

► **MHM -**
Menstrual Hygiene Management Guide
Central Australia 2019





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Introduction

CAYLUS, the Central Australian Youth Link Up Service, supports community initiatives to improve the quality of life for young people in Central Australia. Its work also includes addressing substance misuse. CAYLUS is part of the Tangentyere Council (Aboriginal Corporation).

You can find out more about CAYLUS at www.caylus.org.au or at www.tangentyere.org.au

This is the second edition of MHM Central Australia. The first was published in late 2016. This version contains a number of updates and additional information. It has been locally informed by Aboriginal girls and women, youth workers, health-care workers, school staff, store managers, public health workers, plumbers, architects and builders.


Menstrual Hygiene Management, or MHM, has traditionally had a place in the area of sex education, which tends to be delivered in a school setting. CAYLUS has recognised the need to look more closely at the challenges of MHM in Central Australian Aboriginal communities, and at the capacity of services which work with youth to make communities more 'girl-friendly'.

CAYLUS' MHM work in the Central region has informed us that the difficulties faced by girls and women in remote Aboriginal communities include limited access to:

- knowledge and education;
- adequate infrastructure, including disposal and maintenance systems; and
- suitable absorbent materials.

This Guide is intended to provide support to MHM activities and initiatives in Central Australia by:

- increasing awareness among service providers and agencies of MHM challenges for Aboriginal girls from Central Australia; and
- equipping these services with knowledge of local MHM practices. This includes understanding, suitable language and the resources to enable them to work with girls and women to support MHM.



Sometimes the girls
don't go to school when
they have their period.

Grandmother

This Guide is free for use in any way in which it is beneficial to the user in improving MHM. It is intended to provide information and ideas on how to start discussion, support MHM activities and facilitate access. **Central Australia is a diverse region. Ahead of using this resource in any community make sure to consult local women to seek permission to discuss MHM and to tailor what you do to meet any local expectations.**

This resource is designed for use in Central Australia and may not be appropriate for use elsewhere. Those in other regions are welcome to borrow from this content to create local resources.

We invite further contributions and feedback. CAYLUS is very interested in active MHM programs in Central Australia, and in other remote regions of Australia. **Please contact mhm@caylus.org.au**

MHM in Central Australia

The fundamentals of MHM, as defined by the World Health Organization and UNICEF, are outlined in the table below, corresponding with information gathered in Central Australian remote communities.

For more information about appropriate design of toilets and bathrooms, both public and private, see pages 10-11.

World Health Organization and UNICEF Fundamentals	Central Australian Considerations
<p>Women and girls use a clean material to absorb or collect menstrual blood.</p>	<p>Absorbent materials used by girls and women in remote communities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pads (preferred material) • Tampons (tend to be used by older teens and women) • Clothing • Toilet paper • Toilet paper made into wads and inserted like a tampon • Re-usable items such as moon cups, special period underwear and re-usable pads • Re-usable underwear – being tried in some communities • Nothing
<p>Access to pads, tampons and underwear.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pads, tampons and underwear are high-cost items. • Underwear is not always available for purchase. • For some people, purchasing these items can involve feelings of shame or embarrassment. Store Managers have witnessed unusual incidents of theft which they believe occurs because girls or women feel too shamed or embarrassed to purchase pads, tampons or underwear. • Girls and women may be put off by there being male staff at the store counter, or other staff with whom they have an avoidance relationship. • The presence of other customers in the store can be a barrier. Some women say they go to the store in typically quiet times, such as in the afternoon, to buy tampons and underwear. • Some stores have initiated 'women's only' afternoons in an attempt to address the needs of women and girls in communities to have access to products and increase privacy. • Some girls and women say they purchase pads, tampons and underwear when they go to town (Alice Springs). This can be from twenty to more than 800 kilometres from home. • Some girls and women report that they have no problems with buying pads, tampons or underwear.

Material can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of menstruation.

- Frequency of changing material is limited due to a scarcity of materials, barriers to obtaining materials and private, safe, functioning bathrooms.

MHM also includes using soap and water for washing the body as required.

Home

- Bathrooms do not always function (See the guide on page 10).
- Soap, running water are not always available.
- Many homes are overcrowded, which limits physical access to bathrooms, and puts extra pressure on infrastructure and associated maintenance needs.
- Overcrowding also puts extra financial pressure on specific individuals to provide and maintain bathroom supplies.
- Housing and infrastructure maintenance is managed differently across communities, and can be challenging for families to navigate. Much of the maintenance work is delivered by visiting service providers, which can be based more than 800 kilometres away, and this is a challenge to accessibility.
- Many outstations do not have running water, electricity or formal maintenance support.
- Spontaneous travel and transience is common among many families and can make it difficult to plan for MHM.

School

- Soap and hand-drying facilities are not always available in school toilets.
- Some girls have reported that they do not feel comfortable changing pads at school, and that they only do so at home. While the bathrooms may be functioning and maintained at the school, they are not necessarily being utilised by students during menstruation.

Workplace

- Some women have reported that they do not feel comfortable changing pads at their workplace and that they only do so at home. While bathrooms may be functioning and maintained at the workplace, they are not necessarily utilised by employees during menstruation.
- Soap, rubbish bins and hand-drying facilities not always available.
- Not all menstruating women have access to employment.
- Not all workplaces have staff toilets.
- Many outstations have no employment/employers and associated services.

Access to facilities to dispose of used materials.

- Toilet paper is not always available to wrap used sanitary items for discreet disposal.
- Rubbish bins or bags are not always available. They are rarely used in some households.
- Wheelie bins or skips are not always available to store household rubbish outside before collection.
- Rubbish collection services are not always available, or may be unreliable, and many outstations do not have rubbish collection services.
- The design of the house may be problematic for cultural reasons.
- Schools are often required to manage their own rubbish by taking it to the local tip site (landfill).
- Rubbish bins are not always available inside individual cubicles, or in the hand-washing area in schools or workplaces.
- Sanitary waste units are not suitable due to the remote location of most communities.

Creating Access Points

Access Points in communities are places where girls and women can access sanitary items. A good way to establish an Access Point is for service providers, women and girls to identify the most suitable locations and for these to be equipped with a kit containing a range of sanitary and other items. Ideally each community will have multiple Access Points.

MHM Kit example – CAYLUS Kits

CAYLUS sometimes supplies MHM kits on request to agencies or communities in Central Australia. CAYLUS kits are in a non-transparent, sealable, easily accessible tub, box or other container. They contain a collection of pads, tampons and underwear ranging from size 6-22, preferably cotton, and black.

The kits also include posters from this Guide, paper bags so that people can take sanitary items discreetly, stickers of a bracelet logo used to indicate premises where Access Points are located, and links to an online ordering system for replacement products.

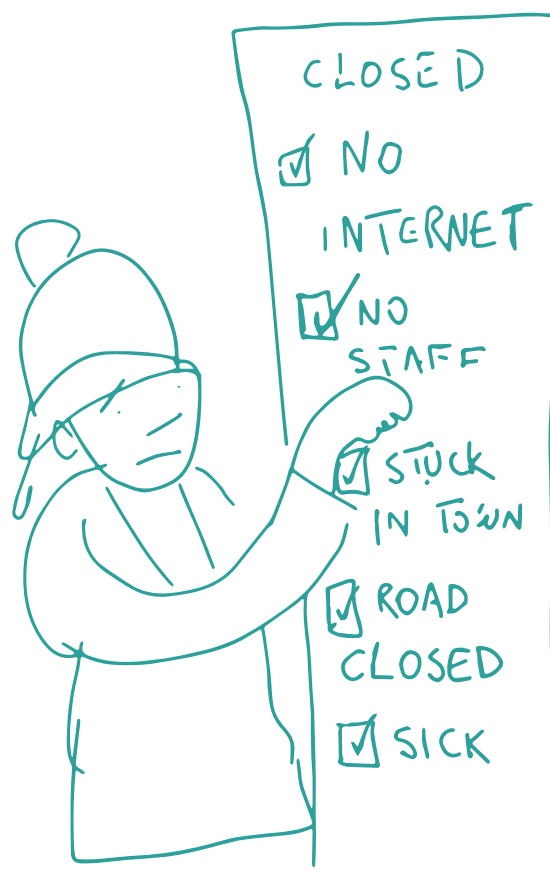


Challenges to Remote Service Delivery

There are many factors that may affect services ability to provide and maintain Access Points. These can include :

- staff turnover and inconsistent management of services;
- under-resourced staff and services;
- language barriers;
- unreliable essential services;
- poor road conditions, or road closures due to weather or men's business;
- local cultural rituals, obligations or events that deter people from using a service, or prevent it from opening;
- funerals or sorry business;
- community meetings;
- school holidays;
- court attendance;
- staff travel; or
- family or health issues.

A good strategy to maximise access is to create multiple Access Points in a community so that if one is not available or working then there are other options.



Alternatives

In recent years, in response to environmental and other concerns, there has been greater availability of alternative sanitary products such as re-usable fabric pads, 'period' underwear and menstrual cups.

Such products may be a good solution for some people, and discussions about options can be helpful on an individual basis. There may, however, be challenges to their use in remote communities:

- Individual cost of re-usable materials can be a barrier to services providing MHM supplies as part of an MHM program.
- Many households do not have access to a functioning washing machine to wash re-usable pads.
- All households are on pay-as-you-go power card scheme, therefore may not have electricity all the time in order to use a washing machine, if they have one which is working.
- Some outstation residents have no electricity or running water.
- There are social and cultural sensitivities related to drying underwear, and a lack of privacy in what are often 'overpopulated' households can make it difficult to dry intimate clothing.
- The challenge of finding an appropriate, shame-free place to dry re-usable pads, an item clearly used to manage menstruation, and possibly stained, is likely to lead to the disposal of re-usable pads after use.
- Disposal of single-use pads (or re-usable pads used once) is a problem, as there are limited waste disposal systems in remote communities, and many households do not have rubbish bins.
- As the disposal options are limited, this often leads to girls and women attempting to flush pads and tampons, t-shirts and other items used for hygiene practices, down the toilet. These toilets have an s-bend and septic systems, and blockages are common.
- There are limited maintenance services in remote communities. Plumbers and other tradespeople travel from Alice Springs to communities up to 1000kms away. This means plumbing problems can persist for a long time.

At Home

Access to functioning toilet, laundry and washing facilities is key to supporting MHM.

How a bathroom fails to function

from *Housing for Health* (www.housingforhealth.com)

How a bathroom fails to function in a two-bedroom house, serving three families with fifteen people in total. A new cake of soap is opened over the basin. The wrapper falls into the basin, gets wet and blocks the waste pipe trap.

A box of laundry powder is used doing a load of washing. There is no high shelf so the box is rested on a small ledge between the laundry tub and wall. The vibration from the machine knocks the box into the laundry tub. During the spin cycle, water softens the packet and soaks into the soap powder. Pieces of wet cardboard and chunks of detergent sit in the tub and go into the tub waste pipe. (It is now difficult to wash a young child in the tub). Further loads of washing with soap suds and lint continue to block the waste pipe.

In the shower two nappies have been left to dry on a curtain rail near the small window. They fall to the ground and block the shower waste. The grading of the floor to the shower waste has never been quite right and there is always a pool of water near the corner of the shower.

The washing machine was bought second-hand. The pump motor fails and to remove the dirty wash water requires tipping the machine on its side. Water floods the floor but the floor waste cannot cope with the quantity of water. When the floor waste was being built, and the concrete slab poured, a small plug of concrete accidentally went down the open pipe. Ever since it can drain only a trickle of water, if any.

Someone coming to use the toilet finds that the roll of toilet paper has been soaked by the washing machine water. At the local shop toilet paper costs \$5 a roll so they use an old piece of rag as toilet paper and flush the toilet. Not long after a young child flushes a soft drink can down the toilet. It seems to disappear. The next toilet user finds the toilet backing up and flooding the bathroom. (Assuming the blockage can be fixed it will still be difficult to clean up the mess given the faulty floor waste.)

Where does the water go if the blockages are not fixed?

Illustration by Paul Pholeros



The following issues have been raised by Malcolm Wall, CEO of Yapa-Karlangu Ngurra (Aboriginal Corporation) at Yuendumu, and by plumbing services in Central Australia.

Toilet blockages occur regularly in homes, and septic systems are common in communities. The toilets have S-bends. Items that tend to be found to be blocking toilets include:

- toilet paper when used to excess. This can also be an expensive item in communities, requiring frequent purchases due to high demand in often over-crowded houses;
- sanitary items, for which there is often no adequate or reliable disposal system;
- items of clothing that are used in place of toilet paper and sanitary materials; and
- rocks and household rubbish.

Limited access to tools and maintenance services may put additional pressure on the infrastructure, and cause more complicated damage.

On Central Australian outstations*, pit toilets have proven to be suitable infrastructure for a sanitation system which allows items other than toilet paper or sanitary items to be disposed of without causing blockages.

* Outstations or homelands are small settlements located outside larger communities, on the country of a family group who may or may not live there permanently. Outstations are often not connected to mains power or water, and do not have community or commercial services on site; nor do they have regular road maintenance.

Appropriate toilet/bathroom design

In consultation with Susan Dugdale and Associates, an Alice Springs architecture firm and Tangentyere Design the following bathroom design has been suggested.

If the toilet is at the end of a hall, with only one door, the user may be in a compromising position if they are exiting and a person with whom they share an avoidance relationship is in the hallway. For this reason families have suggested toilets should have two doors, so the user is free to choose an alternative exit.

Some houses have the bathroom outside, at the edge of the much-used verandas/outdoor areas of the home. This means when someone is on their way to the toilet, it is clear to everyone what that person's intentions are and this can cause shame and discomfort and is a challenge to accessibility. Families have been known to have the entrance to the toilet concealed with iron or other wall structure, to ensure extra privacy. Another suggestion is to have another destination en route to the bathroom, to make it less obvious the individual is heading to the toilet.



At School

I have tampons and pads and undies available for the girls in the classroom, and I have a key which some girls get from me so they can get pads or tampons from the cabinet in the toilet.

The girls know they are welcome to get a supply to take home with them. Some girls get them for their peers if they are too shy.

Female teacher at a school in the Barkly region



Making a school girl-friendly

School staff commonly raise the issues listed below. The responses to the right suggest how to establish and maintain a girl-friendly school, and to facilitate a support group within the school community.

Management of supplies in the toilet

Assigning a staff member, or a staff/student team to this role ensures regular restocking of a small quantity of pads and tampons and gives the school a good oversight of both access to and usage of MHM materials.

Girls not wanting to change pads in the school toilets

There have been reports of girls not going to school while menstruating, and girls have said that their preferred place to change pads or tampons is at home. These factors are worth observing on an individual school and community basis. During MHM sessions it is also worth asking about what the school could do to make girls feel more comfortable with MHM at school. If girls are obtaining materials but are waiting until they get home to change, either during school hours or after school, this may lead to a socially negative and physically uncomfortable, unhygienic, unhealthy experience of menstruation. It may also affect school attendance.

Students damaging supplies and making a mess in the toilets.

Keeping small quantities of pads and tampons in the toilets minimises waste due to misuse, and storing them in a lockable storage cabinet can help with management.

Disposal solutions

Some schools are responsible for their own waste management, which may make it easier to provide regular emptying of bins and appropriate disposal. If there is a problem, for example, with bins getting knocked over, and the school opts to have just one rubbish bin for the toilets, try to keep the bin inside the toilet cubicle to at least ensure some privacy. If the school finds it is frequently experiencing blocked toilets this may be due to the flushing of pads or tampons. Maintaining access to rubbish bins in individual cubicles may help alleviate this problem.

Shyness and shame preventing girls using sanitary materials

Making time to deliver MHM information to girls at school before they reach puberty informs them about their changing bodies and in turn supports them. It may give them the tools to help others. Spending time on making a safe space to talk about MHM enables relationships to form so individuals know who they may go to for help, either for themselves, or for a shy family member or friend.

Male staff in the classroom and in other roles at the school

Establishing and maintaining girl-friendly schools requires an inclusive approach. Male staff have responsibilities in developing and maintaining girl-friendly schools, by:

- ensuring access to toilets, running water, flushing toilets and rubbish disposal;
- being conscious of and sensitive to girls who need to visit the toilet;
- developing a respectful and sensitive strategy for responding to teasing among girls, and by boys, about menstruation; and
- allowing a relationship to develop between girls and an appropriate person or persons in the school. This includes allocating adequate class time to MHM sessions.

Female staff who are uncomfortable discussing MHM

Being female doesn't automatically qualify an individual to deliver MHM sessions, and the employer should not assume that any or all female staff members are equipped for the role. Not all women are adequately informed, or feel comfortable talking about MHM. This Guide is aimed at making women more confident and competent in delivering this information.

In order to establish and maintain a support group which meets the needs of girls in the student community, it is important to identify the people in the school who are best suited, and who feel comfortable about discussing MHM. Asking girls to nominate female staff is a useful way of finding the best people for this role.

Girls' Toilets

Some examples of a girl-friendly space in a school.



Cabinets

Cabinets in toilets at schools and workplaces allow girls and women to obtain pads and tampons independently and in private. They may be used with a key given out to students, or left unlocked.

This is an example of a cabinet which is adequate in size, cheap, sturdy, can be mounted on a wall, and may be locked. First aid boxes can be purchased in Alice Springs at hardware stores, first aid supply stores and office suppliers.

Cover the symbol to avoid the cabinet being mistaken for a first-aid kit, and put the MHM bracelet sticker or stickers on the front. Painting the box could be an activity to help girls to develop ownership of the cabinet and contents.



Cost of MHM materials

See below for estimated costs involved in making a school more girl-friendly. The quantity and relative costs will of course depend on the size of the school, attendance levels of girls of menstruating

age, MHM material accessibility, and the possibility of problematic behaviour in the school toilets and damage to supplies.

Quantity	Quantity individual items	Cost	Shipping costs to A/S	Total cost	Comment	Link/contact
30 packs (4 undies in each pack)	120 undies	\$80	n/a	\$80	dark colours sizes 10 - 16	KMART Alice Springs 08 89 598 300
2 cartons (12 packs of 40 pads in each carton)	960 pads	\$275.76 (\$11.49 per pack)	\$40	\$315.76		https://superbuys.com.au/index.php?manufacture_rs_id=454
Total cost				\$395.76		

At The Store

How to approach the local store

Community stores can play a valuable role in supporting MHM. Stores differ in their layout, management and employee group, and each may have its own history of the sale of pads and tampons.

Stores are increasingly supportive and flexible in trying different approaches to increase access to products. Different strategies have been attempted across the region, such as women's only afternoons, having female staff working in the store, products being wrapped, and sanitary items being kept in a discreet area of the shop. A store's approach can have a really positive impact on MHM in communities.

A good starting point for anyone wanting to increase accessibility at the store is to speak either with senior women in the community, or with women and girls generally if you have established relationships. You could ask:

- Where do people buy or get things for their monthlies?
- Where is the best place in the store to keep pads and tampons?
- Is there someone working at the store who people might prefer to go to, to buy these?
- Is there a quiet time of day when women and girls go to the store for pads and tampons?



Questions for the store to help improve MHM

- Where are the sanitary products currently stored or shelved?
- Do the products actually sell?
- Do they have women's cotton underwear available, and girls' underwear? Do they sell?
- Are there any particular staff who women or girls tend to go to for these products?
- If sales are low are there ways to improve these?
- Would making some changes in the store be a possibility? (Follow up with any suggestions from local girls and women.)

Some stores report minimal or no sales of pads and tampons. Regardless of whether they sell or not, taking steps to improve access to MHM materials is supporting girls and women.

Stores in the region have been able to make the following changes:

- Keeping pads, tampons and undies accessible on the shelf, in an area of the shop which ensures some privacy; that is, not in full view of everyone who comes into the store.
- Making pads and tampons available at the counter, already packaged in paper bags, so the customer can ask for them while paying for other shopping.

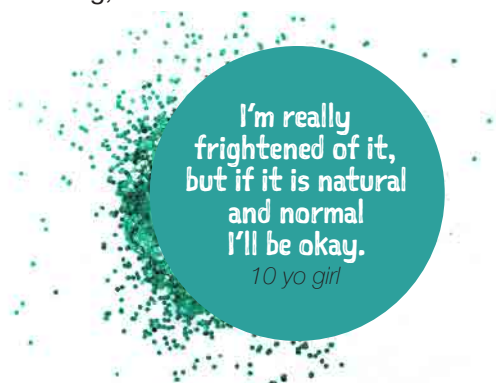


Stories of MHM Workshops

Reflections by Leyla Iten

Bush trip

I picked up six girls who I knew regularly hung out as a group. I informed them that we would be going out bush to talk about girl things, so we got permission from family members at their homes. I asked the girls who else they wanted to join us, including other girls and older women. We tried to get two women they nominated to come along, but neither of them were available.



They felt comfortable as a group and didn't want any other girls to come, so we drove to a place we regularly visited, where we knew we would have some privacy.

I unrolled the Growing Up painting a group of ladies and girls had worked on the day before, and we found where we each fit into the painting. We talked about the different stages our family members were in, where they fit on the painting and how we relate to them. I then took out the MHM bag, and gave each girl a pair of demo undies, and a variety of pads to unwrap and stick in the undies. The girls knew me well and followed the lead of a particularly confident member of the group, so shyness was not a barrier in this session. None of the girls were menstruating yet, and they were very curious and leading the discussion by freely asking lots of questions. The conversation did evolve to talking about sex, which is common in my experience of delivering MHM sessions.

I personally am equipped to discuss sex ed, however, if you are not, be careful with how you manage the session. Make yourself aware of the policy of your given organisation, and try to take a mental note of the questions and see if you can find someone else who may be able to deliver a sex ed session. You can communicate with the group that you are not really sure about that business and you will see if someone else can help answer their questions.

To finish the session, I asked them to think of a couple of people they might approach if they needed to talk about menstruation, or needed help. This person could be family, someone at the clinic, at their school, or possibly a youth worker. I said they do not have to say the person's name, it could be kept private, yet some of the girls offered this information openly.

In the classroom

I was invited to a small school to do an MHM session with grade four, five and six girls. This community did not have a high school, so for further schooling these girls would board at different schools, possibly even interstate. Going to a boarding school, away from family and friends, sometimes alone, sometimes with language and communication difficulties, comes with its challenges for the individual, her family, and for the support networks at the boarding school. Preparing girls with MHM information before they go through puberty, and potentially go away to a boarding school, is really valuable and empowering for the individual possibly experiencing several challenging transitions at the one time.

I had never visited this community before, and was allocated 30 minutes at the end of the school day to deliver an MHM session. The boys were engaged in another activity in another classroom, and present were five girls, their teacher, and the assistant teacher. I introduced myself, and took out the Growing Up painting to share with the girls. The girls were very quiet and shy, and the painting was not very useful or engaging. I then handed out the demo undies and a variety of pads to everyone sitting around the table, including the staff. The girls were very shy and embarrassed. I let them know it was okay to feel embarrassed, that I sometimes feel embarrassed too, and that periods are a normal part of being a girl. The assistant teacher confirmed this, and we all unwrapped the pads. We showed the girls how to remove all the papers, including on the pad's wings, which needed to be removed to be able to stick it on the undies properly.

The girls gradually became less shy, but they had few questions and while they listened they were very quiet. Although I had never met them before I felt that the setting, at school, was a bit of a barrier. Other sessions I have held with girls I had only just met, but out bush rather than in a classroom, were much more dynamic. In future, I think I will ask the school if we can do the session out bush, although this may bring its own set of challenges in terms of time and school policy and procedures.

The teacher and the assistant teacher were very involved in the session, and the teacher was very happy for the opportunity, as it helped her to have some support and a set time allocated to introducing and discussing MHM. The session helped to start the conversation about MHM between herself and the girls, and hopefully this will give both the teacher and the students the confidence needed to discuss MHM at school. The other objective when doing the session at the school was to look at the school toilets and to make the staff aware of what girl-friendly toilets look like, and possibly to help troubleshoot any issues.

Ideas, Myths and Practices

Since we started stocking the pads behind the counter, we haven't had any theft. They go and ask women working at the counter.

Store manager in a remote store

Those young girls, they don't know, they're myall [uneducated, dirty, wild].

25 yo

I don't know what they did in old times. I've never asked anybody.

Several women between ages 32-50

That thing [menstruation] stops when you have kids.

11 yo

Young girls just throw it [rags/socks/sanitary pads] on the ground in the toilet.

25 yo

Girls wear black shorts when they've got that thing [menstruation].

15 yo

We don't change them [pads] at school we go home to do that.

14 yo

Girls can't play [have sex] with boys when they have period because then they get pregnant.

14 yo

Do white fellas get periods too?

18 and 21 yo

You should tell them [store] to change it [put pads behind counter] tomorrow. You should tell the school to get them to put in the toilets tomorrow!

Group of girls 10-17 yo

Boys ask us, what's that thing [menstruation]? But we don't say anything because we are shy.

14 yo

We want to change them [pads/tampons] at home, not at school.

Group of 14-16 yo

The bracelets are a good idea, I'll make one for my granddaughter.

Grandmother

Before I got my period I always thought you got it the first time you had sex, but it's not like that.

33 yo

A lot of blockages in toilet systems are caused by flushing sanitary items and clothing down the toilet.

Three Central Australian plumbing services

My mum gets those things [pads] for me.

11 yo

There are girls who don't come to school when they have their periods.

School Principal Barkly region

Don't put those [tampons] on the poster [MHM awareness]. They're too dangerous.

45 yo mother

We haven't reordered any pads or tampons in the six months we've been here. No one is buying them and there hasn't been any theft.

Managers of a remote store with all male staff.

When you get that thing you might sleep away from your partner, with other girls.

22 yo

Is it okay to wear one of those things [sanitary pad] for one week?

12 yo

They [young girls] might talk about it to each other, but not to mothers or grandmothers. They never say anything to us about it. I wish my daughter would talk to me about things like that, but she doesn't.

32 yo

Girls tease each other about it [menstruation] a lot.

32 yo

My daughters come to me and I get those things [pads] for them.

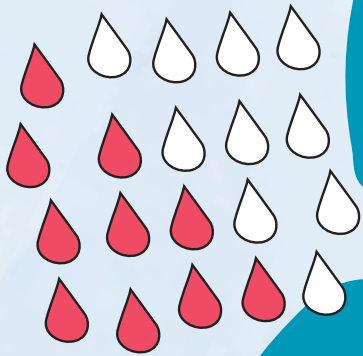
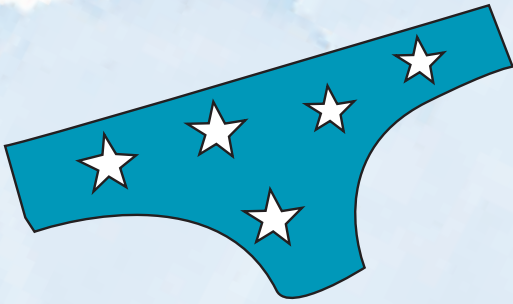
33 yo mother

Sometimes the girls don't go to school when they have their period.

Grandmother

Common Terms used in English

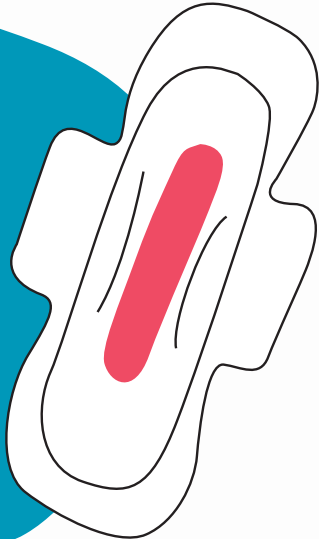
Feedback from practitioners is valued. It helps us to develop our regional vocabulary, so we can have better discussions about MHM.



Female underwear
Bloomers
Undies
Knickers

Menstruation
That thing
Monthlies
Periods

Pads
Kimbies
Pads



Tampons
Rockets
Tampons



Activity and discussion tools

How to talk to girls about MHM

Discuss the MHM session with female family members of potential participants before a session, to get their permission and, if possible, their input. Allow the participants and a woman older than them to choose the location. Inform all participants that this is a talk about 'girls' things'. Refrain from calling it 'women's business', as this suggests a particular type of discussion about cultural matters.

Is it okay to wear
one of those things
[sanitary pad]
for one week?
12 yo

- If you have the resources, teaching MHM can be a very practical activity, which involves handling pads and tampons. If you do not have access to these, or if you are doing a follow-up session with girls with whom you previously used the materials, try working with the posters featured in this Guide.
- Try not to assume the extent of knowledge about menstruation or MHM within the group. Give the participants time to ask questions and share their impressions.
- Take time to respond gently and sensitively; you should define the group dynamic. It is very important to maintain a respectful and shame-free atmosphere.
- Pre-pubescent girls sometimes do not want older girls who are already menstruating to join them. Their presence may prevent younger ones speaking freely, and asking questions.
- You may need to do several sessions with different groups to ensure good practice.
- Unwrap all items, including tampons, using very clear gestures while removing the packaging. This also applies to demonstrating disposal.
- Have toilet paper and pad wrappers handy to show the process of wrapping up used pads or tampons before throwing them in the rubbish. It's also good to have a rubbish bag.







Growing up painting

This painting illustrates some of the elements of the different stages of life that girls experience, from pre-natal to being a grandmother. If you are delivering MHM information at a school as a visitor, you could share this painting with the staff before your visit so the teacher may introduce the topic to the group before your visit. This can support and strengthen the relationship in the classroom. It also works to make the school better equipped and able to allocate time to make the school more girl-friendly.

Activity

Display the painting so everyone can see it, and ask what the group can recognise. The discussion about this painting may inspire participants to do their own paintings about this kind of story. It may be worth asking the group who they would like to invite to help with the painting.

Materials

Poster 1 Painting – digital or print form

Discussion

An important element of MHM, and discussing MHM, is being inclusive. This discussion can be a good introduction to the topic of growing up, as it is very general and does not have any intimidating or embarrassing images that may make people feel shamed. The use of the image invites participants and practitioners to recognise themselves, their friends and their family members in it.

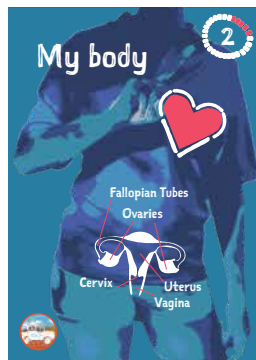
The image can be used to help discussion in several ways:

- to tell the story of an individual growing up;
- to discuss how we relate to females in each stage of life, e.g., a little girl and her teenage sister; a baby boy and his grandmother;
- to talk about responsibilities in the different stages of life; and
- to explore particular themes, events or needs at different times of life, e.g., having a relationship, earning money, reaching puberty, getting a licence, looking after yourself throughout pregnancy, worrying for young kids, learning, family, challenges, going to the clinic, support systems.

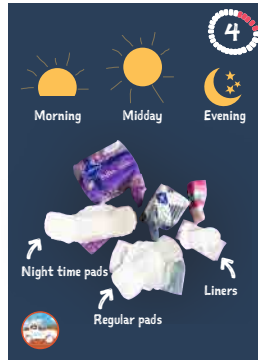
This discussion can lead to the next activity, involving the MHM bag and associated activity. See page 23.

Share

See the feedback form on page 45 to share the experience of the session with CAYLUS.



My Body Poster	The poster displays the female reproductive organs.
Activity	<p>Give everyone a copy of the poster or display it so the whole group can see it. Pointing at the relevant body parts, give the following basic information:</p> <p>“Eggs are released from the ovaries. The egg travels through the fallopian tube – it takes a few days. While this happens the walls of the uterus thicken. This is to support the egg if it gets fertilised. If the egg is not fertilised, then you will get your period. That’s when the blood that lines the uterus comes out through your cervix and vagina. Then the cycle will start again.”</p> <p>It is important to use the right language. Alternatively, you can show a video clip, and get the participants to follow the story on the poster.</p> <p>YouTube clips: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXrQ_FhZmos https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayzN5f3qN8g&t=105s</p> <p>Talk about language and the words that people might use for their body parts. Write them down. Remember to be confident. Don’t react negatively if people use language that makes you uncomfortable. Explain the importance of knowing the right names for body parts in all languages that people speak.</p>
Materials	Device to show YouTube clip. Poster 2
Discussion	<p>What other words do you use? How big is the egg? How does the egg get inside you? (You are born with all the eggs already inside you. When your body uses all the eggs then your periods stop. This happens to older women.) What is fertilisation? What is the lining made up of? If you have more questions who can you ask?</p> <p>Consideration: This topic can lead to discussions about sex. Always give factual answers and keep it simple. If you are uncomfortable talking about sex, use a YouTube clip or seek help from a colleague or female community member to support this part of the workshop.</p>
Share	See feedback form on page 45 to share the experience of the session with CAYLUS.



MHM Bag

This bag is full of the items girls can use to look after themselves when they are menstruating. There are images of all the items and what they look like in the store. If you are not able to buy all the materials, you can use the images in this Guide. The images may also be useful for a follow-up session.

Activity

Give one pair of undies and a pad to each girl. Let them unwrap and put the pad in the undies, assist by doing the same yourself, and let each girl complete the task with minimal interference.

Show where the tampon is inserted into the vagina by using a real, unwrapped tampon and referring to poster 2 – My Body.

Materials

- Different sized pads, liners and tampons
- Undies (approx. 10, one pair for each girl participant and for adults who are present)
- Toilet paper to show demonstration of disposal
- Bag to keep everything private
- Small rubbish bag to dispose of unwrapped pads and tampons
- Posters 3, 4 and 5

Discussion

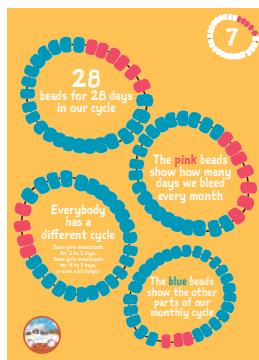
- What is the pad or tampon?
- Where can you buy pads or tampons in the community or in town?
- The purpose of each item
- Washing hands and unwrapping
- Inserting tampon in vagina and placing pad in underwear; clean hands.
- For how long it is safe to wear the item?
- Showering and washing
- Appropriate disposal and how flushing can make toilets block up
- Ask participants to think of a person they could talk about menstruation, at home and at school.

Share

See feedback form on page 45 to share the experience of the session with CAYLUS



<h2>At the Shop</h2>	<p>Poster 6 has images of stock at the local store and in town as examples of what you'll find on the shelf. It can be nerve-wracking for girls and women to purchase tampons or pads, and can be so overwhelming as to prevent them attempting to purchase. This activity aims to give girls some ability to navigate shopping for intimate items, as well as familiarity with products and their packaging. It should also inform us of the best store sales strategies.</p>
<h2>Activity</h2>	<p>Look at the printed poster, or the image on screen, and allow girls to zoom in, or point out the location of different items.</p> <p>Also have posters 1-2 available, and while talking about these, get girls to show where the specific item is located on the shelf.</p>
<h2>Materials</h2>	<p>Posters 6</p>
<h2>Discussion</h2>	<p>Fundamental messages to get across:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where these items are kept in the community store and in town shops. • What makes it easy or difficult to buy pads and tampons? • There are different types of pads and tampons, and when you have the right kind for you it feels more comfortable. • What might need to change in your community to make it easier to buy pads, for example, the store having them behind counter? • Who could help you to buy pads or tampons if you feel too shamed or embarrassed?
<h2>Share</h2>	<p>See feedback form on page 45 to share the experience of the session with CAYLUS</p>



Girl's Bracelets

Make a bracelet with girls and women, with beads representing the number of days of the menstrual cycle.

Activity

Invite girls to select beads of two different colours, to represent bleeding and non-bleeding days.

If they do not feel comfortable revealing how many days they bleed, suggest five or six.

This process gives girls something enjoyable to do, and makes it a bit easier if they are feeling uncomfortable at any stage of the session.

It is a practical and appealing activity that can continue while other discussion takes place and other resources are shared.

This activity helps to develop an image of the relationship between the female body and time, equipping girls with a way to predict their menstrual cycle, and giving them more control and greater capacity to manage MHM.

Materials

Beads and elastic. Experiment with different-sized beads to ensure bracelets will fit the girls' wrists.

It is important to have the beads in a circle, without other items placed in between, so as to effectively illustrate the cyclical nature of menstruation.

All other posters may be useful, depending on the discussion.

Media: Funny menstruation animation.

Discussion

Fundamental messages to get across:

- Everybody is different. Some of us might bleed for two or three days, and others might bleed for four to seven days.
- Everybody is different, but there are some things which many of us feel.

Share

See feedback form on page 45 to share the experience of the session with CAYLUS



Energy Wheel

These posters are to help add some movement and fun to the MHM sessions. They are guidelines to assist with a healthy cycle. The Energy Wheel shows the entire month. It is helpful to understand that menstruation is just one part of the monthly cycle. Doing the stretches throughout the month can help to alleviate period pain. The nutrition suggestions are for some things that are good to eat during different parts of the cycle, and which are likely to be available in communities.

Activity

Talk about the different times in the cycle, using the discussion points below. Together, choose some of the yoga poses on one on the posters and do them together. All poses done during menstruation are gentle stretches. If the girls want, filming the poses could be part of the activity and could help the girls to observe and discuss the stretches once they have looked at the footage.

If you find that the girls have trouble holding the positions, maybe offer a prize to help them to focus.

Materials

Posters 13, 14, 15

Discussion

- The Energy Wheel shows the whole month and menstruation is just one part of the cycle.
- The first day of the cycle is the first day of your period.
- The last day of the cycle is the days before the first day of your period.
- Everyone is different, with a different cycle; usually a cycle goes for about a month.
- Lots of things happen inside your body over the month. You can see on the different posters when you have lots of energy and when you have low energy.
- There are things you can do to look after yourself over the whole month, so you feel better all the time, and could have less period pain.
- Stretches are good for looking after your muscles. They also help your body to release hormones called 'endorphins'. These help us to have less pain and to feel happier.
- Having a warm shower or holding a hot water bottle on your tummy or back or just keeping warm can help if you have pain.
- Are there foods you can collect that are especially good for women and girls? (Speak to senior women about this first and get permission to discuss; it may be culturally sensitive information.)

Share

See feedback form on page 45 to share the experience of the session with CAYLUS



My body



Fallopian Tubes

Ovaries

Cervix

Uterus

Vagina



What is puberty?

- Puberty is the time when girls begin to produce eggs.
- It is the time when we develop into young women.
- It is a very special time, and it is our bodies' way of maturing so that one day we can have children and start our own families. Even though girls' bodies start getting ready to have babies, it does not mean that girls are ready to have children or should have them yet.

When does puberty begin and how long does it take?

- Changes take place in girls and boys at different times. Generally changes start earlier for girls than for boys.
- Some start before the age of 10, while others start after age 14.
- For some girls, changes may take place in one year or less. In others, they can take as long as six years.



What are the physical changes that take place in girls?

- A girl's breasts start to grow and her hips get wider.
- Hair starts to grow under her arms. Hair grows in her pubic area. She starts to menstruate (have her period or bleed every month).

What is menstruation?

- Menstruation means that a girl's body is growing up, and is preparing for the future when she might get pregnant and have a baby.
- During menstruation, the lining of the uterus comes out along with blood through the vagina.
- Bleeding usually lasts 4-7 days and usually happens every month.
- Monthly bleeding is not something to be scared of because it is perfectly normal.
- Most girls have their first period between the ages of 11 and 14. Some girls start as early as 8, and some at 17 or older.



'What is Puberty?' Information has been sourced from Shama Books, Grow and Know resource, 'Growth and Changes' pages 1-7 http://www.growandknow.org/Growth_and_Changes_Ethiopia_Book_Oromiiffa.pdf

CAYLUS has permission to feature this in this resource book

4



Morning



Midday



Evening



Night-time pads



Regular pads



Liners



Change tampons every 3 hours

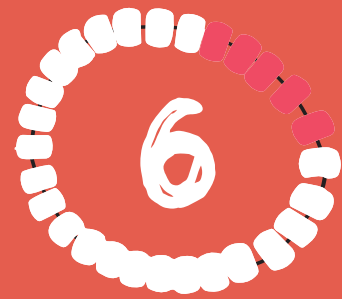


Super tampon

Regular tampons



At the town shops



At the community store





28

beads for 28 days
in our cycle

The **pink** beads
show how many
days we bleed
every month.

There are
many
different cycles.

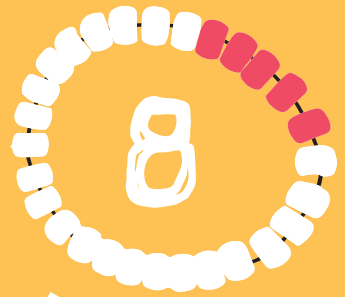
Some girls menstruate
for 2 to 3 days.
Some girls menstruate
for 4 to 7 days,
or even a bit longer.

The **blue** beads
show the other
parts of our
monthly cycle.





Toxic Shock Syndrome



Change your tampon every 3 hours

Ask the clinic if it is okay to use tampons if you've just had a baby, or any special women's operations.

Only use a tampon when you have your monthlies.

Don't use tampons when you are sleeping for a long time.

Always unwrap your tampon yourself. If you don't use it, throw it in the rubbish. Don't keep it.

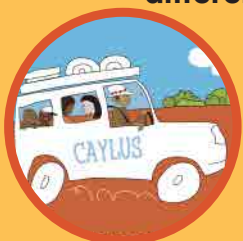
Only use one tampon at a time.

Make sure you wash every day when you have your monthlies.

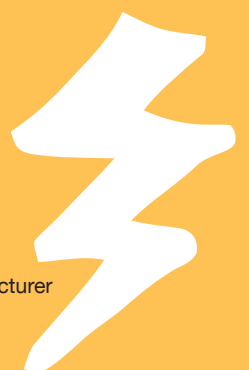
- If you use tampons, you need to take extra care.
- If you leave a tampon in for too long, you might get 'toxic shock'.
- Toxic Shock Syndrome, or 'toxic shock' can make you feel sick, give you a headache or fever, make you vomit, get diarrhoea, feel weak, dizzy, or confused, or get a rash.
- Never use other things for a tampon, like toilet paper or clothing. This could make you really sick.
- Use the right-sized tampon for your amount of bleeding.
- You might need to use super (big) or regular (medium) or mini tampons on different days.



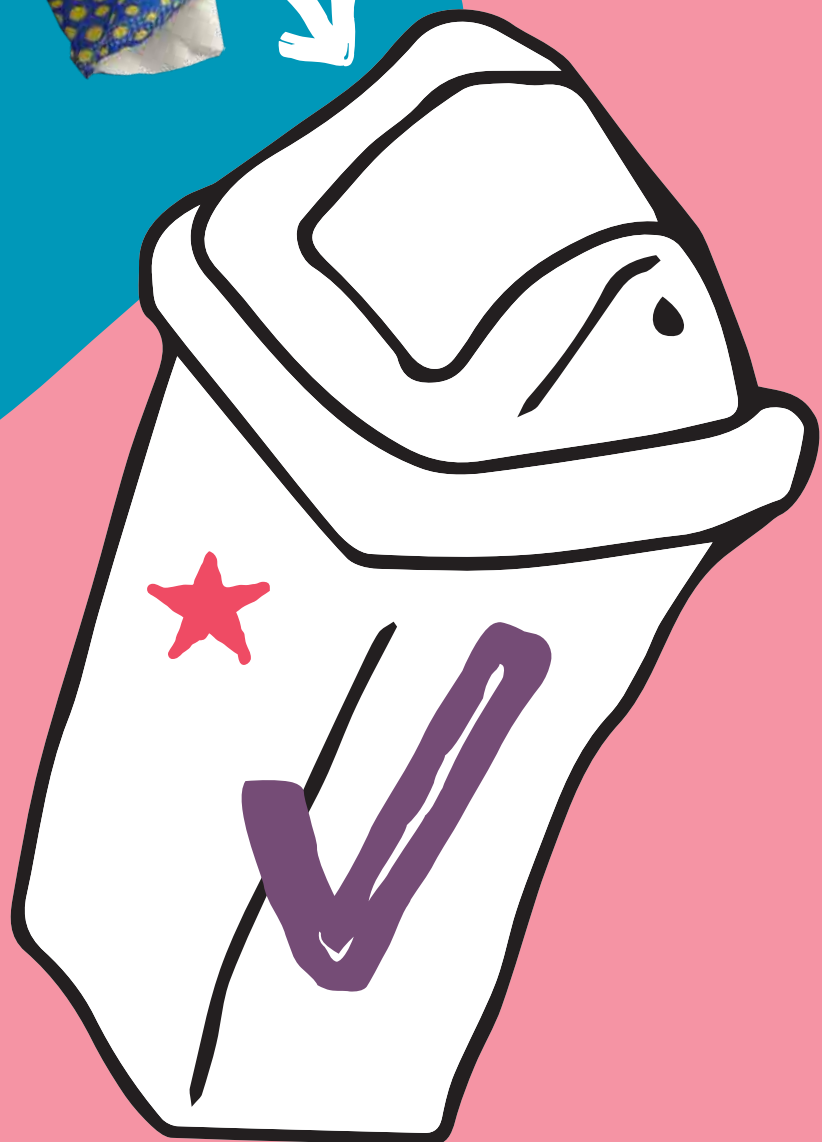
Don't use a tampon if it hurts you.



*TSS information featured is informed by the information and warnings of a leading tampon manufacturer



Don't flush it!



PMS

is short for Pre-menstrual Syndrome

Not all girls have PMS, and not all girls have it in the same way.

PMS can start a week before you start bleeding, and usually goes away after the first couple of days of your period.

You might feel

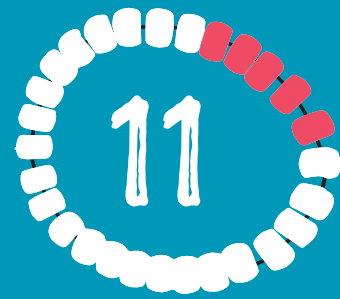
- moody, miserable, frustrated
 - stressed
 - sooky, crying, cranky
- tired, weak, sleeping a lot
 - it's hard to sleep
- like you don't want to join in or be with others
 - more hungry, or having cravings
 - like you have mixed up thinking

In your body you might have

- muscles paining
- sore, swollen boobs
 - stomach ache
- big, tight stomach — bloating
- diarrhoea or constipation
 - pimples
 - headaches
- nausea — feeling like vomiting



Is it normal if...



Is it normal if I don't get my period every month?

Yes. When girls' bodies are developing, the period is often not regular and you can skip months.

Is it normal to get your period 5 days one time, 6 days another time, and 4 days another time?

Yes. Every girl's period is different and can last for different numbers of days as she is growing up.

Is it normal if you get your period on a different day each month?

Yes. A typical menstrual cycle is 28 days but it can range between 21 and 35 days.

Is it normal if I get my period for 3 days and my friend gets her period for 5 days?

Yes. The average length of a period is 5 days but it can range from 2 to 7 or more days.

Is it normal to get breast pains when you are growing up?

Yes. As a girl's body develops, many inside changes are happening and small pains are natural.

Is it normal that boys do not get periods?

Yes. Boys' bodies are different inside and they cannot have babies. So they do not get a period.

Is it normal to feel shy when you have your period?

Yes. Many girls feel shy because they are not used to managing their periods. This is normal and as you get older, you will feel less shy.

Is it normal to get a discharge just before or after your period?

Yes. Once a girl's body starts to develop, some clear or milky-white discharge is normal. During a period, the menstrual blood can be different colours, including bright red, light pink or even more brown in colour.



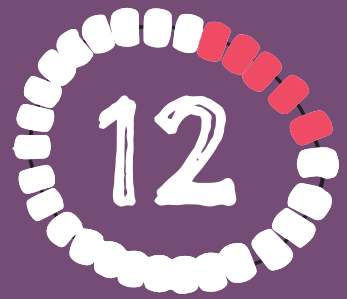
Is it normal if...

'Is it normal if?' has been sourced from Shama Books, Grow and Know resource, 'Growth and Changes' pages 28,30

http://www.growandknow.org/Growth_and_Changes_Ethiopia_Book_Oromiffa.pdf

CAYLUS has permission to feature this in this resource book

True or False

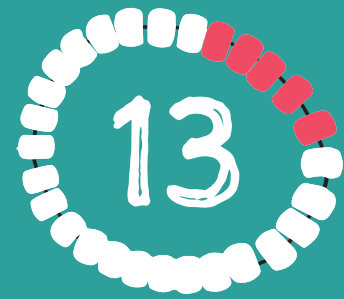


1. When you grow up and have children your monthlies will stop forever.
2. On average, it takes 3-4 years for a girl's breasts to fully develop.
3. Your monthlies start the first time you have sex.
4. You can go to school or play in any sports during your period.
5. You can have a warm shower to help period pain.
6. You have to change tampons every 3 hours.
7. You can get pregnant if you have sex without a condom during your monthlies.
8. If I use a tampon I can still pee.
9. Monthlies end when a woman stops having kids.
10. While women breastfeed their monthlies stop.
11. Getting monthlies is a normal thing for girls.
12. I can usually guess when I will get my monthlies next.
13. Flushing pads/kimbies or tampons down the toilet, blocks the toilet.

Answers
1. False 2. True 3. False 4. True 5. True 6. True
7. True 8. True 9. False 10. True 11. True 12. True 13. True



Cycle days 1-8 Menstruating



Low energy time



Hot Water Bottle
on Belly and Back

WATER

PORRIDGE

BEANS

Kangaroo

Stretching

BEEF

FRUIT

NUTS



GREEN
VEGGIES



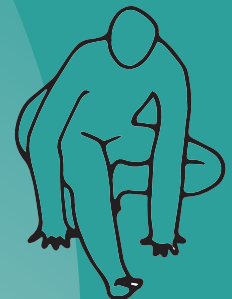
DRIED
APRICOTS

Walking



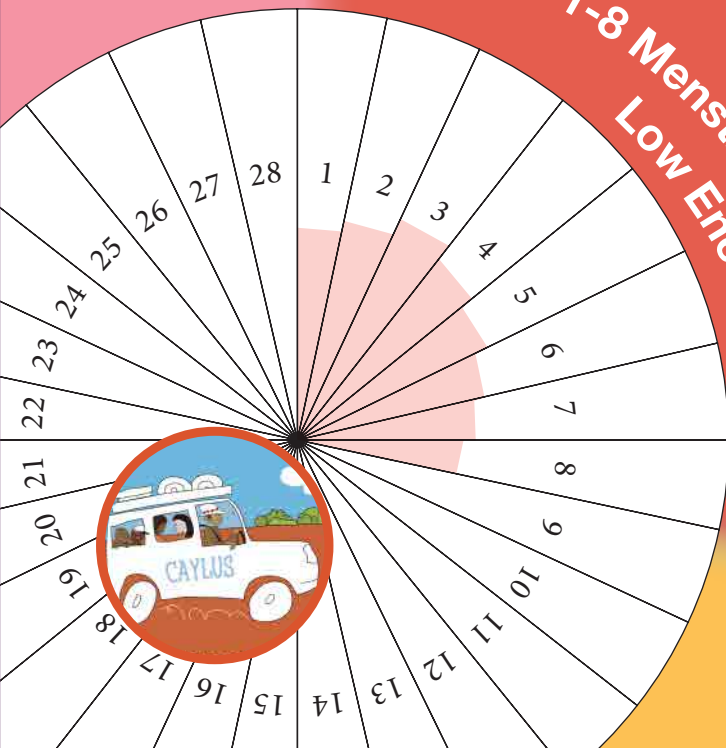
PRUNES

Warm shower



1 Hour more sleep a day

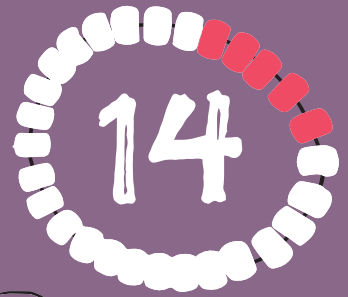
Everyone feels different and menstruates for
a different number of days
Cycle Days 1-8 Menstruating
Low Energy Time



If you feel really
bad go to the clinic!

Cycle days

9-21



Feeling good



PORRIDGE



WATER



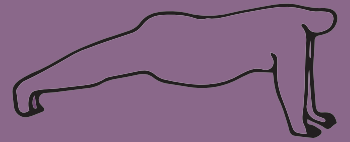
GREEN VEGGIES



BEEF



FRUIT



EGGS



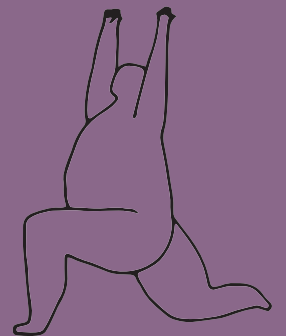
Kangaroo



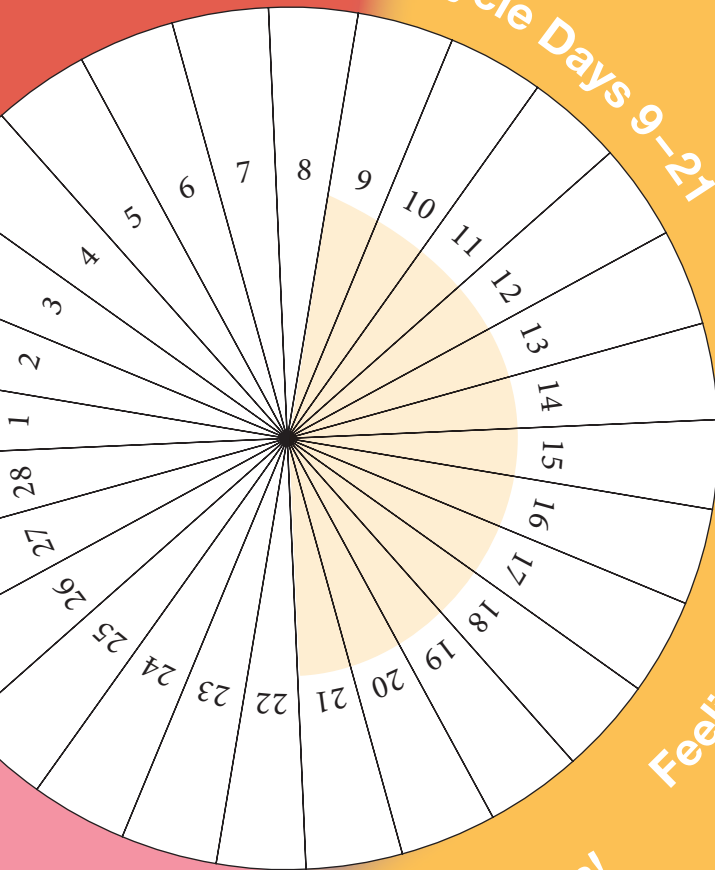
NUTS



Yoghurt

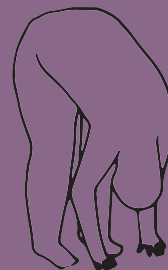
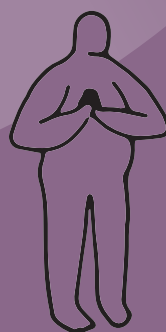


Cycle Days 9-21

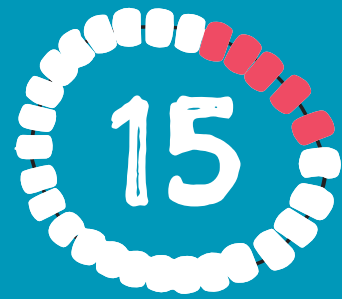


Feeling good!

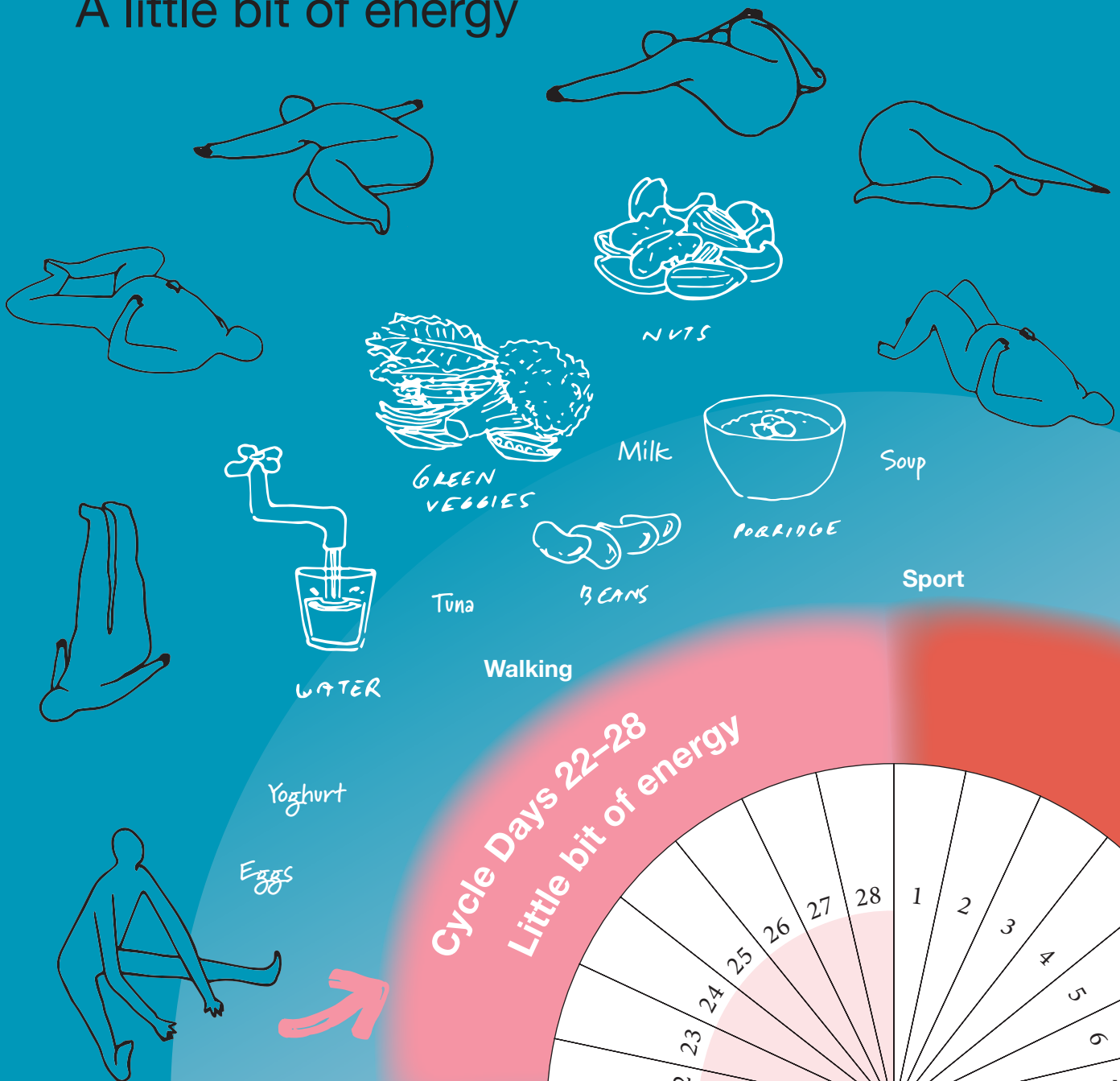
Have Fun!



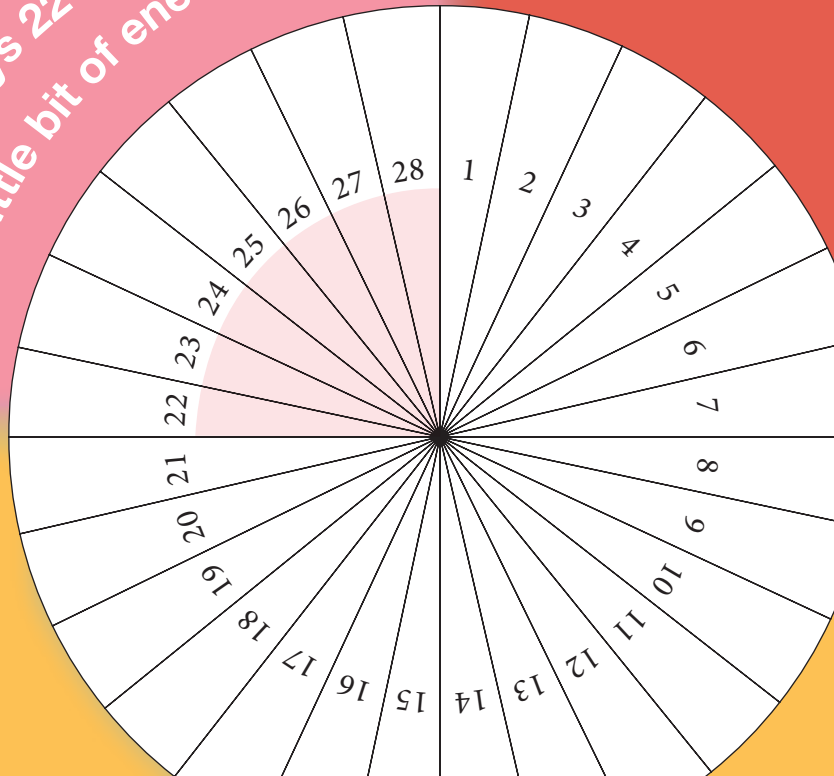
Cycle days 22-28



A little bit of energy



Cycle Days 22-28
Little bit of energy



Additional Resources

Housing for Health, Central Australia	How a Bathroom Fails to Function: http://www.housingforhealth.com/realworld/bathroom-fails-function/
Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and Alukura, Central Australia	CCHEP Young Women's Community Health Education Program: http://www.caac.org.au/how-we-help/education/congress-community-health-education-program-cchep/
High as a Koit, UK	Funny Menstruation Animation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvPVyas68jE
Wateraid, International	Menstrual Hygiene Matters: http://www.wateraid.org/what-we-do/our-approach/research-and-publications/view-publication?id=02309d73-8e41-4d04-b2ef-6641f6616a4f
Menstrual Hygiene Day, International	Menstrual Hygiene Day: http://menstrualhygieneday.org/
Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council, International	WSSCC Menstrual Hygiene Management: http://wsscc.org/resource-links2/menstrual-hygiene-management-mhm-manuals-wheel-flipbook/
United Nations Children's Fund, International	UNICEF WASH in Schools Empowers Girls Education Proceedings of the Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools Virtual Conference 2012: http://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/files/WASH_in_Schools_Empowers_Girls_Education_Proceedings_of_Virtual_MHM_conference(2).pdf
Mailman School of Public Health, International	Utilizing participatory and quantitative methods for effective menstrual-hygiene management related policy and planning by Marni Sommer: https://watsanmissionassistant.wikispaces.com/file/view/marnisommer_participatoryquantativemethodsmhmpolicyplanning_2010.pdf/356181744/marnisommer_participatoryquantativemethodsmhm-policyplanning_2010.pdf
Menstrupedia, South Asia	Menstrupedia: Official Blog of Menstrupedia: http://menstrupedia.com/blog/
Share the Dignity, Australia	http://www.sharethedignity.com.au
products	Period-proof underwear Modibodi (Australian company) https://www.modibodi.com
products	Period proof underwear Thinx (USA company) https://www.shethinx.com

<p>Lauren Chockman, Eco Femme, Australia/India</p>	<p>Unlearning menstruation, sanitary waste in India https://ecofemme.org/unlearning-menstruation-sanitary-waste-india/</p>
<p>Ted-Ed, USA/International</p> <p>This is recommended for English-speaking MHM practitioners to help inform their practice, and could be helpful for some girls and women with strong proficiency in spoken English</p>	<p>Why do Women have periods? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjbgZwgdY7Q&t=2s</p>
<p>Kids Health, USA</p> <p>This is recommended for MHM practitioners to help inform their practice, and could be helpful for some girls and women with strong proficiency in spoken English</p>	<p>The Menstrual Cycle https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vXrQ_FhZmos</p>
<p>Ted-Ed, USA/International</p>	<p>How Menstruation Works https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ayzN-5f3qN8g&t=3s</p>
<p>University of Queensland and WaterAid Australia, Australia</p>	<p>Discussion Paper from the University of Queensland and WaterAid Australia Water, sanitation and hygiene in remote Indigenous Australia: A scan of priorities http://gci.uq.edu.au/filething/get/13903/UQ_WASH%20scan%20in%20Indig%20Communities-FINAL-LR-2.pdf</p>

Acknowledgements

CAYLUS would like to thank the many young girls and families of Ampilatwatja, Utopia, Atitjere, Ali Curung, Kintore, Ikuntji, Amoonguna, Ntaria, Kalka, Pipalyatjara, Engawala and Yuendumu. Since 2015 these communities have hosted CAYLUS and a number of services working in the region, while developing this resource and implementing MHM programs. These partnerships have informed this work, and enabled MHM delivery across the region.

The commitment and work of the following government and non-government organisations has been instrumental in the development and delivery of the MHM program: MacDonnell Regional Council, Barkly Regional Council, Central Desert Regional Council, Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation (WYDAC), and Ngaanyatjarra Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara Women's Council (NPYWC).

We also thank the following individuals:

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Katrina Georgiou *Principal Ampilatwatja School*

Lyn Koppes, *Manager, Warte Alparayetye Aboriginal Corporation Store, Lake Nash*

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Want to support the CAYLUS Central Australian MHM program?

Any funds Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service receives are 100% tax deductible.

CAYLUS does not charge administration fees.

You may arrange a one-off or an ongoing donation here: <https://www.givenow.com.au/cause3907> Please specify that you are donating to the MHM program in the 'special messages' section of the Give Now donation process.

Note: your credit card company may charge a fee.

Funds received go towards resourcing MHM programs in the following ways:

- employing local women to deliver MHM sessions to girls in their community;
- buying pads, tampons, underwear, and period-proof underwear to supply MHM programs; and
- contributing to the cost of design and media work to develop educational resources in local languages.

If you would like to donate MHM materials such as pads, tampons, conventional or period-proof underwear, please contact CAYLUS at mhm@caylus.org.au to discuss current needs, and to arrange shipping.

Feedback

If you use any of the resources together with girls and women, please share some of the stories which came up in the session so we may get a better understanding of ideas, myths and practices about MHM in Central Australia.

Please contact mhm@caylus.org.au for further information or to share feedback.

Activity or resource used:

Participants (age range, and family connections if known):

Senior local participants/facilitators happy to be contacted for future sessions/consultations etc:

Location (e.g. school classroom, bush trip, youth centre, clinic etc.):

Other resources used not included in this booklet:

Language/words used to talk about menstruation:

Comments and suggestions from facilitator and/or participants (please specify):

NB: Age of participants is useful to pair with information, however anonymity will always be respected. The names of individuals and communities will not be published. Permission will be sought for any shared material which may be included in future editions of this Guide.

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