

# DAYS FOR GIRLS

# MENSTRUAL HEALTH GLOSSARY

## **Menstruation (or Menses)**

The natural bodily process of releasing blood and associated matter from the uterus through the vagina as part of the menstrual cycle.<sup>1</sup>

## **Menstruator**

A person who menstruates and therefore has menstrual health needs – including girls, women, transgender and non-binary persons.<sup>1</sup>

## **Menarche**

The onset of menstruation, the time when a girl has her first menstrual period.<sup>1</sup>

## **Menstrual materials**

Products used to catch menstrual flow, such as pads, cloths, tampons or cups. These may also be referred to as menstrual materials or period products.<sup>1</sup>

## **Menstrual supplies**

Other supportive items needed for MH, such as body and laundry soap, underwear and pain relief items.<sup>1</sup>

## **Menstrual facilities**

Those facilities most associated with a safe and dignified menstruation, such as toilets and water infrastructure.<sup>1</sup>

## **Menstrual Health (MH)**

The ability of menstruators to:

- Access accurate, timely information about the menstrual cycle, self-care, and hygiene practices.
- Care for their bodies so that their preferences, hygiene, comfort, privacy, and safety are supported. This includes access to a choice of effective, affordable menstrual materials, access to WASH infrastructure, and safe ways to clean or dispose of used materials.
- Access care for menstrual-related discomforts and disorders, including pain relief, self-care strategies, and access to health services.
- Experience a positive and respectful environment regarding the menstrual cycle, free from stigma or psychological distress.
- Decide if and how to participate in all spheres of life, free from menstrual-related barriers.<sup>2</sup>

## **Menstrual Health and Hygiene (MHH)**

A term often used when referring to MH in combination with the water, hygiene, and sanitation (WASH) components that support MH.

## **Menstrual equity**

The ideal that all menstruators should have equal access to all components of MH including products, infrastructure, education, supportive social environments, and bodily autonomy.

## **Female Genital Cutting (FGC)**

Sometimes referred to as female circumcision or FGM (female genital mutilation). FGC is a term that respects the rights that people must have over their own bodies and the social and cultural contexts in which these practices take place. FGC is relevant to the work of DfG because extreme forms of this practice may prevent menstrual blood flow, which can lead to discomfort and infection, and we work with local experts when addressing this issue.<sup>4</sup>

## **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR)**

A state of complete physical, mental and social well-being in all matters relating to the reproductive system. It implies that people are able to have a satisfying and safe sex life, the capability to reproduce, and the freedom to decide if, when, and how often to do so.<sup>4</sup>

## **Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE)**

CSE enables young people to protect their health, well-being and dignity. Because CSE programs are based on human rights principles, they advance gender equality and the rights and empowerment of young people.<sup>5</sup>

## **Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)**

Due to their interdependent nature, these three core issues are grouped together to represent a growing sector. <sup>6</sup> WASH infrastructure is an essential component of MH as menstruators need hygienic, safe, private, and convenient spaces for changing and disposing of menstrual materials as well as sufficient clean water.

## **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

A set of 17 global goals designed by the United Nations as a shared blueprint for all countries towards a peaceful and prosperous future for people and the planet by the year 2030. Learn more [here](#).

## **Sustainable Development**

Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable development calls for concerted efforts towards building an inclusive, sustainable and resilient future for people and planet. For sustainable development to be achieved, it is crucial to harmonize three core elements: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. These elements are interconnected and all are crucial for the well-being of individuals and societies.<sup>7</sup>

## References

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF (2019). Guidance on Menstrual Health and Hygiene. Available at <https://www.unicef.org/wash/files/UNICEF-Guidance-menstrual-health-hygiene-2019.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Hennegan, J., Winkler, I.T., Bobel, C., Keiser, D., Hampton, J., Larsson, G., Chandra-Mouli, V., Plesons, M., & Mahon, T. (2021) Menstrual Health: A Definition for Policy, Practice, and Research. Sexual and Reproductive Health Matters. <https://doi.org/10.1080/26410397.2021.1911618>

<sup>4</sup> UNFPA (2020) Sexual and Reproductive Health: Overview. <https://www.unfpa.org/sexual-reproductive-health#:~:text=Overview,how%20often%20to%20do%20so.>

<sup>5</sup> UNFPA (2020) Comprehensive Sexuality Education: Overview. Available at <https://www.unfpa.org/comprehensive-sexuality-education#:~:text=Comprehensive%20sexuality%20education%20is%20a,school%20or%20out%20of%20school.&text=But%20it%20also%20goes%20beyond,their%20sexual%20and%20reproductive%20health.>

<sup>6</sup> UNICEF (2016). About WASH. Available at [https://www.unicef.org/wash/3942\\_3952.html](https://www.unicef.org/wash/3942_3952.html)

<sup>7</sup> UN (2020) The Sustainable Development Goals. Available at <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda/>



DAYS FOR GIRLS INTERNATIONAL

P.O. Box 2622

Mount Vernon, WA 98273 USA

+1 (360) 220-8393

[info@daysforgirls.org](mailto:info@daysforgirls.org)

  @daysforgirls