of 7-8. Ask them to work together to list all the changes that happen to a girls' body during puberty and a boys' body.
- Invite pupils to suggest one change that happens until you have all of the changes (see Facilitators' notes below).
- Then explain in detail puberty involves (see Facilitators' Notes below).

## FACILITATORS' NOTES: What is puberty?

- Puberty (also called adolescence) is the stage when girls and boys experience physical changes as they move from childhood into adulthood.
- It is a time of big changes in the body – both inside and outside – and is the stage when a boy or a girl become sexually aware or mature and can have a baby.
- Puberty usually starts between the ages of 8 and 14 in girls and 9 and 15 in boys. Some people start puberty a little earlier or later.
- Each person is different so everyone goes through puberty on his or her body's own schedule. This is one reason why some of your friends might still look like kids whereas others look more like adults.

Some of the changes that occur include:

<b>Girls</b>	<b>Boys</b>
Development of breasts	Voices break and deepen
Widening of hips	Shoulders widen, facial hair grows
Growth of pubic hair	Growth of pubic hair
Spots/acne	Spots/acne
Unexplained mood swings	Unexplained mood changes
Sweat glands become more active	Sweat glands become more active
Girls start menstruation	Boys have 'wet dreams' (involuntary ejaculations of semen during sleep)

### **Mood swings**

- Puberty is a very exciting time but it can also be a time of uncertainty, self consciousness and anxiety. As well as changing physically, you are also changing emotionally and psychologically.
- This means that sometimes you will feel swings of emotion – very happy one minute, very sad the next minute, and sometimes very angry. This is normal!
- If you understand what is happening to you, then you will be better able to cope with the big changes happening in your body and your emotions.

## 2.2 WHAT IS MENSTRUATION?

This session will emphasize that menstruation is normal, natural and a sign of good health. It will examine how menstruation works and it will explain the the menstrual cycle

- Refer to this question from Dot Game 1

**Which of the following sentences BEST explains what menstruation is?**

- A. Menstruation is a sickness that makes women bleed every month.
- B. Menstruation is a natural biological function of the female body that is part of the female reproductive system.
- C. Menstruation is a sign that girls have done something wrong or bad.

- Ask the pupils by show of hands which is the **BEST** explanation of menstruation of the three sentences. (ANSWER: B)
- Tell them that menstruation is **NORMAL**, is **NATURAL** and a sign of a **HEALTHY BODY**. (See Facilitators' notes below.)

### FACILITATORS' NOTES: What is menstruation?

- Menstruation is a natural biological change of the body that a girl goes through when she is growing up. It is the monthly flow of blood from the uterus (womb) through the vagina in all girls every month, and is normal and natural.

Menstruation is **NOT**:

- A disease
- Something to be ashamed of
- A reason to stop girls and women from going to school, carrying out household activities, doing sports or working

Menstruation **IS**:

- A normal, healthy part of growing up and becoming a woman
- Something that is experienced by ALL women and girls
- A natural process whereby a girl's body sheds the lining of the uterus every month, causing bleeding from the vagina

- **Hand out the diagram of the female uterus.** Ask the pupils to identify the different parts of the uterus from the words listed next to the diagram.
- Go through the results when they have finished. Then explain how menstruation works. (See Facilitators' notes below)

## FACILITATORS' NOTES: How menstruation works

- Every month, an egg is released from the ovary and travels to the uterus (womb). This is called ovulation.
- The walls of the uterus have already prepared to receive the egg by growing a lining made of blood and tissue. The egg spends a few days in the uterus.
- Then, if the egg is not fertilised, your body releases it through the vagina. At the same time, the lining of the uterus break down and blood flows through the vagina. That is menstruation.

### When do periods start?

- Girls normally start their periods between the age of 9 and 15 years.
- Menstruation then takes place every month until it stops between the ages of 45 and 55. This is called menopause.

### How long do periods last?

- Periods can last for between 3 and 7 days at a time. The average is 5 days.
- The amount of blood flow varies and sometimes is heavier than at others. But the total amount lost during a period is no more than a few teaspoons.

- **Hand out diagrams of the menstrual cycle.** Explain that once menstruation starts, it normally follows a predictable pattern, referred to as the menstrual cycle.
- The menstrual cycle is the length of time between one period and the next. Most girls will find their menstrual cycle is usually around 28 days but for some it is a few days longer or shorter – every girl is unique!
- Go through the diagram with the girls. See Facilitators' Notes below.

## FACILITATORS' NOTES: The menstrual cycle

- The menstrual cycle diagram shows that day one is the first day of your period. From days 7 to 11, body tissues and blood build up in the walls of the uterus in preparation for fertilisation.
- The egg is released between days 12 and 15. If the egg is not fertilised, the lining of uterus breaks down and is discharged through the vagina along with some blood – menstruation again. This cycle happens every month.
- You can use this predictable pattern to know when your period will come so that you are prepared.
- When you first start your periods, it takes time for your body to adjust to all the changes so they may be erratic for the first 1-2 years until your body adjusts to all the changes. This means they won't necessarily come every month, but may be more frequent or less frequent.
- Don't worry if your periods are erratic, they will settle down over time.

## 2.3 TRUTH AND MYTHS

- This exercise assesses what girls know and believe about menstruation. Because menstruation is not talked about, a lot of myths and misunderstandings can arise.
- **Give the girls the Truth and Myths handout.** Explain that they are to decide which sentences are true and which are false.
- Read each sentence to the girls one by one, making sure they understand them. The girls mark 'true' or 'false' in their notes.
- When you have finished, go through the sentences and discuss which are true and which are false. (NB: It is important that no one is ridiculed for getting something wrong.)

### FACILITATORS' NOTES: Answers to the Truth and Myths questions

Some of these statements are true, some are false

1	Big girls are the only ones who menstruate	<b>FALSE:</b> Girls can start their periods at 9 years of age.
2	You can get pregnant if you have sex during your period.	<b>TRUE:</b> You can get pregnant while you are on your period.
3	Men with AIDS are cured if they have sex with young girls.	<b>FALSE:</b> Sex cannot cure HIV/AIDS. Unprotected sex is one of the ways the HIV infection spreads to other people.
4	Getting your first period means you are ready for marriage.	<b>FALSE:</b> No, you are not ready for marriage, you are still a child. If you are under 18 years, Ugandan law forbids you from marrying. You should continue your education.
5	Sex cures painful menstruation.	<b>FALSE:</b> Sex does not prevent menstrual pains. Exercise, drinking plenty of water and eating a healthy diet may help reduce pains. If too painful, seek medical help.
6	Girls can take part in exercise or sport during their period.	<b>TRUE:</b> Girls who are menstruating should lead a normal life - taking part in sport, going to school, socialising with friends
7	If you go into the garden or climb a tree during your period, crops or fruit will die.	<b>FALSE:</b> Girls are exactly the same while they are menstruating as when they are not. Menstruation has no relationship with crops drying or fruits rotting.

## Truth and Myths continued

8	If girls and boys do not have sex when still young, their penises and vaginas will block up	<b>FALSE:</b> Girls' vaginas and boys' penises cannot become blocked. Early sex exposes girls and boys to sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and early pregnancy, and may result in child marriage or dropping out of school early.
9	If your menstrual cloth is burned, you will become barren.	<b>FALSE:</b> Burning your menstrual cloth will have no impact on your ability to have children. Burning menstrual cloths is a hygienic way of disposing of them.
10	Used menstrual cloths will attract evil spirits.	<b>FALSE:</b> Used menstrual cloths attract flies and germs, not evil spirits. Dispose of them properly.

## 2.4 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- The facilitator should explain that now that we have gone through what puberty and menstruation are, we will take a break before discussing how to manage your own menstruation. But first, are there any questions or comments?

# BREAK SNACKS and DRINKS

30 minutes

- Take a 30-minute break. Hand out some snacks and drinks.



# MODULE 3: MANAGING MENSTRUATION

**Purpose:** To help learners understand how menstruation works and how to manage it with confidence and dignity

No	Activity	Description	Equipment	Time
3.1	Dot Game 2	An exercise to identify girls' biggest challenges on menstruation	Flip chart paper, sticky dots	10 mins
3.2	Managing your periods	Using sanitary pads or cloth Different types of pads Personal hygiene Being prepared Staying active	Menstruation handout	20 mins
3.3	Period problems	Period pain / discomfort Health issues	Pads, knickers, hot water bottle	5 mins
3.4	Q&A	An opportunity for girls to ask questions or make comments	None	5 mins

## BEFORE THE MODULE

- Pin flip chart paper on the walls for the Dot Game 2 (see Appendix 8).
- Hand out THREE sticky dots to each girl for the Dot Game 2.
- Have pads, knickers and (if possible) a hot water bottle ready

### 3.1 DOT GAME 2: Challenges

- Explain that this game is intended to get an idea of their biggest challenges when it comes to managing their menstruation: it is not an exam (no names are being taken) but will give us an idea of what they know and think.
- Point out the Dot Game flip chart papers on the wall, with the statements (see below).
- Read the statements to the girls, ensuring that they understand them.
- Then tell them they must choose the THREE BIGGEST challenges. They have THREE sticky dots: they should come up to the papers and place one dot next to the three statements they consider to be their biggest challenges in managing their periods.
- Collect the Dot Game papers for analysis afterwards.

## QUESTIONS FOR DOT GAME: CHALLENGES

1. The toilets at school are too crowded
2. No separate toilets for girls
3. Lack of water at school for washing
4. Nowhere to dispose of menstrual cloths at school
5. Lack of menstrual health education / knowledge
6. Don't have sanitary products / materials
7. Don't know which teacher to talk to about menstrual health problems
8. Can't discuss these issues because of social stigma
9. Embarrassment/shame: Worry that boys will make fun of me

### 3.2 MANAGING YOUR PERIODS

- Explain that periods are a normal part of every girl's life. So you need to learn to manage your menstruation for good health as well as dignity.

#### FACILITATORS' NOTES: Managing your periods

- Managing menstruation is about dealing with your menstrual flow while you continue regular activities such as going to school, working, bathing, taking part in sports etc.
- **Don't be afraid of having your period:** it is completely normal and means you are healthy.
- **Tell a parent/guardian** when your period arrives so they can tell you what to do. Remember that all girls go through this, it's nothing to be ashamed about.

#### **Managing blood flow**

- You can use clean cloths or sanitary pads to absorb the blood and prevent clothes from being soiled.
- These should be changed every 2-3 hours for normal flow, more often for heavy flow (flow refers the amount of blood: some girls have heavier flows – ie, more blood – than others).
- Check your pad regularly to see if it needs changing. This will help you to avoid blood leaking onto your clothes. You will soon learn how often you need to change it. Wash your hands with soap afterwards.

#### **Maintaining personal hygiene**

- It is very important to stay healthy and hygienic during your period.
- You should wash your private parts with soap and water at least twice a day. This reduces the risk of smells and infections.
- For the same reason, keep your clothes clean too. Wash your panties regularly and as soon as they become dirty.

## Types of sanitary pads

- Have some examples of sanitary pads ready to show the girls. Then explain that all sanitary pads are meant to absorb the menstrual blood but there are several different types. (See Facilitators' Notes below.)

### FACILITATORS' NOTES: Disposable sanitary pads

#### Disposable pads

- Disposable pads are made from absorbent material and are meant to be worn once, then thrown away. They are sold in shops and supermarkets.
- Some have wrap-around 'wings' to wrap under your panties to keep the pad from moving.
- Others have sticky strips that help the pad stick to your panties. You pull off the covering over the sticky strip before putting in your pants.

#### Throwing away disposable pads

- Never throw sanitary pads down the latrine or toilet – this causes blockages.
- Throw used sanitary pads in the bin or in the incinerator for burning (if your school has one), or wrap them in newspaper or waste paper and burn them in a private place at home.

- **DEMONSTRATION: After explaining about disposable pads, the facilitator should demonstrate how to wear them in panties.**
- Pass the sample pads around the room for the girls to look at.

### FACILITATORS' NOTES: Reusable pads

#### Reusable pads

- Reusable pads are made from washable fabric and are not thrown away but instead washed, dried properly, then used again.
- Like other pads, you must change them regularly to prevent blood leaking onto your clothes.
- Used properly, reusable pads will last for at least a year and sometimes up to three years. This means they are much cheaper than buying disposable pads.
- Some are made in a factory and sold commercially, and others are homemade using locally available materials including cloth and cotton.

- **DEMONSTRATION: The facilitator should show the girls some examples of the reusable pads and demonstrate how to wear them in panties.**
- Explain that every girl will get a pack of these pads at the end of the training. We will also teach them how to make reusable pads during the girls' clubs.

- Because they will be getting a pack of reusable pads, they must listen very carefully to how to look after them. (See Facilitator's Notes below.)

### FACILITATORS' NOTES: Looking after reusable pads

It is very important to keep reusable cloths clean to minimise infection. And if you look after them well, they will last a long time.

- Wash your reusable pads every time you use them.
- Soak them in cold water, then wash them using clean water and soap.
- Never dry your reusable pads and panties under your bed. Always dry them in the sun on the line.
- If you are embarrassed, you can always put them under another cloth or T shirt: the important thing is to make sure they dry properly. If they don't dry properly, they might give you an infection in your private parts.
- Avoid drying them on the grass in case of insect infestation.
- You can iron your cloths to kill germs. Some reusable pads do not recommend ironing – read the instructions.
- Dispose of your old worn-out reusable pads by burning them.

**GROUP EXERCISE: Divide the class into groups of 3 girls. Give them ONE MINUTE to list how to look after reusable sanitary pads.**

- Ask the girls to put their hands up and give ONE item from their list about looking after reusable pads. Keep asking until you have them all.
- Then go through the remaining tips on to managing your menstruation (see Facilitators' notes below).

### FACILITATORS' NOTES: other tips for periods

- **Be prepared:** It's a good idea to take an extra cloth/sanitary pad in a plastic bag to school so that you can change. (Then you are always prepared.)
- If you get a bloodstain on your uniform, tie a cloth or sweater around your waist and ask a friend or teacher for help.
- **Keep active:** Carry out normal activities: Just because you have your period is no reason to stop any of your normal activities. You can go to school, play sports, meet your friends, help with housework – anything.
- **Exercise:** Exercise is healthy and you should stay active.
- **Eat a healthy diet:** There is no reason to stop eating a particular food. Drink plenty of water and eat plenty of fruit and vegetables. Bananas, citrus foods and avocados might help prevent cramps because they increase potassium levels. Foods rich in iron are needed to make new blood so eat plenty of beans and green leafy vegetables such as spinach; try to include some red meat and chicken.

### 3.3 PERIOD PROBLEMS

- Explain that sometimes periods are painful or uncomfortable. This is normal. See Facilitators' Notes below.

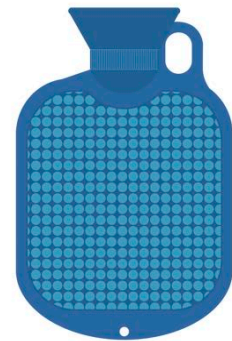
#### FACILITATORS' NOTES: Period problems

##### Painful menstruation

- Some girls experience back pain, sore breasts, stomach ache or headaches. Others feel tired, or low in spirits, or develop pimples. Some develop bloating in their abdomen.
- The pain/discomfort is usually caused by the muscles of the uterus cramping to shed the uterus lining.
- But plenty of girls feel fine.

##### Dealing with painful periods

- Simple painkillers can help with pain.
- A hot water bottle held on your stomach can help. This is a rubber bottle that you fill with hot water. Sometimes you can also wrap it in a towel if it is too hot. **(The facilitator should demonstrate the hot water bottle).**



##### Health issues

- After puberty some girls see a white or yellowish vaginal discharge in their pants. This is NORMAL and nothing to worry about. Vaginal discharge is a fluid or mucus that keeps the vagina clean and moist, and protects it from infection.
- However, if you have vaginal discharge that is discharge that is itchy, irritating, discoloured or smells bad, this may be a sign of infection and you should see a doctor or the school nurse.
- Also see a doctor if you get pain when urinating, or if you produce more discharge than usual, or if you get a lot more menstrual bleeding than usual.
- Using dirty cloths can introduce bacteria to your private parts which could lead to infections.
- Using old, rough, damp or non-absorbent cloth, or not changing sanitary pads often enough, can cause skin irritation in the vaginal area or thighs.

### 3.4 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Give the girls an opportunity to ask any questions or make comments on what they have heard.

# MODULE 4: ATTITUDES TO MENSTRUATION

**Purpose:** To understand that menstruation is normal and nothing to be ashamed of  
 To understand the faith perspective of menstruation  
 To challenge stigma and shaming

No	Activity	Description	Equipment	Time
4.1	The faith view	What do faiths say about menstruation? Faith values Challenging stigma and shame Class discussion	Word search handout Flip chart paper, sticky notes	20 mins
4.2	Responsibilities	Responsibilities of growing up Looking after yourself	None	10 mins
4.3	Reusable sanitary pads	Distribution of reusable pads, pants and soap	Reusable pads, pants and soap	10 mins

## BEFORE THE MODULE

- Have the faith values word search handout ready for each girl (see Appendix 9; Solution to word search in Appendix 10)
- Have sticky notes ready for each girl, plus a flip chart paper on the wall.
- Have pads, pants and soap ready for distribution to each girl

### 4.1 THE FAITH VIEW

**Notes for facilitator:** Adapt the section below according to your audience. If you are in a Christian school, use the Christian quotations and values; in a Muslim school, concentrate on the Muslim quotation and values. However, given that many schools are mixed, you may wish to include both faith teachings, to ensure you are reaching everyone in the class and to improve understanding between the faiths.

- Explain that both the Christian and Muslim faiths believe menstruation is a normal, bodily function created by God.
- The Bible (Christianity's holy text) and the Qur'an (Islam's holy text) both tell us that God created everything on Earth. Quote the verses below from the holy books:

Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made

– John 1:3

It is He who created for you all that is in the Earth.'

– Surah al Baquarah 29

- If God created everything, this also includes menstruation.
- The Bible and the Qur'an also tell us that what God created was 'very good' and 'perfect':

God saw all that He had made, and it was very good

– Genesis 1:31

Allah 'perfected everything which He created'

– Surah As-Sajdah 32:7

- If we are taught that God created everything, including menstruation, how should this affect our attitudes to menstruation?
- Is it right to feel ashamed of it? Are other people right to use menstruation to mock us and shame us?
- No, instead of being ashamed of menstruation, we should remember that this normal bodily function has been created by God and therefore we should not disdain it.
- And we should tell people who try to shame us, that there is no shame in a natural bodily function that has been created by God for the benefit of all people.
- Menstruation should be a joyful event because it is a sign that we are growing up and entering a new phase of our life.
- Menstruation can also be seen as a gift from God because it is a vital part of the human reproductive cycle. This is for the benefit of every single person in this world.

### Faith values

- Explain that both Christianity and Islam have values that should guide us in how we treat other people. See Facilitators' Notes below.

### FACILITATORS' NOTES: Shared Christians and Muslims values

- The **value** and **dignity** of human beings
- **Respect** – for ourselves and for one another
- **Love** – for God, for one another and for His Creation

Out of **love** for one another come other values such as:

- **Caring** for each other
- **Supporting** each other
- **Sharing** what we have with each other

### Faith values word search

- **Give the word search handout to each girl.**
- Tell the girls to work together in groups of three to find six words in the word search. The words are: dignity, love, sharing, care, supporting, respect.

- The words can go across, down or diagonally on the word search. We have found one word in the word search – value – to show you. Give them five minutes.
- When the time is up, invite the girls to say where each word can be found, one word at a time. Continue until all the words have been found. (Solution in Appendix 10.)

## Challenging stigma and shame

### CLASS DISCUSSION (10 minutes)

- Ask the girls how the different faith values should guide us on our attitudes towards menstruation?
- Can we use these values to change the social stigma on menstruation?
- Can we use these values to challenge those who try to shame us? If a boy teases you, what will you say to him?
- **At the end of the discussion, hand out sticky notes to the girls.**
- If they were talking to a younger sister or friend, what POSITIVE message would they tell her to help her prepare for her periods?
- Invite the girls to write one thing they would tell their younger sister or friend, and put the sticky notes on a flip chart paper on the wall.
- Read out some of the comments, without identifying who wrote them.

## 4.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF GROWING UP

- Explain that when a girl starts her periods, it is also a sign that she can become pregnant. So as well as learning how to manage her periods, she also needs to learn how to care for herself (See Facilitators' notes below).

### FACILITATORS' NOTES: Growing up

- Menstruation is a beautiful stage in life, the gateway for girls to adulthood. However, every good thing comes with responsibility.
- That means learning how to manage your menstruation properly and also safeguarding yourself so that you can grow up happy and healthy.
- Look after yourself. Do not allow anyone to disrespect you.
- You need to treat your body with respect and dignity. And you need to protect yourself from people who want you to behave differently.

#### Protecting yourself

- Some men or boys may imagine that you are ready for sex or marriage. And you also might experience new feelings of interest in a man or boy.
- But under the law a child (boy or girl) under 18 cannot consent to sex – they are too young to make such an important decision.
- Men or boys may tempt you, or put pressure on you, or even try to force you into having sex. That is why you should take care and try to avoid risky situations.



- Having sex may lead to unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and even HIV and AIDS.

### **Sexually transmitted diseases**

- Sexually transmitted diseases (also called venereal diseases) are diseases that result from having sex with someone who is infected.
- Sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrhea may lead to infertility. Others as HIV lead to serious health complications.
- It is important to guard against sexually transmitted diseases.

### **Teenage pregnancy**

- Teenage pregnancy is a major cause of school dropout and health complications.
- If you drop out of school early, you will leave school with few skills and qualifications. This means a poor and difficult future.
- Just because your periods have started does not mean your body is ready to carry a baby or that you yourself are mature enough to look after a baby.
- If you are a young girl and you have a baby before your body is ready for childbirth, you are at high risk of serious health complications and even death.
- Both the Christian and Muslim faiths teach that sexual relationships should be part of a loving marriage.
- The Ministry of Education and Sports says all children must be protected from sex and marriage before they reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.
- For this, and the above reasons, you should avoid sex and child marriage until you are old enough legally, physically and emotionally.

### **You are precious**

- Remember, you are precious as a girl! You are precious in the eyes of God!
- Consult your teachers, parents, faith leaders and other trusted people in your community to help you mature responsibly. Avoid risky places and situations.

## **4.3 SANITARY PADS, PANTS AND SOAP**

- If the budget allows, provide snacks and drinks for the girls as you hand out the sanitary pads
- Each girl receives
  - A. One pack of reusable sanitary pads
  - B. One pair of pants
  - C. One bar of laundry soap
  - D. One handout showing how to care for the reusable pads.
- Remind the girls that we went through how to care for the reusable pads. The handout also has instructions on caring for them.

**WORKSHOP END**

## Dignity for Girls schools training workshop consent form

Name of school: ..... Date: .....

District .....

Facilitators: .....

You are being asked to take part in a project about menstruation (you might call it your period, your menstrual period or ensonga). This will involve a mix of lessons and activities such as working in groups and taking part in quizzes. This is not a test! We hope it is fun as well as educational.

You do not have to take part. You will not get into trouble if you don't want to take part. However, if you would like to take part, please read the Statement of Consent and sign your name below.

The purpose of the workshop is to:

- teach you the facts about puberty and menstruation
- teach you how to manage your periods confidently and with dignity
- teach you about personal hygiene during menstruation
- help you to feel more confident about talking about periods

### **Statement of consent**

- I understand the purpose of the school menstruation workshops.
- I understand that I do not have to take part.
- I am willing to take part.

**Name (write clearly)**

## DOT GAME 1: KNOWLEDGE & ATTITUDES

- Give each girl five sticky dots or stars.
- Write the questions below on flip chart paper. Make sure the writing is big enough and there is plenty of space for girls to come up to place their sticky dots or stars.
- Pin or stick the flip chart papers on the wall.
- Read the statements to the girls, ensuring that they understand them, then ask them to come and place one dot next to their answer for each question.



### QUESTIONS FOR DOT GAME 1: KNOWLEDGE & ATTITUDES

- 1. Which of the following sentences best explains what menstruation is?**
  - a. Menstruation is a sickness that makes women bleed every month.
  - b. Menstruation is a natural biological function of the female body that is part of the female reproductive system.
  - c. Menstruation is a sign that girls have done something wrong or bad.
- 2. Has someone talked to you about periods? Who is the MAIN PERSON?**
  - a. Yes, some one in my family (my mother / sister / aunt / grandmother)
  - b. Yes, my teacher
  - c. Yes, my friend
  - d. No one
- 3. How difficult is managing your menstrual periods?**
  - a. I find managing my menstrual periods is ALWAYS difficult.
  - b. I find managing my menstrual periods is SOMETIMES difficult.
  - c. I find managing my menstrual periods is NEVER difficult.
  - d. I have not started my menstrual periods yet.
- 4. How confident do you feel about managing your menstrual periods?**
  - a. I am VERY confident about managing my menstrual periods.
  - b. I am A LITTLE confident about managing my menstrual periods.
  - c. I am NOT AT ALL confident about managing my menstrual periods.
  - d. I have not started my menstrual periods yet.
- 5. Do boys in your school tease girls about menstrual periods?**
  - a. Yes, they tease them often
  - b. Yes, they tease them sometimes.
  - c. No, they never tease them

## WHAT IS PUBERTY?

- Puberty (also called adolescence) is the stage when girls and boys experience physical changes as they move from childhood into adulthood.
- It is a time of big changes in the body – both inside and outside – and is the stage when a boy or a girl become sexually aware or mature and can have a baby.
- Puberty usually starts between the ages of 8 and 14 in girls and 9 and 15 in boys. Some people start puberty a little earlier or later.
- Each person is different so everyone goes through puberty on his or her body's own schedule. This is one reason why some of your friends might still look like kids whereas others look more like adults.

Some of the changes that occur include:

Girls	Boys
Development of breasts	Voices break and deepen
Widening of hips	Shoulders widen, facial hair grows
Growth of pubic hair	Growth of pubic hair
Spots/acne	Spots/acne
Unexplained mood swings	Unexplained mood changes
Sweat glands become more active	Sweat glands become more active
Girls start menstruation	Boys have 'wet dreams' (involuntary ejaculations of semen during sleep)

### Mood swings

- Puberty is a very exciting time but it can also be a time of uncertainty, self consciousness and anxiety. As well as changing physically, you are also changing emotionally and psychologically.
- This means that sometimes you will feel swings of emotion - very happy one minute, very sad the next minute, and sometimes very angry. This is normal!
- If you understand what is happening to you, then you will be better able to cope with the big changes happening in your body and your emotions.

## WHAT IS MENSTRUATION?

Menstruation is a natural biological function of the female body that a girl goes through when she is growing up and is part of the female reproductive system. It is the monthly flow of blood from the uterus (womb) through the vagina in all girls every month, and is **NORMAL** and **NATURAL**.

Menstruation is **NOT**:

- A disease
- Something to be ashamed of
- A reason to stop girls and women from going to school, carrying out household activities, doing sports or working

Menstruation **IS**:

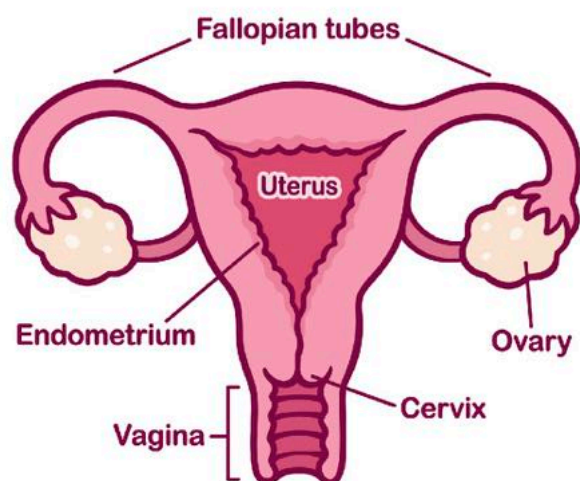
- A normal, healthy part of growing up and becoming a woman
- Something that is experienced by **ALL** women and girls
- A natural process whereby a girl's body sheds the lining of the uterus every month, causing bleeding from the vagina

### How menstruation works

- Every month, an egg is released from the ovary and travels to the uterus (womb). This is called **ovulation**.
- The walls of the uterus have already prepared to receive the egg by growing a lining made of blood and tissue.
- The egg spends a few days in the uterus.
- Then, if the egg is not fertilised, your body releases it through the vagina.
- At the same time, the lining of the uterus break down and blood flows through the vagina. That is **menstruation**.



Female Reproductive System



## When do periods start?

Girls normally start their periods between the age of 9 and 15 years. Menstruation then takes place every month until it stops between the ages of 45 and 55. This is called menopause.

## How long do periods last?

Periods can last for between 3 and 7 days at a time. The average is 5 days. The amount of blood flow varies and sometimes is heavier than at others. But the total amount lost during a period is no more than a few teaspoons.

## Managing your periods

- **Managing menstruation** is about dealing with your menstrual flow while you continue regular activities such as going to school, working, bathing, taking part in sports etc.
- **Don't be afraid of having your period:** it is completely normal and means you are healthy.
- **Tell a parent/guardian** when your period arrives so they can tell you what to do. Remember that all girls go through this, it's nothing to be ashamed about.

## Managing blood flow

- You can use clean cloths or sanitary pads to absorb the blood and prevent clothes from being soiled.
- Change your cloth or pad every few hours for normal flow, more often for heavy flow (flow means the amount of blood).
- Check your pad regularly to see if it needs changing. This will help you to avoid blood leaking onto your clothes.
- Wash your hands with soap afterwards.

## Personal hygiene

- It is very important to stay healthy and hygienic during your period.
- You should wash your private parts with soap and water at least twice a day. This reduces the risk of smells and infections.
- For the same reason, keep your clothes clean too. Wash your panties regularly and as soon as they become dirty.



Types of sanitary pad



## THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE

The menstrual cycle is the length of time between one period and the next – usually around 28 days but sometimes a bit longer or shorter – every girl is unique!

The menstrual cycle diagram begins with the first day of your period (**day 1**).

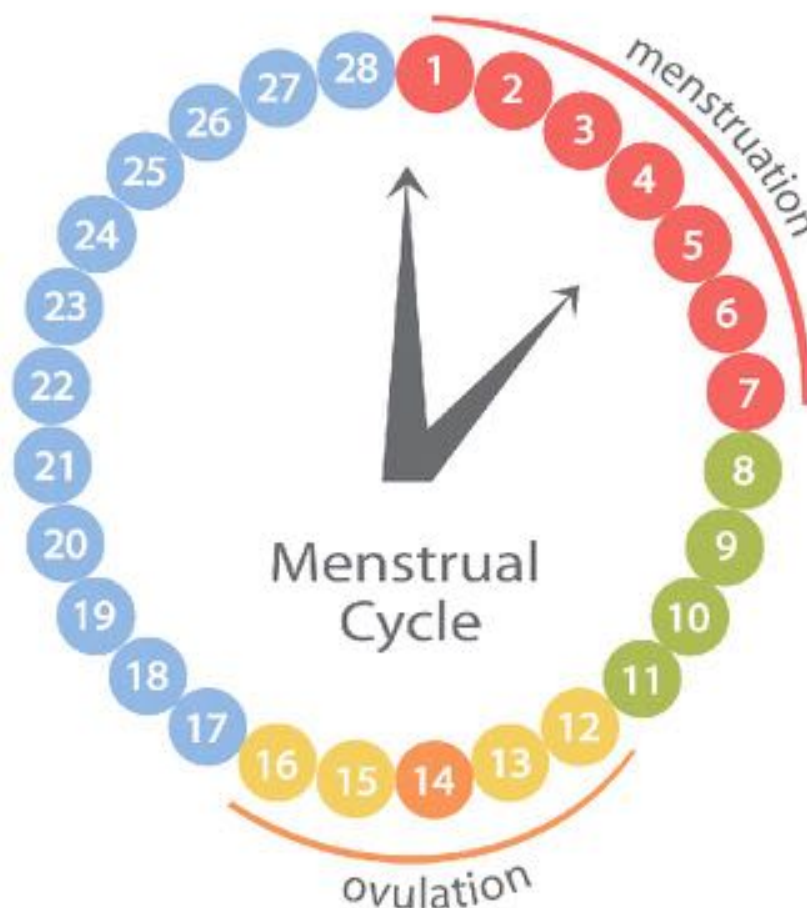
**Days 1 to 7:** This is when menstruation happens (periods usually last for 3 and 7 days).

**Days 8 and 11:** Body tissues and blood build up in the walls of the uterus in preparation for fertilisation.

**Days 12 to 16:** Ovulation takes place from (ie, your body releases an egg).

**Days 17 to 28:** If the egg is not fertilised, the lining of uterus breaks down from. This is discharged through the vagina along with some blood, when menstruation starts again.

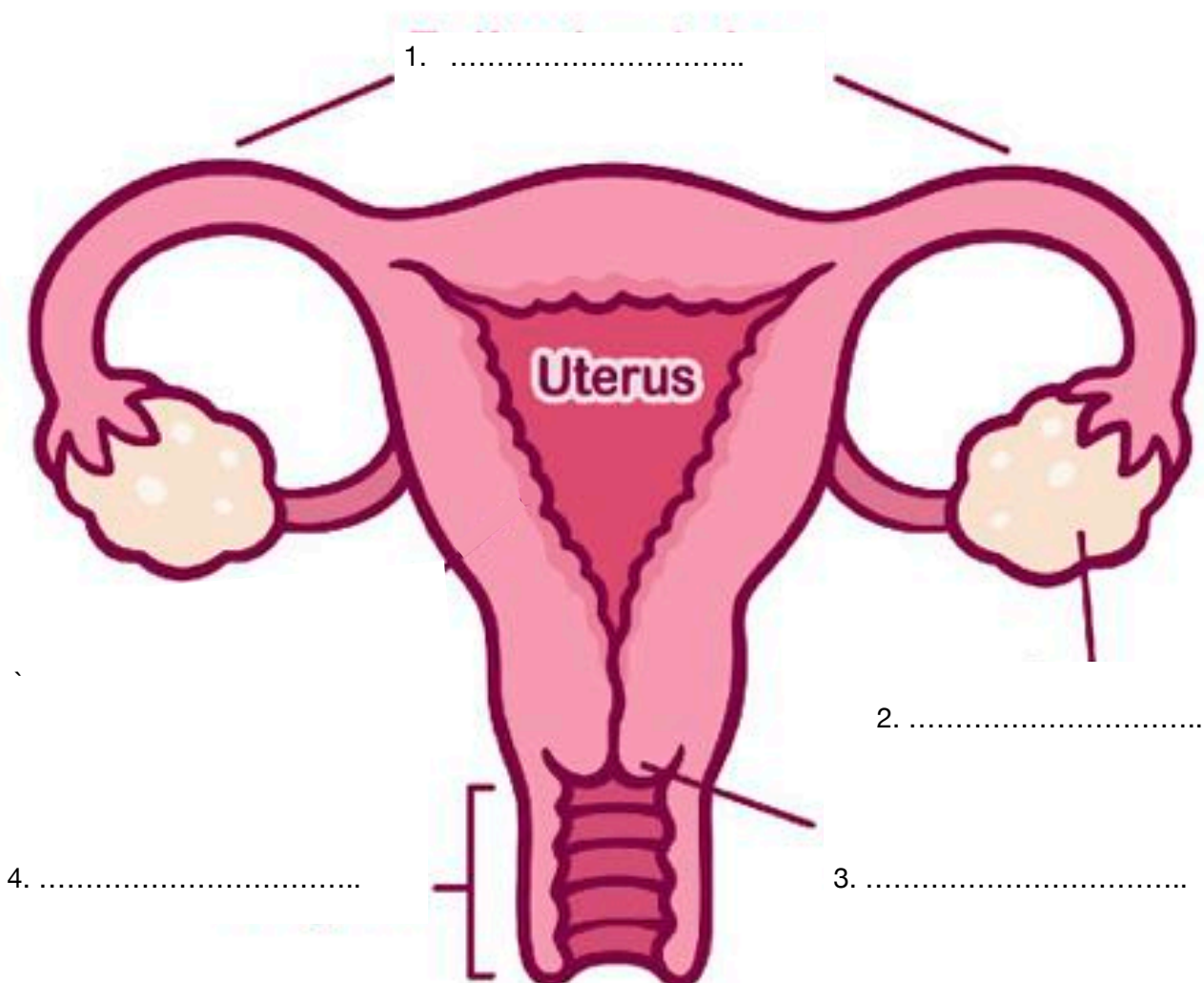
This cycle happens every month and only stops at menopause. You can use this predictable pattern to know when your period will come so that you are prepared. Don't worry if your periods are erratic at first, they will settle down over time.



## DIAGRAM OF THE UTERUS

Do you know the names for the different parts of the uterus? See if you can match the names below in the correct place.

- Ovary
- Fallopian tubes
- Vagina
- Cervix





### Truth and Myths questions

Some of these statements are true, some are false. Tick ✓ the correct answer.

	STATEMENT	TRUE	FALSE
1	Big girls are the only ones who menstruate		
2	You can get pregnant if you have sex during your period.		
3	Men with AIDS are cured if they have sex with young girls.		
4	Getting your first period means you are ready for marriage.		
5	Sex cures painful menstruation.		
6	Girls can take part in exercise or sport during their period.		
7	If you go into the garden or climb a tree during your period, crops or fruit will die.		
8	If girls and boys do not have sex when still young, their penises and vaginas will block up		
9	If your menstrual cloth is burned, you will become barren.		
10	Used menstrual cloths will attract evil spirits.		

## DOT GAME 2: CHALLENGES OF MENSTRUATION

This game is intended to get an idea of girls' biggest challenges when it comes to managing their menstruation.

- Give each girl THREE sticky dots or stars.
- Write the questions below on flip chart paper. Make sure the writing is big enough and there is plenty of space for girls to come up to place their sticky dots or stars.
- Pin or stick the flip chart papers on the wall.
- Read the statements to the girls, ensuring that they understand them, then tell them they have just THREE sticky dots or stars. They must choose which are the THREE BIGGEST challenges for them in managing their menstruation.
- When they are ready, they should come up to the papers and place one dot next to the three biggest challenges.

### QUESTIONS FOR DOT GAME: CHALLENGES

1. The toilets at school are too crowded
2. No separate toilets for girls
3. Lack of water at school for washing
4. Nowhere to dispose of menstrual cloths at school
5. Lack of menstrual health education / knowledge
6. Don't have sanitary products / materials
7. Don't know which teacher to talk to about menstrual health problems
8. Can't discuss these issues because of social stigma
9. Embarrassment/shame: Worry that boys will make fun of me

## WORD SEARCH

Hidden in this table are seven words which are all associated with faith values. See if you can find them. The words can go across, down or diagonally. We have found one word to show you: VALUE.

See if you can find these words:

LOVE

CARE

SHARING

DIGNITY

RESPECT

SUPPORTING

FAITH VALUES WORD SEARCH										
A	E	R	D	G	N	A	S	L	E	C
C	N	D	G	I	K	X	H	T	R	A
A	Q	I	A	T	G	T	A	D	A	R
V	A	L	U	E	P	N	R	E	Z	E
A	W	S	H	A	R	I	I	B	O	C
P	L	H	O	I	A	Z	N	T	L	L
C	V	O	C	A	R	H	G	T	Y	O
A	I	T	V	L	E	P	E	C	T	V
L	E	S	M	E	S	S	O	E	Y	E
C	S	U	P	P	O	R	T	I	N	G
A	S	A	V	U	H	A	M	S	Y	P
R	E	S	P	E	C	T	D	I	A	R

Word search solution for facilitators:

FAITH VALUES WORD SEARCH - SOLUTION										
			D				S			C
				I			H			A
					G		A			R
V	A	L	U	E		N	R			E
							I			
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	S	U	P	P	O	R	T	I	N	G
R	E	S	P	E	C	T				