

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT GUIDE FOR NURSES







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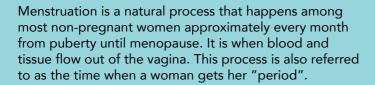


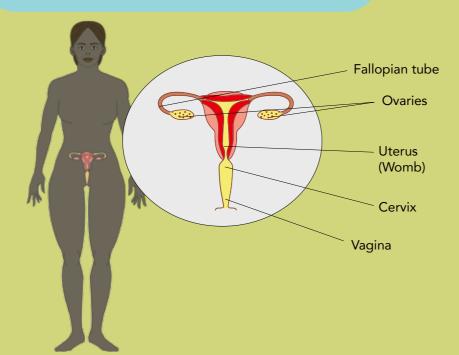
PART 1: MENSTRUATION

I. MENSTRUATION AND THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE



What is menstruation?



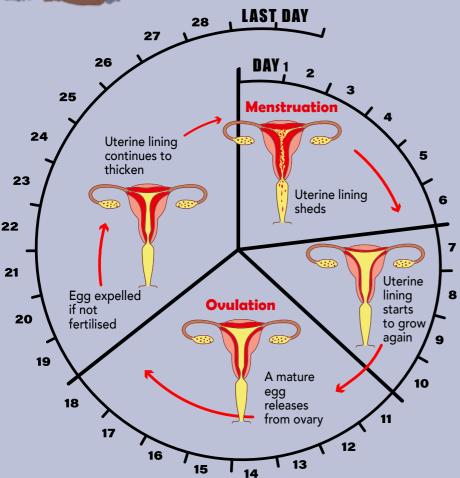




Women who menstruate go through a menstrual cycle every month to get the body ready for a possible pregnancy. During each cycle, an ovum (egg) develops and is released from the ovaries. While the egg moves into the fallopian tube, the lining of the uterus builds up for a possible pregnancy. If the egg is fertilized by an active sperm, it will attach to the lining of the uterus and grow into a foetus. If the egg is not fertilized, it is shed with the uterine lining as menstrual blood, and the body prepares itself for the next egg.



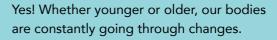
How long does a menstrual cycle last?



The average length of a menstrual cycle is 28 days, but this timing can differ from person to person and can change in one person over time. The process of menstruation, when the uterine lining and egg are discarded as blood, can last between 2-7 days and the amount of blood can be less on some days and more on others. It's important to recognize variations in menstrual experiences and avoid generalizing one person's experience with others.



Do older women experience menstruation differently from younger women?







I've heard about menopause. What is it?

Menopause is when your body approaches the end of its reproductive years (usually around the ages of 45 to 55) and menstruation gradually stops.





How does a woman know if she's going through menopause?

She'll begin to experience irregular menstruation or the absence of menstruation. Some common symptoms include hot flashes, difficulty sleeping, or bladder problems. These symptoms can affect one's ability to work at their best.



II. MENSTRUATION AT WORK

For women to manage their menstrual health and hygiene with dignity, they need:



Awareness, information and self-confidence regarding their menstrual health and hygiene.







Access to safe, hygienic and absorbent products, either on site or at an affordable price near their workplace.



Access to safe and clean facilities that are equipped with clean water, soap, and proper disposal of menstrual products.



A supportive workplace environment that enables them to manage menstruation without fear.



- ∠ 2 billion people around the world menstruate. Many of them also menstruate while at work.
- ✓ Talking about menstruation doesn't make any employee an attention-seeker, unprofessional, lazy, or immature.



Encourage menstruating employees to:

- Track the start date and duration of their menstrual cycles to understand the frequency of their periods and prepare accordingly.
- Choose menstrual products based on their menstrual flow and how frequently they can change products at work.
- Parry backup menstrual products, painkillers, and clothes.





PART 2:
PROMOTING DIGNIFIED
MENSTRUATION AT WORK



I. HOW CAN NURSES PROMOTE DIGNIFIED MENSTRUATION AT WORK?

Reduce menstrual stigma with accurate information



Are periods dirty and shameful?

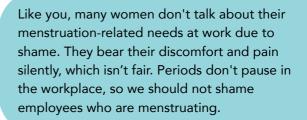
Menstruation or menstrual blood is not dirty, unhygienic, or shameful. Many people think that menstruation removes dirt from the body and that menstrual blood is impure, but this is not true. It is a natural biological process.



Address the culture of shame and silence around menstruation



I feel ashamed when I ask my experienced colleagues about how to use a reusable pad or request lighter duties from my supervisor when my menstrual pain is really bad.

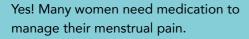




Provide guidance on menstrual management at work



Is it okay to take painkillers at work when period pain is too much?





How can I prevent staining my clothes at work when I bleed? I'm worried that others will find out that I'm menstruating.

Many employees, like you, are worried that their colleagues will judge them or make fun of them if they are menstruating. There is nothing wrong with menstruating or accidentally staining your clothes. If you use menstrual products that are safe, comfortable, and good at absorbing blood, you can reduce the chances of leaks and stains.



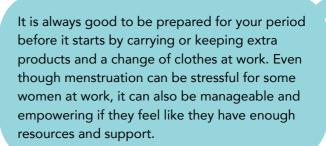
How will I know what is the best menstrual product for me?

Try out different products to see which one works for you. When choosing, you should consider price, comfort, your menstrual flow, and how often you will need to change it while at work. Remember, leaks happen if your product isn't absorbent, doesn't stay in place, or if you wear it for too long.





I am constantly worried when I know my period is about to start.





II. IMPORTANCE OF DIGNIFIED MENSTRUAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

It can negatively affect employees when menstrual health and hygiene are not properly addressed in the workplace:



1. Health

Employees who don't have access to safe and hygienic menstrual products may wear the product they have for longer than the recommended time, or they may use unsafe materials, which can lead to discomfort and infections. This can distract them, slow them down at work, or force them to take time off to see a doctor.



2. Productivity

Employees may not be able to work effectively or meet targets if they are feeling menstrual pain, are not allowed to take toilet breaks, or are using uncomfortable menstrual products.

Menstruation can impact employees emotionally and physically; many workplaces often don't think about how menstruation can affect one's ability to be productive at work.

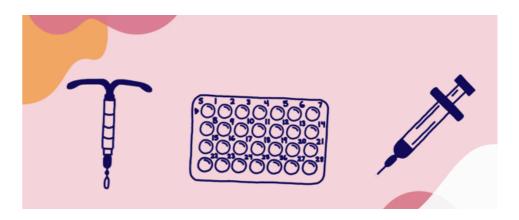


3. General Wellbeing

Menstruating employees may feel constantly worried or anxious because:

- They may accidentally stain their work clothes and be judged.
- They feel their supervisors won't understand why they may need to take time off or rest while menstruating.
- They don't have enough breaks to change their menstrual products in a timely manner, which may lead to leaking or infections.

III. FAMILY PLANNING AND MENSTRUATION



Some women in the workplace use or are considering using a family planning method (also known as contraception or birth control). Certain types of family planning methods can affect a woman's menstrual cycle, especially hormonal contraceptives like the Depo Provera shot.

Some people who start, stop, or change family planning methods may experience:

- Heavier or lighter bleeding
- Bleeding outside their regular menstrual cycle
- Shorter or longer menstrual cycles
- Multiple menstrual cycles in one month
- Absence of bleeding

If employees are experiencing uncomfortable physical or emotional symptoms as a result of using a family planning method, they should consult their doctor.

NOTE: Encourage employees to seek medical advice from a doctor before starting any family planning method.



PART 3:
ADDRESSING MENSTRUAL
STIGMA IN THE WORKPLACE



I. MYTHS AND FACTS ABOUT MENSTRUATION



What is menstrual stigma?

Stigma associated with menstruation. This stigma is deeply rooted in cultural taboos, social and religious beliefs, sexism (discrimination against women), and lack of information, which results in negative effects and unfair treatment of people who menstruate.

What is period shame?

This is when women feel or are made to feel embarrassed because they menstruate. No one should feel or be made to feel ashamed because of a natural process.

What is a myth?

A belief that many people have that isn't true.

What is a taboo?

Something that is not acceptable to say, do, or believe in, usually because of social, religious, or cultural practices.



How can we reduce menstrual stigma and period shame?

Many myths, taboos, and misinformation about menstruation in society also exist in the workplace. To address menstrual stigma and period shame, we must replace misinformation with accurate information.



Myth:

Women must bear and suffer their menstruation in silence - especially in the workplace!

Fact:

Menstruation is a natural process which can be kept private, but if employees want to talk about their menstrual experiences and needs, they should be able to do so freely. It is everyone's responsibility to create a culture of acceptance, respect, and kindness at work.



Myth:

Menstruation is something women should just persevere through!

Fact:

A woman should not have to suffer while menstruating. Everyone in the workplace can help women have more manageable menstrual experiences at work.



Myth:

Menstruation is dirty and shameful!

Fact:

Menstruation is a natural process that helps prepare the body for potential pregnancy.



Myth:

Leaking or staining work clothes with menstrual blood is shameful!

Fact

Menstrual blood can leak and stain work clothes for many reasons. The nurse shouldn't make employees feel guilty, afraid, or ashamed when this happens. Instead, they can help women find fresh clothes or menstrual products.



Myth:

Discussing menstruation in the workplace is attention-seeking, shameful, and immature!

Fact:

Employees who talk about their experiences with menstruation aren't immature or attention-seeking. Menstruation can affect their workplace experiences in many ways, and the nurse should listen to employees respectfully when they speak out about menstruation-related issues. They shouldn't judge women for needing menstrual products or accidentally staining their work clothes, nor should they discuss or gossip about employees' menstrual experiences with other people.



Myth:

Menstruation is a burden that women need to bear privately!

Fact:

Menstruation isn't something women have to experience alone or in silence, especially if it means that they're in excessive pain at work. Just as we support other employees who are pregnant, have injuries, or have health-related needs, we can also find ways to support employees who menstruate so that they don't feel pressured to suffer quietly. Menstruating employees can be supported in the workplace through the provision of pain medication, breaks, and time to rest when in excessive pain.



PART 4:
PATIENT-CENTERED CARE



I. PRACTICING EFFECTIVE PATIENT-CENTERED CARE

What is patient-centered care?



Patient-centered care is care that puts the patient's needs first. It is when a nurse provides care that is respectful of and responsive to a patient's needs and preferences.

Why should nurses in the workplace prioritize employees' needs?



Promoting health and wellbeing in the workplace contributes to employees' confidence, motivation, job satisfaction, and a sense of safety while at work. When employees feel healthy, they're more likely to be focused and perform higher quality work.

II. HOW CAN NURSES BETTER PRACTICE PATIENT-CENTERED CARE IN THE WORKPLACE?

To practice patient-centered care with menstruating employees, remember **"PATIENTS".**



Pay attention to employees' needs

Listen to menstruating employees who come to you as patients without judging them. Take the time to learn about their menstrual experiences, needs, and realities at work so that you can make the best and most informed recommendations.



Assume nothing

It's important to be objective and not assume anything about an employee's economic status, priorities, values, or beliefs based on their choice of menstrual product or practices. Making assumptions about employees can worsen stigma, spread misinformation, and potentially harm employees in the long term.



Treat employees with empathy

Women experience menstruation differently. It is therefore important to treat each woman according to her own menstrual needs and not use others' experiences to dismiss or demean an employee. For example, don't make a menstruator who is in pain feel like she is overreacting just because you or people you know don't experience a lot of pain.



Inform those around you

Share accurate information about menstruation and decrease stigma by educating all employees on the importance of menstrual health and hygiene.



Establish trust

Not everyone feels comfortable talking about menstruation. Employees who seek health care at work need to be able to trust their nurses so that they can talk openly and without fear of judgement. Also, if employees trust their nurses, they are more likely to follow their recommendations.



Note when a patient needs additional care

Refer employees to an outside healthcare provider, should they need additional care. For example, if an employee seems to be experiencing a menstrual disorder or family planning-related menstrual complications, she should be referred to a doctor.



Take every opportunity to advocate

Advocate for your patients' access to safe and reliable menstrual products and pain medication in the workplace. Also, advise management on how they can address infrastructural needs so that employees can maintain their menstrual health and hygiene. For example, make sure the workplace has enough toilets, clean running water, and soap to wash hands. Also, ensure that disposal bins are emptied frequently and that they have lids.



Support your patients

Employees can experience increased worry, mood swings or even sadness just before or during their period. Pay attention to the impact of menstruation on employees' emotions and how it is affecting their productivity. When you can, provide them support.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

In the event that an employee needs additional information about sexual, reproductive, and menstrual health issues, encourage them to reach out to the following resources:

- Aunty Jane Hotline Call for free at 0800 721530
- Ask NIVI WhatsApp at +254 207 640 156
- LVCT Call for free from a Safaricom line at 1190
- Marie Stopes Kenya Call for free at 0800 720 005 or WhatsApp at +254 709 819 001



Women go through many physiological changes related to their menstrual cycle that can make them anxious, nervous, tense, irritable, or even sad. These emotions can make them feel overwhelmed and can often affect their general wellbeing. Here are a few tips to help nurses better support their menstruating patients:



1. Identify what is impacting their wellbeing and seek resources to address the problem.



2. Urge them to rely on support systems like workplace resources, friends, and families.



3. Promote light exercise and maintaining a healthy diet.



4. Stress the importance of regular rest and a consistent sleeping schedule.



5. Suggest that they track their menstrual cycle and consult a doctor if it changes.



6. Encourage them to carry (or store in a locker) spare menstrual products, pain medication, underwear, and clothes at work.



PART 5: PAIN MANAGEMENT



I. HOW TO MANAGE PAIN DURING MENSTRUATION



I think I need help. Day two of my menstrual cycle is usually so painful! I get the worst cramps and I have a hard time completing my work duties. How many painkillers should I take per day?

I'm sorry to hear that. It's okay to take non-prescription painkillers for relief. You can take 1- 2 tablets with water up to four times daily, as recommended on the packaging.



Everyone tells me that I should just bear this pain silently, but it's hard to do that, especially when I'm working. At what point should I take a painkiller?

There's no need to suffer unnecessarily! It's common to experience cramping before or during your period. You can take a painkiller if menstrual pain is preventing you from doing your work like you normally would. There are non-medicinal pain relief methods too.





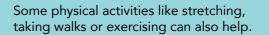
Wait a minute... you mean there are other ways I can relieve the pain from my cramps?

Yes! You can take warm baths, massage pain relief balms like Robb or Kaluma on your abdominal area, or you can apply heat where you feel pain by using a hot water bottle.





I didn't know that there are things I could do to ease the pain. I just thought that the pain I feel is part of life!







What options are there for people like me who will do anything to avoid any physical exercises?!

Don't worry! Paying attention to what you eat while you menstruate is another helpful way to alleviate period cramps. Avoid caffeine and any foods that cause bloating and nausea. Instead, eat light, healthy meals, and drink plenty of water.





Wah! These methods are simple for us to try.

Start gradually with one method and observe which one works for you.



II. ASSISTING EMPLOYEES WITH MENSTRUAL PAIN MANAGEMENT

When dealing with women who are experiencing menstrual pain, nurses can assess the situation and recommend any of the following methods:



1. Common painkillers

Common painkillers, like paracetamol, can be bought at pharmacies or at local shops. It is advisable that employees get a doctor's opinion, however, if the common painkillers don't feel like they're helping.



2. Heat

Employees can buy a hot water bottle at the supermarket to apply heat to the abdomen and lower back. They can also improvise at home by using a plastic bottle filled with hot water. In either case, the bottle should be covered and wrapped using a thick fabric (like a towel) to prevent any burn accidents.



3. Pain relief balm massages

By applying and massaging a pain relief balm (like Robb or Kaluma), employees can relieve lower abdominal cramps, lower back pain, and headaches.

III. REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH CONDITIONS AFFECTING MENSTRUAL HEALTH

Although menstruation is a natural process, there are menstrual health conditions that nurses should know about, especially because they can affect employees' ability to work

affect employees' ability to work.

Endometriosis: A disorder whereby a tissue similar to the lining of the uterus – the endometrium – grows outside the uterine cavity. The tissue can be found on the ovaries, bowel and/or the tissue lining the pelvis. Common symptoms of endometriosis included severe abdominal and/or pelvic pain, long periods, heavy menstrual flow, nausea and/or vomiting, bowel and urinary disorders, and pain/cramping during or after sexual intercourse.

Premenstrual syndrome (PMS): A condition caused by hormonal changes during a woman's menstrual cycle that affects her emotions, behavior, and physical health during the days leading up to her period. PMS is very common and affects most menstruating women. Symptoms include cramping, mood swings, headaches, back pain, and many others.

Premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD): A more severe and chronic manifestation of PMS, disrupting one's ability to function generally, including at work. Symptoms of PMDD include severe irritability, depression, or anxiety in the week or two before a woman gets her period, and they usually disappear two or three days after the start of a woman's period.

Polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS): A hormonal condition can cause the ovaries to enlarge and develop numerous small cysts/collections of fluid. PCOS may result in menstrual irregularity, excessive hair growth, acne, and obesity.

Uterine fibroids: A non-cancerous growth on the wall of the uterus. Women with uterine fibroids may experience pelvic swelling or abnormal menstrual bleeding.

Reproductive system cancers: These include ovarian, uterine, and cervical cancers. These cancers begin with abnormal cells that multiply out of control and form a tumor. If not treated, the tumor can spread to other parts of the body. Women may experience a range of symptoms including bloating, pelvic or abdominal pain, and/or unusual bleeding.

Ovarian cysts: A fluid-filled sac (cyst) which may develop on one or both ovaries. Many women have ovarian cysts at some time and experience no pain or discomfort. However, if a cyst is large and/or ruptures it can cause sharp pelvic pain, bloating, and/or abdominal discomfort.

III. VARIATIONS IN MENSTRUATION

Menstruation can be very different from one woman to the next, and even from one cycle to the next. Variations in menstruation my include:

Amount of blood: The volume of blood lost during menstruation may be more or less during a menstrual cycle. Very heavy bleeding could increase the risk of anemia.

Frequency of bleeding: Some people bleed while they aren't supposed to be menstruating, bleed between menstrual cycles, or bleed irregularly and infrequently.

Frequency and duration of menstrual cycles: Some people have longer or shorter cycles, skip a cycle, or have multiple cycles in a month. For older women employees, these changes could indicate peri-menopause, especially if accompanied by symptoms like hot flashes, lack of sleep, and fatigue.

Amount of pain: Some people experience little pain while others have debilitating cramps and excessive pain.

Always remind employees to listen to their body and see a doctor about changes in their menstrual cycle.





PART 6:
IMPORTANCE OF MENSTRUAL
HEALTH AND HYGIENE
IN THE WORKPLACE



I. MAINTAINING GOOD MENSTRUAL HYGIENE



What are some of the things women can do to maintain basic menstrual hygiene at work?

There are a number of things they can do, including using clean menstrual products to absorb and collect blood, and changing their menstrual products as often as required and/or recommended. Also, when using the toilet facility, they should wash their hands with soap and water and wipe from front (vagina) to back (anus), as the opposite can cause infections.



No, poor menstrual hygiene doesn't always mean someone is unhygienic. Sometimes, women don't have access to safe menstrual products or to proper toilet facilities with clean running water and soap. Other times, it may have to do with a lack of information about how to practice proper and regular hand washing or about when to change a menstrual product after it has collected blood.

dirty person?





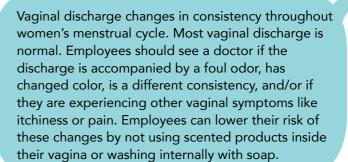
Why does having proper menstrual hygiene matter for women?

It's extremely important to maintain proper hygiene while menstruating. Poor menstrual hygiene could lead to negative health outcomes that can cause a woman to experience, among other things, vaginal discomfort, foul odor, chafing, or itchiness.



Does having vaginal discharge mean poor hygiene?

Does having poor hygiene mean an employee is a







FOR GENERAL PERSONAL HYGIENE

Nurses can suggest that employees:

- Avoid using cut pieces of cloth, especially if used as menstrual products or in place of toilet paper.
- 🥯 Shower or bathe regularly with clean water.
- Avoid washing inside the vagina with soap or applying any scented products to this area.
- 🌏 Wear clean and dry underwear.

II. HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH POOR MENSTRUAL HYGIENE

Some health risks associated with poor menstrual hygiene:

Bacterial Vaginosis (BV): This is an imbalance of certain types of bacteria that become present in larger amounts than usual in the vagina exposing one to infection, including sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Symptoms of BV include itching, odor, and abnormal vaginal discharge.

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI): This is an infection that affects the bladder, kidneys or urethra. Most UTIs are caused by bacteria and can cause symptoms such as pain in the genital area and lower abdomen, excessive itching, rashes, blood, irregularly colored discharge, and/or vaginal odor.

Reproductive Tract Infection (RTI): This is an infection that affects any part of the reproductive system. Examples are bacterial vaginosis, yeast infections, and STIs, among others.

Toxic Shock Syndrome: A rare but serious bacterial infection that gets into the blood and produces harmful toxins. It is often associated with leaving menstrual products, like tampons and menstrual cups, in for too long before being replaced. Poor personal hygiene practices around the vaginal opening may also contribute to bacterial growth. Symptoms of toxic shock syndrome often appear suddenly and can include fever, low blood pressure, headache, muscle aches, confusion, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, rash, and seizures.



PART 7:
DO'S AND DON'TS FOR WORKPLACE
MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT
(MHM) FOR NURSES

DO'S AND DON'TS OF WORKPLACE MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT (MHM) FOR NURSES

DON'T: Make offensive jokes and remarks about whether someone is menstruating.



DO: Report offensive jokes, comments, and other instances of harassment when you observe them and maintain employees' privacy.

Menstruation is a biological process - not something to mock.

DON'T: Spread misinformation and menstrual stigma.



DO: Recognize that talking about menstruation is not a negative thing. Always provide accurate information and encourage others to do the same to increase knowledge about menstruation at the workplace.

DON'T: Make comments that employees who menstruate are weak, attention-seeking, or unprofessional.



DO: Promote a workplace culture that helps management understand that having a flexible work routine is possible. Some workplaces allow menstruating employees to sit and take breaks, temporarily take on lighter duties, go to the nurse for painkillers, and rest or go home for some time.

DON'T: Make a mockery of someone's period stain or gossip about it with other employees.



DO: Let her know politely and privately without embarrassing her or calling the attention of others. Support her with your counsel on menstrual health and hygiene as needed.

DON'T: Join others in bullying or demeaning women because of their menstruation.



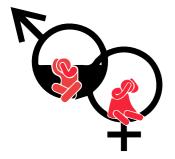
DO: Lead by example! Believe women when they report menstruation-related harassment in the workplace, and be among those who speak up against menstruation-related bullying. Women deserve to talk about menstruation in a judgement-free, respectful, caring, and supportive work environment.





PART 8:
GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)
MITIGATION AND SUPPORT
IN THE WORKPLACE





WHAT IS GBV?

GBV is when violence is directed against a person because of their gender.

TYPES OF VIOLENCE



Physical - The use of physical force that may result in bodily injury, physical pain, or impairment. Some examples include pinching, kicking, slapping, strangling, burning, among others.



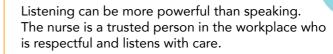
Sexual - Any unwanted sexual act (touching, kissing, intercourse) or unwanted sexual comments ('you look sexy today') without another person's permission that makes them feel sad, upset, or scared. These include rape, sexual assault, or sexual harassment.



Psychological - Intentional harm that affects another person's mental or emotional state of mind by using threats or verbal insults.

II. ATTRIBUTES OF A SUPPORTIVE NURSE

A good listener





Trustworthy



Protecting employees' confidentiality is the professional thing to do. It also assures employees that their safety is important.

Compassionate



Not shaming or blaming employees for experiencing any form of abuse validates their feelings and experiences.

Non - judgemental



Treating employees without judgement builds trust and shows empathy.

Some thoughtful things to say to employees experiencing GBV:

- I'm sorry; this must be very difficult for you.
- It's not your fault; you don't deserve this.
- You did nothing wrong.
- I'm here for you.
- I believe you.

NOTE:

- If the employee has injuries or other health issues as a result of experiencing GBV, connect them to urgent healthcare services.
- Provide employees with referrals for support they need (e.g., medical, psychosocial, legal, economic).
- Avoid offering solutions.

III. GBV SUPPORT CONTACTS

The following are some useful resources you can share discretely with employees who experience GBV and who may request additional support services:

- The Gender Violence Recovery Centre (GVRC) 0719 638 006
- Free medical emergency/ urgent healthcare services, follow-up care and therapy.
- Coalition on Violence Against Women (COVAW) Free SMS Hotline 20351, Hotline 0723 703 939 Emergency, medical, reporting, counseling and legal services.
- **USIKIMYE** 0718 158 400 Safe houses, legal aid, general services for survivors.
- Aunty Jane 0800 721 530 Information about sexual and reproductive health services.

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