

What is MHM?



MHM is a human rights issues that affects the lives of **26%** of the world population each month.

The effective management of menstrual hygiene requires a transversal approach and the collaboration of numerous sectors such as education, health, sanitation and infrastructures.

Nonetheless, it is still not fully considered in public policy.



Intrinsically related to the issue of access to clean water and sanitation, menstrual hygiene remains taboo in several countries, including in West and Central Africa, where some beliefs and myths influence women and girls' daily lives while strengthening gender inequalities.

Girls are often unprepared for this event and feel embarrassed, ashamed or frightened about the management of their menstruation.

During that time, there are often considered as **"impure"** excluded from society and suffering in silence. This situation is even more enhanced by the inadequacy of sanitation infrastructures.

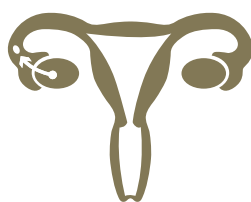


What is menstruation?

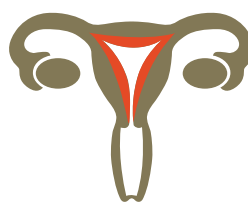
- Menstruation is the scientific name of periods and reappears cyclically every 28 days on average.
- It occurs during puberty (a period of transition and profound biological changes) in girls aged from 9 to 16 years.
- The arrival of the first periods is a natural body function and the vital sign of a good reproductive health, in other words the ability to have children.
- It is not a disease. It should be welcomed with joy. The child becomes a young woman as she enters her fertile period.

How does it work?

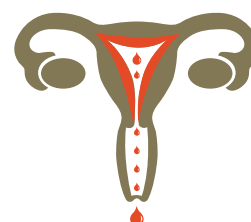
At every cycle, the ovary releases a mature ovule that will route from the Fallopian tubes to the uterus. Throughout that period, the ovaries produce hormones (oestrogen and progesterone) that thickens the mucous of the uterus, known as endometrium. This thickening prepares the uterus to an eventual pregnancy. If the ovule is not fertilized during its passage in the Fallopian tubes, the ovule dies and is evacuated with the endometrium, this is what is called menstruation.



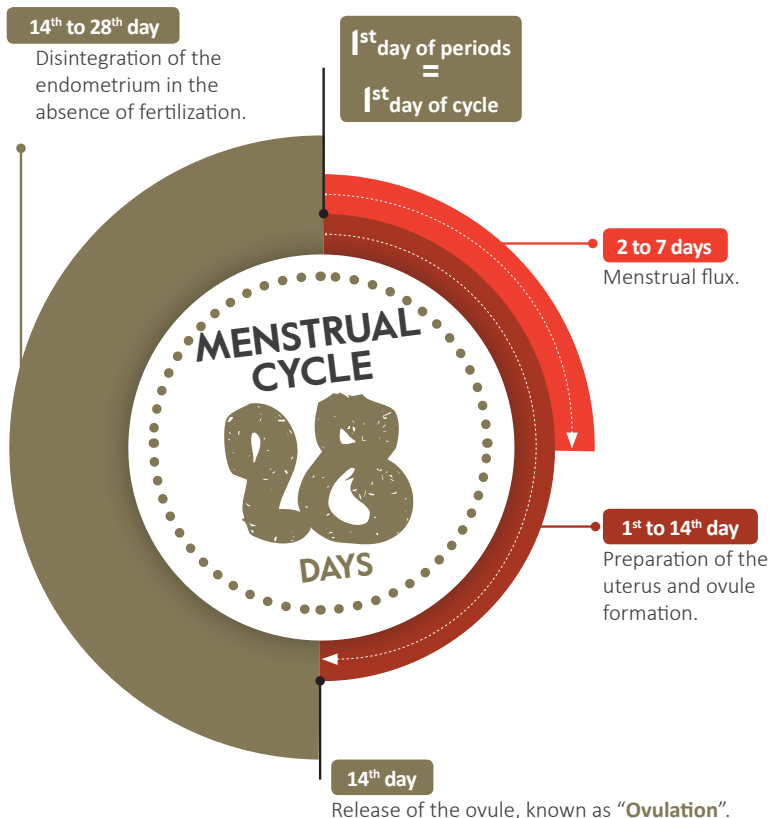
Ovulation



Preparation of the uterus and ovule formation



Menstrual flux



Good menstrual hygiene is essential.



Women and girls must use adequate protections to absorb menstrual blood.



These protections must be changed in complete privacy and as often as necessary during the menstrual period.



For good hygiene, it is best to use soap and water to wash hands, intimate parts and clothes.



Protections must be disposed of in closed bins.

Negative impact of poor menstrual hygiene management.



Impact on Health.

Bad hygiene can cause infections or reproductive device diseases.



Impact on Sanitation and the Environment.

Menstrual waste is still too often eliminated through latrines and toilets, for discretion purposes or lack of space. Impacts on the environment are harmful and are not addressed.



Impact on Education.

In sub-Saharan Africa, one girl out of ten does not go to school during her menstrual cycle, which corresponds to about 20% of school time lost over a year. Many of them completely drop out of school after getting their first periods.

Speak Up Africa.

Headquartered in Dakar, Senegal, Speak Up Africa is a strategic communications and advocacy organization dedicated to catalyzing leadership, enabling policy change, and increasing awareness for sustainable development in Africa. We are a Policy and Advocacy Action Tank and through our platforms, we ensure that policy makers meet implementers; that solutions are showcased and that every sector- from individual citizens and civil society groups to global donors and business leaders- contributes critically to the dialogue and strives to form the blueprints for concrete action for public health and sustainable development.

Speak Up Africa's commitment.



Advocacy & Behavior Change Communication.

Speak Up Africa, with its campaign “**No Taboos Periods.**” advocates for a better understanding and improvement of practices around of menstrual hygiene within communities. It targets national policies, decision makers in health, environment, water, sanitation for an improved management of the issue at all levels.

