

Exclusive health camp on Menstrual Hygiene Management Day 2019

“It was an ideal situation to share issues personally to doctor and get detailed consultations”, said Lalitha from Vivekanandhapuram in the exclusive health camp organized for ladies of Vivekanandhapuram and balavinayagar nagar slums in Periyanaickenpalayam and Narasimhanaickenpalayam.

A normal woman spends anywhere between 2500 to 2700 days of her life menstruating. That is anywhere between six to seven years of her life. Yet, this simple fact of her existence is shrouded in secrecy, with an air of mystery around it. Good Girls don't talk about such things. Hush! As a result of this taboo, the importance of menstrual hygiene is completely neglected. When menstruation is a taboo subject, any discussion around it becomes difficult.

According to a study from UNICEF, 1 out of 3 girls in South Asia knew nothing about menstruation prior to getting her period, while 48% of girls in Iran and 10% of girls in India believe that Menstruation is a disease (WaterAid 2013, Menstrual Hygiene Matters). In 2014, initiated by WASH United, Menstrual Hygiene Day (MH Day) was observed all over the world on 28 May. MH Day is an attempt to raise awareness on the challenges faced by women and girls worldwide due to the simple fact that they menstruate, and highlight solutions that address these challenges. The day was created to publicly recognise the right of women to hygienically manage their menstruation wherever they are.

Today, Menstrual Hygiene Day is being celebrated across the world on 28 May in a bid to break the silence around menstruation, help break myths and taboos around periods and help girls and women seek information and advice on menstrual health and menstrual hygiene management.

In line with the same, Keystone Foundation, City Technical support unit of the Tamil Nadu Sanitation Urban Sanitation Support Programme (TNUSSP) had organized exclusive counseling and health camp for ladies and adolescent girls of the slums in Periyanaickenpalayam and Narasimhanaickenpalayam on 27th May 2019. The camp was supported by Karpagam trust hospital. A team of doctors headed by Dr. Naveen prabhu (Chief doctor) at Karpagam Trust hospital conducted the special medical counselling. Dr. Swathandra Devi M.D. D.G.O. started with special message on Menstrual hygiene day with the adolescent girls and women from the community .

A total of 100 women from the two communities benefitted from the special health camp. Some of the important queries were on occurrences of irregular periods among adolescent girls and young women. Dr. Swathandra Devi, gynaecologists and obstetrician responded to the pressing concerns on reproductive health and various ailments commonly faced by women. The importance of balanced diet which includes multivitamin and iron enriching food was emphasised.

“I had a detailed consultation and doctor had prescribed free follow-up treatment at hospital and I will make use of this service at my doorstep”, said Suganthi from Balavinayagar nagar.

Apart from addressing issues on Menstrual Hygiene and well-being, special consultations were arranged for the pregnant women from the communities. The medical support and facilities available for the community members at Karpagam trust hospital was also shared. Specific health care option available at Karpagam Trust hospital without any cost was highlighted to those who couldn't afford prenatal and antenatal care was shared. Apart from the majority of women form the community the exclusive medical camp extended some of the medical check up to ailing senior citizens and elderly from the community as well.

In many societies women are prohibited from participating in normal life while menstruating. A woman must be “purified” before she is allowed to return to her family and day-to-day chores of her life.

Many girls and women are subject to restrictions in their daily lives simply because they are menstruating. These could be religious and social restrictions like not being allowed to enter a place of worship or participate in a communal celebration like festivals or weddings etc.

With such thoughts around us, City TSU wanted to through light on what people of Coimbatore have to say about taboos, myths and their understanding on menstruation. This was done through a public opinion video among men and women around the city. A varied lens of opinion among the public was obtained. The video is named Period talks @ Kovai.

Adolescent girls are also led to believe that doing exercise/physical activity during menses aggravate the dysmenorrhea while in reality a gym instructor Mr. Prem says all these are myths around and in turn proper guided exercises can help relieve symptoms of premenstrual syndrome , dysmenorrhea and bloating.

These myths and taboos have an adverse impact on the emotional and psychological state of girls' their mentality, lifestyle and most importantly their health. It is a well-known fact that girls in poorer countries drop out of school when they begin menstruating due to the lack of clean and safe sanitation facilities. In India, this accounts for 1 in 5 girls who drop out of school on the onset of menarche.

“We need to burn out or wrap the used sanitary napkins properly and dispose, since sanitary workers who handle them are also human beings” says Mrs. Shanti in the opinion poll

- An average woman throws away nearly 50,000 sanitary pads in her lifetime.

- The soiled napkins stay in the landfills for about 800 years as they are non-biodegradable.
- It is estimated that 432 million pads are disposed of every month across the country, according to a report cited in the Clean India Journal.
- More than 80 per cent of this waste is either flushed down the toilet or ends up in a landfill.
- The disposal of sanitary waste in India is a complex issue. The fact that it remains a largely taboo topic and carries much social stigma only adds to its complexity and makes it difficult to find effective solutions.

“Periods is nothing shy to talk, It is more important to support women and girls at home to boost up their confidence during menstruation”, said Mr. Ganesh from Coimbatore. Such opinions finally give a relieve that the world is on a progressive path.