



WORKER RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVE GUIDE TO MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT





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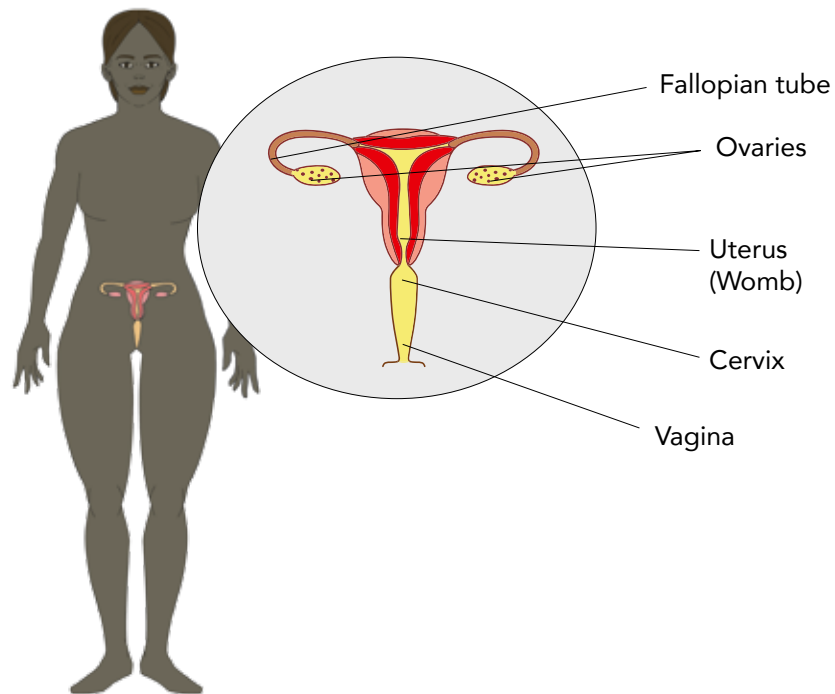


PART 1:
CREATING A SUPPORTIVE
ENVIRONMENT FOR
EMPLOYEES WHO MENSTRUATE

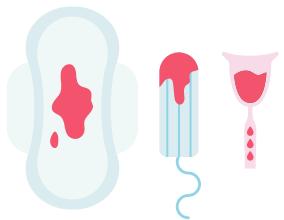
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I. WHAT IS MENSTRUATION?

Menstruation is a natural process that happens among most non-pregnant women approximately every month from puberty until menopause. It is when blood and tissue flow out of the vagina. This process is also referred to as the time when a woman gets her "period".

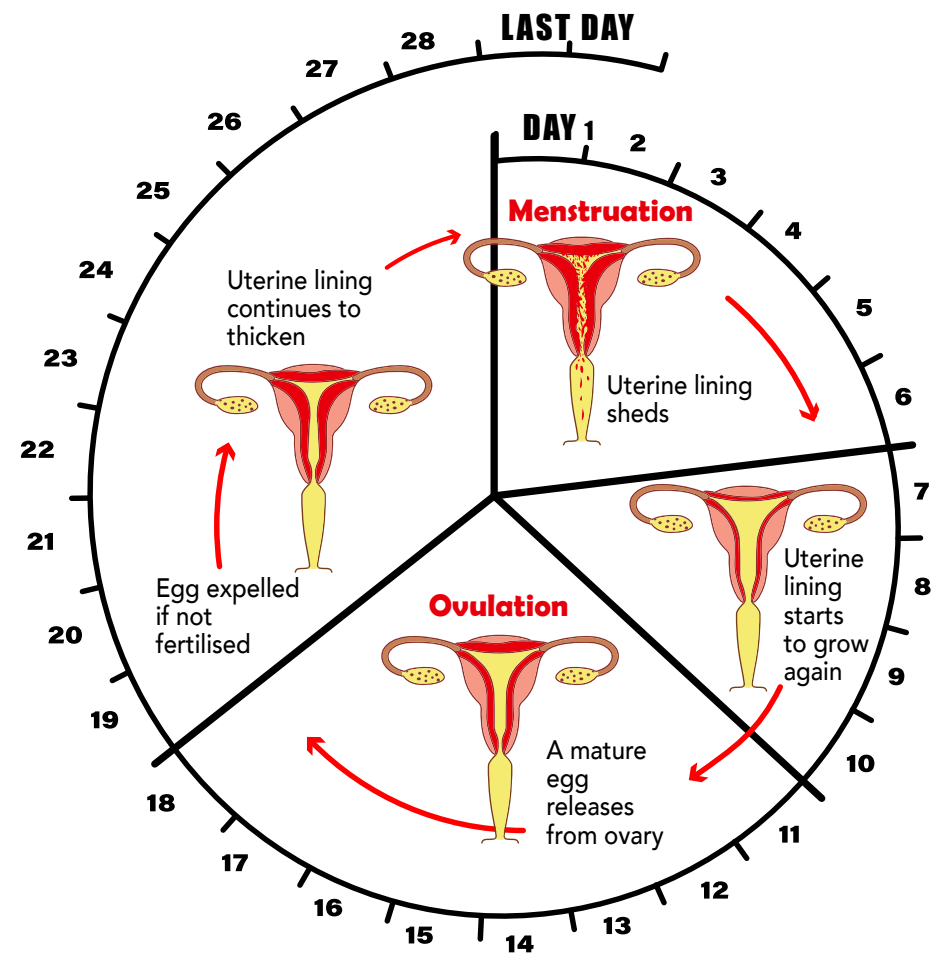


Is menstruation dirty?



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

II. THE MENSTRUAL CYCLE



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. The body then 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 over a person's reproductive life. 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 women menstruate their entire lives?

No, women's periods become more irregular as their bodies approach the end of their reproductive years, usually between the ages of 45 and 55, but the timing may vary from person to person. When women stop menstruating altogether, this is called menopause.

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



She'll begin to notice irregular menstruation or absence of menstruation. Some common symptoms include hot flashes or difficulty sleeping. If severe and untreated, these symptoms could affect one's ability to work at their best.

III. UNDERSTANDING EMPLOYEES WHO MENSTRUATE AT WORK

Menstruation is a natural process and no employee should be mocked, harassed, punished, or made to feel badly about it.

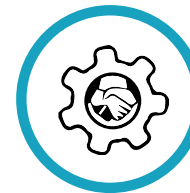
Should women be silent about menstruation at work?

If women prefer to keep their experiences private, that's okay as long as they're not hiding their pain or discomfort because of fear or shame.

Many people mistakenly think that menstruation is something dirty or shameful. For this reason, it can be scary for employees to talk openly about it.

We should all work to create a work environment where all employees feel free to talk about their menstrual experiences if they want to.

How can a worker relations representative encourage employees to express their menstrual needs at work?



Build friendly and respectful working relationships with supervisors and managers. They are more likely to be open to your recommendations.



Connect with those specifically tasked with supporting employee needs, such as the Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) committee, HR manager, factory manager, and first aider.



Support management in creating an environment that encourages employees to openly communicate about their experiences with menstruation at work.



IV. QUALITIES OF AN EFFECTIVE WORKER RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVE



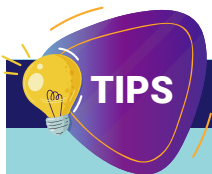
Listens to employees' concerns about their menstrual experiences at work.



Cares about the experiences of menstruating employees.



Builds trust with everyone at work. Some employees may not feel comfortable talking about their MHM needs at work, especially with managers and supervisors.



To support menstruating employees, worker relations representations should avoid:

- 💡 Gossiping or joking about employees' menstrual needs or experiences with other people.
- 💡 Shaming, punishing, judging, or embarrassing employees for menstruating.
- 💡 Spreading false information or incorrect beliefs about menstruation at work.

V. IMPROVING THE MENSTRUAL EXPERIENCES OF WOMEN AT WORK

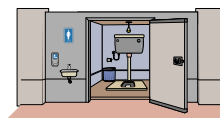
Worker relations representatives can improve the menstrual experiences of women in the workplace by working with management in the following areas:

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE PRODUCTS & DISPOSAL METHODS



Provide **access to safe menstrual products**, as well as to accurate information about how to **use and dispose** of menstrual products in a healthy, hygienic, safe, and timely manner.

WATER SANITATION & HYGIENE (WASH)



Increase the number and quality of properly-managed toilet facilities with clean running water and adequate soap.

MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT POLICIES



Advocate for changes in **workplace policies** that improve conditions for all employees who menstruate, including adjustments in workload or schedules, and allowing employees to sit down, take breaks and get assistance from first aiders when experiencing menstrual discomfort.

MHM-FRIENDLY WORKPLACE



Create a supportive environment for women by addressing any **bullying, shaming, teasing, or harassment** related to menstruation that they might be experiencing from their colleagues, supervisors, or management.



**PART 2:
MENSTRUAL STIGMA
IN THE WORKPLACE**

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I. ADDRESSING MENSTRUAL STIGMA IN THE WORKPLACE

**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.

II. MYTHS & FACTS ABOUT MENSTRUATION

**Myth:**

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

Facts:

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 dirty and shameful!

Facts:

Menstruation is not dirty. It's a natural process that helps prepare the body for potential pregnancy. Worker relations representatives can support menstruating employees by reporting and addressing instances where employees shame, harass, or bully employees who menstruate at work.

**Myth:**

Leaking or staining work clothes with menstrual blood is shameful!

Facts:

Menstrual blood can leak and stain work clothes for many reasons. Worker relations representatives shouldn't make employees feel guilty, afraid, or ashamed when this happens. Instead, they can direct employees to the first aider who can help them find fresh clothes or menstrual products.

**Myth:**

Menstruation is something women should just persevere through!

Facts:

A woman should not have to suffer while menstruating. A worker relations representative can take simple steps that make a woman's menstrual experiences at work more manageable. For example, worker relations can support temporary adjustments to work duties so that employees can use the toilet when they need to or see the first aider when they're experiencing menstrual pain.

**Myth:**

Menstruation is a burden that women need to bear privately!

Facts:

Menstruation isn't something women should have to experience alone or in silence, especially if it means that they're in excessive pain at work. Worker relations representatives should ensure that employees are able to communicate their needs, including those related to menstruation, to supervisors and management. Worker relations can also support women by advocating for increased access to pain medication in the workplace and by introducing flexible work schedules like taking breaks or temporarily being assigned lighter duties when women are in excessive pain due to menstruation.





PART 3:
IMPORTANCE AND RELEVANCE OF
MHM IN THE WORKPLACE

3

I. MENSTRUATING EMPLOYEES ARE VALUABLE

Barriers faced by menstruating employees can affect their health and wellbeing, as well as their ability to reach their full potential in the workplace.



Investing in women's menstrual health, hygiene, and wellbeing can create a supportive environment for all employees, which contributes to the company's success.

II. KENYA'S MHM POLICY

The Government of Kenya is committed to addressing menstrual health and hygiene as a national priority. In 2020, Kenya launched its first-ever policy aimed at improving MHM across the country. The policy recognizes that within the workplace:



did you
KNOW

Ahead of the curve: In 2011, Government of Kenya removed import duties and value-added sales tax on menstrual hygiene products and solutions.

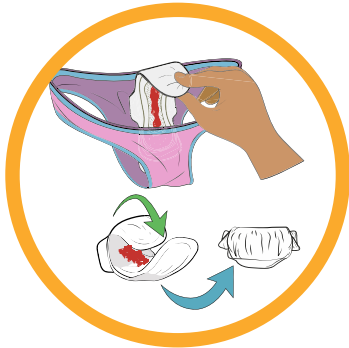
III. IMPACT OF INADEQUATE MHM ON EMPLOYEES

It's extremely important to maintain proper hygiene while menstruating. Poor menstrual hygiene could lead to negative health outcomes and influence productivity at work.

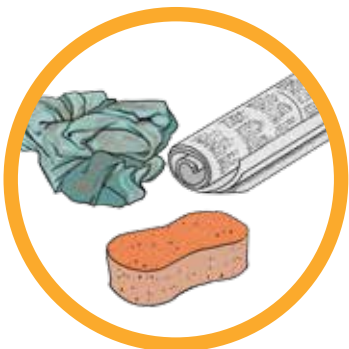
Poor menstrual hygiene doesn't always mean someone is unhygienic. It can instead be linked to:



Lack of adequate toilet facilities, clean running water, and soap at work.



Wearing menstrual products for too long.



Using unsafe menstrual materials when affordable products are not available at work.

IV. BASIC HYGIENE AT THE WORKPLACE

Worker Relations promote good menstrual hygiene in the workplace by:



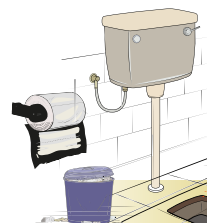
Ensuring that there are functional handwashing facilities with soap and water.



Increasing accessibility to clean and safe toilet facilities.



Providing safe methods for employees to dispose of used menstrual products.



Ensuring that toilet facilities are regularly equipped with toilet paper.






Supporting cleaning staff and promptly addressing maintenance issues.






PART 4:
DO'S AND DON'TS OF WORKPLACE
MHM FOR WORKER RELATIONS
REPRESENTATIVES

4

DO'S AND DON'TS OF WORKPLACE MHM FOR WORKER RELATIONS REPRESENTATIVES

<p>DON'T: Assume that people are menstruating based on their behavior, and then make fun, gossip, or bully them when they come to seek your support.</p> 	<p>DO: Listen to women when they report issues of menstruation-related harassment at work. Gossiping about someone's period is unprofessional.</p>
<p>DON'T: Assume that women are looking for an excuse to avoid their work.</p> 	<p>DO: Promote a workplace culture that helps management understand that menstrual needs are valid reasons to take breaks, take time off, or seek temporary adjustments to work duties.</p>
<p>DON'T: Make comments implying that employees who menstruate are weak, attention-seeking, or unprofessional.</p> 	<p>DO: Share accurate information about menstruation and its effects in the workplace and correct employees' misconceptions about menstruation.</p>

<p>DON'T: Make a mockery of someone's period stain or gossip about it with other employees.</p> 	<p>DO: If employees' clothes are stained with menstrual blood, politely and privately inform them in a way that doesn't embarrass them or call the attention of others.</p>
<p>DON'T: Join others in bullying or demeaning women because of their menstruation.</p> 	<p>DO: Lead by example! 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.</p>
<p>DON'T: Ignore or stand in the way of women's menstrual needs in the workplace.</p> 	<p>DO: Support employees' access to safe and reliable menstrual products, information, and pain management resources at work. Talk to management about facilities or any other improvements that employees need to manage their menstrual health and hygiene at work.</p>

