



# MHM Central Australia





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## Introduction

The Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service mission is to support community initiatives that improve quality of life and address substance misuse affecting young people in Central Australia.

Menstrual hygiene management (MHM) has traditionally had a place in the research, resources and delivery of sexual health education, which tend to be delivered in a school setting. CAYLUS recognises that there is a need to look more specifically at the challenges to MHM in Central Australian Indigenous communities, and the capacity of services which engage with youth to make these communities more girl friendly.

This is the first MHM specific resource to have been developed in Central Australia. It includes information which has emerged from many discussions and sessions throughout 2015. These discussions have taken place with Indigenous girls and women, as well as youth workers, stores, clinics and schools, in the NT communities of Ampilatwatja, Utopia, Atitjere, Ali Curung, Kintore and Ikuntj.

*The three fundamental aspects of MHM, as identified by Columbia Mailman School of Public Health and UNICEF are:*

- Knowledge and education (sufficient knowledge, practical guidance and support)
- WASH facilities addressing MHM needs (privacy, disposal mechanisms, access to water and soap etc.)
- Availability and accessibility of absorbent materials

*This book aims to develop more girl friendly spaces in Central Australian communities by:*

- Developing an awareness among services engaging with youth of the specific challenges to MHM experienced by Indigenous girls, from and/or living in Central Australian communities
- Equipping services engaging with youth with locally informed, appropriate MHM knowledge, language and resources, so they may work together with girls and families to support MHM

This resource invites further contributions and feedback, and is the first edition of this resource.

Please contact **Central Australian Youth Link-Up Service; leyla@caylus.org.au**

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many young girls and families of Ampilatwatja, Utopia, Atitjere, Ali Curung, Kintore and Ikuntj with whom I have had the opportunity throughout 2015/16 to share and discuss MHM practices, challenges and needs of young girls and women in their communities. Without their knowledge and ongoing commitment to this project, developing this resource would not have been possible. I would also like to acknowledge the following individuals and their respective organisations for their ongoing support, information sharing, and commitment to developing good MHM practice and more girl friendly spaces in Central Australia.

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## MHM in Central Australia

The fundamentals of MHM, as defined by the World Health Organisation and UNICEF, are outlined in the below table and paired with information gathered in Central Australia.

|   |
|---|
| <p>►</p> <p><b>Women and adolescent girls use a clean material to absorb or collect menstrual blood</b></p> |
|   |

### Absorbent materials used;

- Pads
- Tampons (start being used among older teens/women)
- Socks/rags
- Toilet paper
- Talcum powder (this is featured in sexual health resources developed in the region, but was not info shared by girls or women)
- Nothing

### Remote community store

- Pads and tampons are a high cost item
  - Underwear not always available
  - Purchasing is linked to shame, store managers have witnessed unusual incidents of theft they believe occurs because girls/women feel too shame to buy
  - Staff at counter not always appropriate (male or otherwise inappropriate)
- N.b. Some women and girls report to have no issues with buying MHM materials

### Alice Springs/Tennant Creek stores

- Preferred place for purchasing sanitary items, less shame involved, however access to town is limited

## Access to pads and underwear

### School

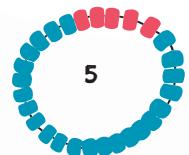
- Schools tend to have pads available for emergencies, sometimes accessible in classrooms, staffrooms, principal's office
- Trial in Barkly Region, cabinets installed in girl's toilets containing pads and sometimes tampons

### Clinic

- Sometimes available, tends to be on an emergency basis

### Family members

- Some young girls discuss MHM with female family members, however it is common for young girls not to speak about MHM or the onset/experience of menstruation



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

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

### **Individual**

- Among young adolescents there is not a strong awareness of the importance of frequency of change
- Access to enough materials to be able to change frequently
- Access to toilet in the home which is both functioning and private is not always available
- Access to new underwear is limited due to availability, and the shame associated purchasing in local stores affects some girls and women
- Access to laundry facilities is limited, hand washing is often the way underwear is washed
- Drying underwear is sometimes done privately, sometimes wet underwear/clothing is worn

### **Home**

- Soap not always available in home
- Issues around bathrooms failing to function (see the guide on page 9)

### **School**

- Soap not always available in school toilets
- Rubbish bins not always available

### **Workplace**

- Soap not always in workplace toilets
- Rubbish bins not always available

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### **Home**

- Soap not always available in the home
- Access to private and functioning bathroom not always available in each home
- Not every household has a washing machine or access to public laundry

### **School**

- Soap not always available in school toilets

### **Workplace**

- Soap not always available in workplace toilets

## Access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials

### Home

- Rubbish bins not always available in the house
- Rubbish removal in some communities is infrequent
- Wheelie bins not always secured or available
- Large populations of dogs in Indigenous communities in Central Australia may impact disposal, and may be a factor contributing to the common practice flushing used MHM materials

### School

- Rubbish bins not always available in individual cubicles
- Rubbish removal in some communities is infrequent

### Workplace

- Rubbish bin not always available in workplace toilets
- Rubbish removal in some communities is infrequent

*Septic systems often endure blockages, due in part to flushing of sanitary items and clothing used in the absence of toilet paper*

## Ideas, Myths and Practices

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

Grandmother

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

14 yo

My mum gets those things [pads] for me

11 yo

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

45 yo – mother

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

22 yo

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

33 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

Store managers in an all male staffed remote store



## Common Terms used in English

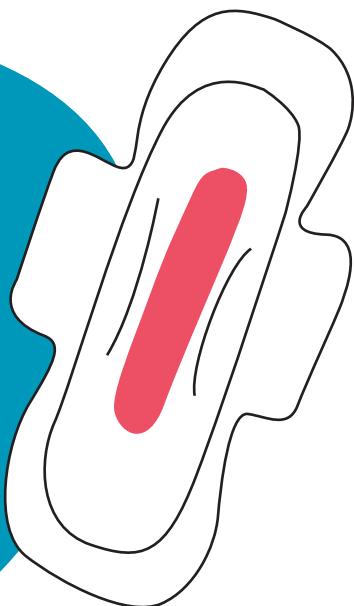
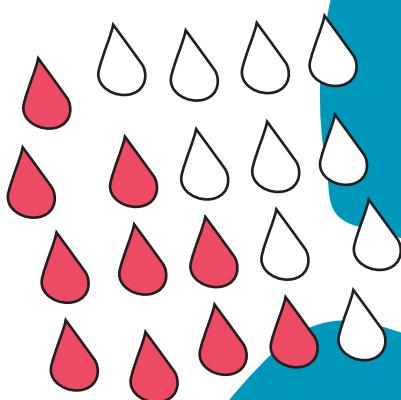
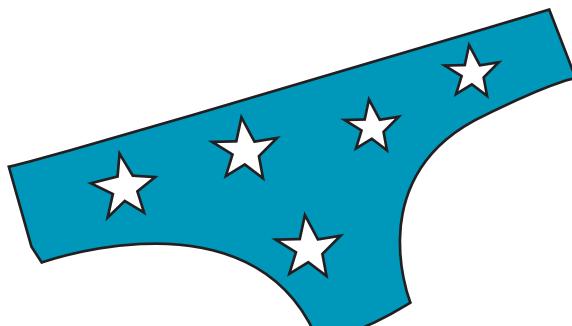
Feedback from practitioners is valued so we can develop our regional vocabulary, helping us to discuss MHM

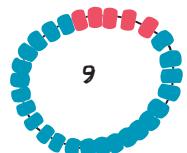
Female underwear  
Bloomers

Menstruation  
That thing  
Monthlies  
Periods

Pads  
Kimbies  
Pad

Tampons  
Rockets  
Tampons





## At Home

This guide, published by Housing for Health, is a useful illustration, explaining some of the challenges to MHM Girls and women face.

### HOW A BATHROOM FAILS TO FUNCTION

How a bathroom fails to function in a two bedroom house, serving 3 families with 15 people. 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.

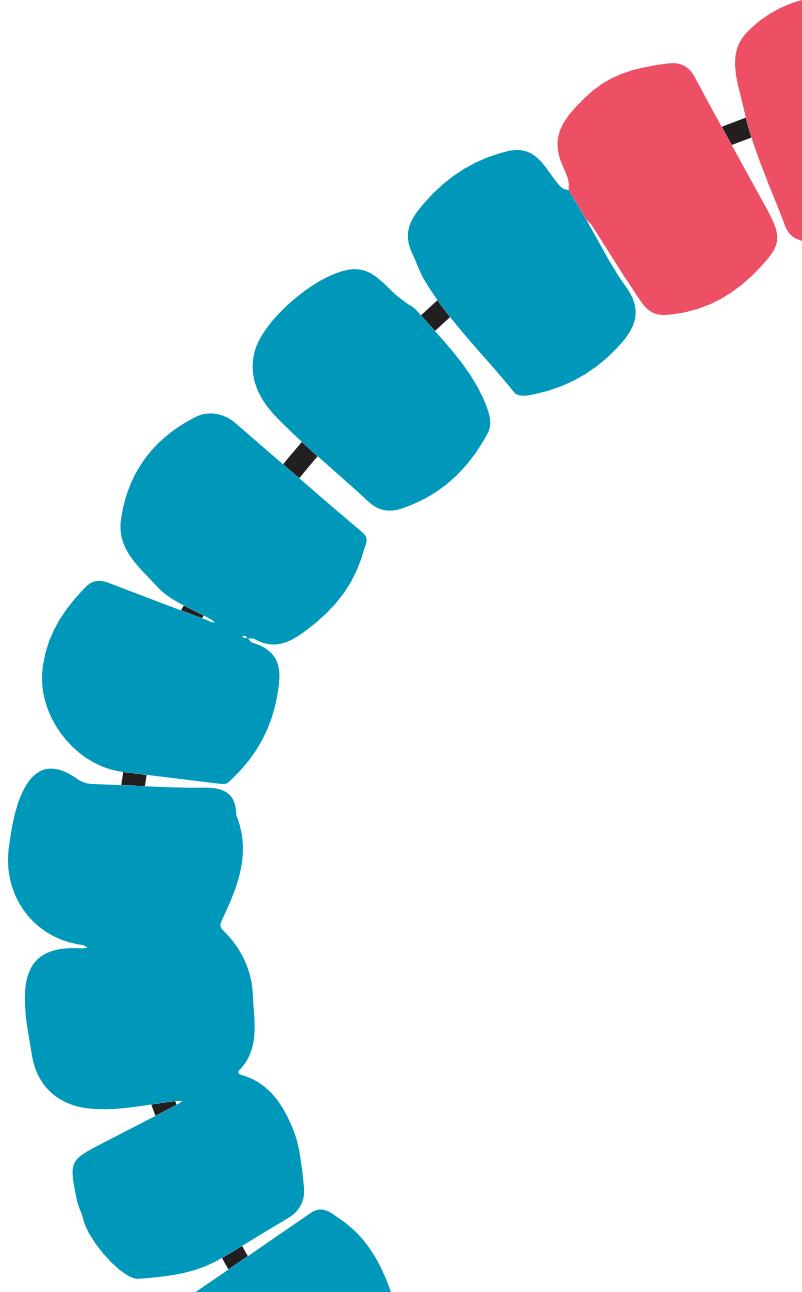
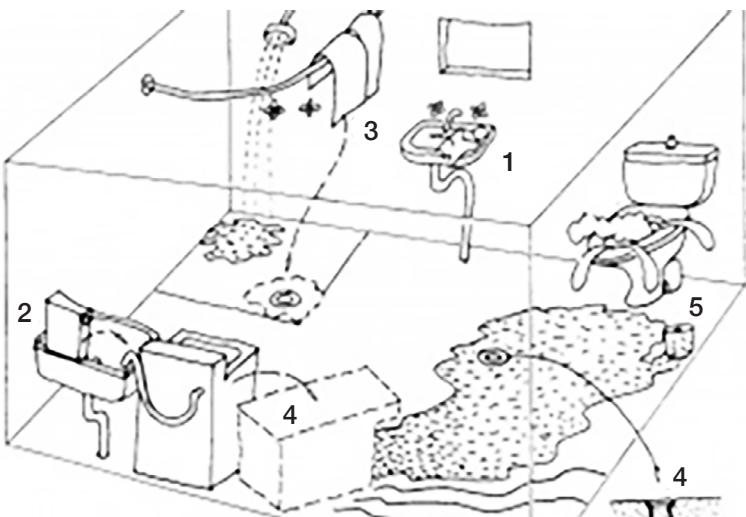
In the shower two nappies have been left to dry on a curtain rail near the small window. They fall to the ground and block the shower waste. The grading of the floor to the shower waste has never been quite right and there is always a pool of water near the corner of the shower.

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 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*



## At School

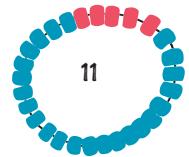
### Girls' Toilets

These images are a great example of a school creating and maintaining a girl friendly space at their 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/tampons from the supply to take home with them. The girls know they are welcome. Some girls get them for their peers if they are too shy.

Female teacher at a school in the Barkly region



## Making a girl friendly school – the challenges

The following factors are commonly expressed by staff in schools. The suggested responses support a school's capacity to establish and maintain a girl friendly school, and to facilitate a support group within the school community.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>The management of supply in the toilets</b>                     | <p>Assigning a staff member, or a staff/student team to this role, ensures regular restocking of a small quantity of pads/tampons and gives the school a good oversight of both access and usage of MHM materials in the school.</p>   |
| <b>Girls not using the school toilets to change pads</b>           | <p>There have been reports of girls not going to school while menstruating, and girls have shared that their preferred place to change pads/tampons is at home. Both of these factors are worth observing on an individual school/community basis. It is also worth enquiring within MHM sessions about what the school could provide to make girls feel more comfortable to practice MHM at school. If girls are accessing materials but waiting to change until they get home, either during school hours, or after school, this may lead to a socially negative, and physically uncomfortable, unhygienic, unhealthy experience of menstruation, and have an impact on school attendance.</p> |
| <b>Students damaging supplies and making a mess in the toilets</b> | <p>Keeping small quantities of pads/tampons in the toilets minimises waste due to misuse, and having the option to lock the storage cabinet could help with management.</p>  |
| <b>Disposal solutions</b>  | <p>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 big problem with rubbish bins getting knocked over etc. and the school opts for having just one rubbish bin for the toilets, try to keep the rubbish bin inside the actual toilets ensuring at least some privacy. If the school finds it is frequently experiencing blocked toilets this may be due to the flushing of pads/tampons. Maintaining access to rubbish bins in individual cubicles may be help alleviate this problem.</p>   |
| <b>Shyness and shame stopping girls from accessing materials</b>   | <p>Making time to deliver MHM to girls at school before they reach puberty informs girls about their changing bodies and in turn supports them, and may give them the tools to support 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, for themselves, and/or for a shy family member/friend.</p>  |

## **Male staff in the class room and in other roles at the school**

- Establishing and maintaining girl friendly schools requires an inclusive approach. Male staff have practical, economic, social and political responsibilities in developing and maintaining girl friendly schools, by;
- Ensuring access to toilets, running water, flushing toilets, rubbish disposal
- Being conscious and sensitive to girls' toilet visit needs
- Developing a respectful and sensitive strategy for responding to teasing among girls, and by boys, related to menstruation
- Allowing for a relationship to develop between girls and an appropriate person/s in the school, this includes allocating class time to adequate MHM sessions

## **Female staff uncomfortable about discussing MHM**

Being female doesn't qualify an individual to deliver MHM sessions, and the workplace should not presume any/all female staff are equipped to fulfil the role. Not all women are adequately informed, or feel comfortable talking about MHM. This book endeavours to make women more confident and competent in delivering MHM. Finding the person in a school who is best equipped, and feels comfortable to deliver MHM is vital in establishing and maintaining a support group which meets the needs of girls in the student community. Asking girls to nominate women working in the school who they would feel comfortable approaching, can be a very helpful way of finding the most appropriate staff member for this role.

## Funding to provide ongoing MHM materials

See below for an idea of the cost involved in making a school more girl friendly. The quantity and relative costs are dependent 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. N.b. costs are at time of writing and subject to change.

## Cabinets

Cabinets in female toilets at school and in workplaces allow girls and women to access pads both independently and privately. This may not be the best option available, but at time of writing these were being installed as a trial. Cabinets may be used with a key given out to students, or left unlocked as the following example shows.

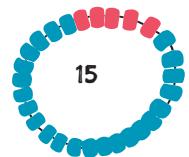
This is an example of a cabinet which is an adequate size, cheap, sturdy, can be mounted on a wall, and has an option to be locked. If the school decide to leave the cabinet unlocked, the magnets on the inner of the door (see below image) ensure the door doesn't swing open, and a small handle can be installed to make it easy to open.

The first aid box can be purchased in Alice Springs at hardware stores, first aid supply stores and at office supply stores. Total cost of items pictured \$53

N.b. The wall mounting materials not included in image or cost

*Cover the first aid symbol to avoid it being mistaken for a first aid box. This could possibly be a girls' activity, to paint the box which may develop some ownership of the cabinet and contents.*





## At the Local Store

Local stores can play a valuable role in supporting girls and women in terms of MHM. Each store has a different layout, management, employee group, and may have a different history of sales of pads and tampons.

Over the past 6 years I have observed that there have been some store managers who have made attempts to make purchasing pads and tampons easier and less shame inducing for women and girls. In my experience, stores tend to be supportive and flexible in trying out different things to see what works.

I suggest, if you are approaching a store staff to discuss MHM product placement and sales, start by asking mature local women working at the clinic or school, and if you have good relationships, girls and women in the community the following, general questions:

- Where do people buy or access things for their monthlies?
- Where is the ideal place in the store where the pads and tampons may be kept?
- Is there someone working at the store that people might go to to buy them, or to ask for them?
- Is there a quiet time of day people tend to go and buy them?

These discussion points will help develop an understanding specific to the local context, which is helpful for working with the store to make the MHM items more accessible.

## Questions for the Store

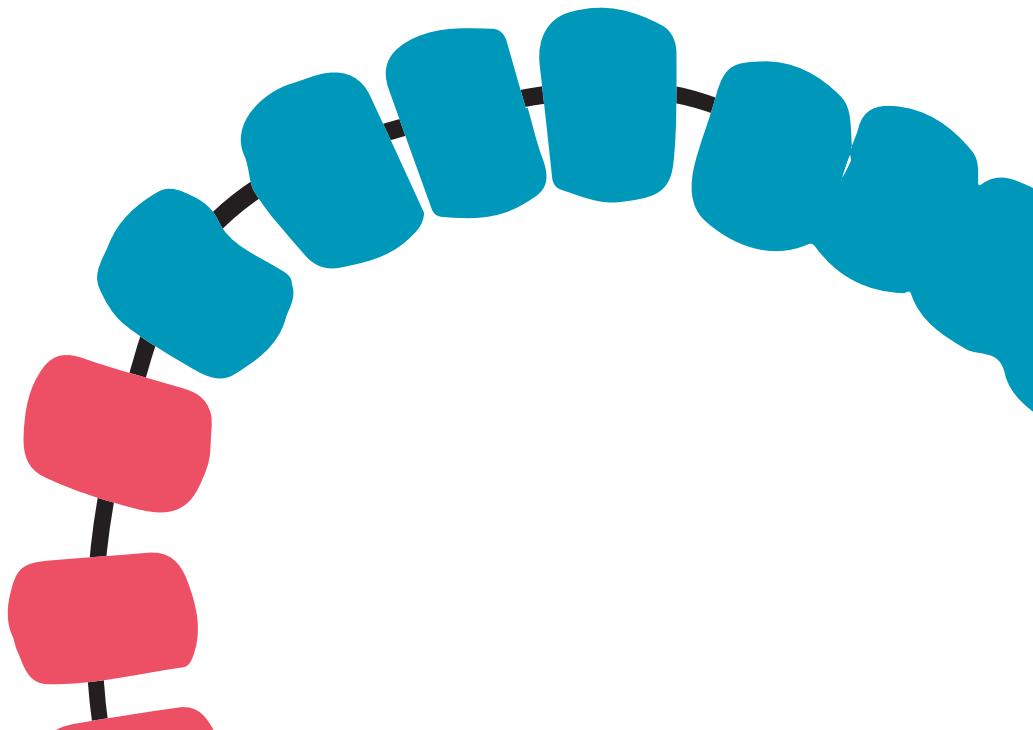
- Where are they currently storing/shelving sanitary products?
- Do the products actually sell?
- Do they have ladies cotton underwear available, girl's underwear? Do they sell?
- Are there any particular staff who people go to, to ask for or buy the products?
- If the sales are at a low level, do they have any suggestions for what they think would work?
- Would making some changes in their store be a possibility? (follow up with suggestions of the local girls and women)

Some stores report minimal to no sales of pads and tampons. However, regardless of whether they sell or not, taking steps to improve access to MHM 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 level of privacy, ie. not in full view of everyone walking into the store
- Making pads and tampons available at the counter, already packaged in paper bags concealing the products, so the buyer can ask the staff member for them while paying for other shopping

At time of writing, CAYLUS were in the early stages of discussions with clinics and stores, about the possibility of subsidising MHM packs, which would include, underwear, soap and pads.



## Activity and discussion tools

### Making a Safe Space to Talk about MHM with Girls

Discuss the MHM session with female family members of potential participants prior to a session, to get their permission and possible input. Allow your participants to choose the location and a woman older than them. Inform all participants that this is a talk about girls' things, I personally refrain from calling it women's business, as I am unqualified; I do not hold the position or knowledge to impart cultural information, as the term women's business may suggest.

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 the resources, or you are doing a follow up session with girls who you have done a session with the materials previously, try using the posters featured in this book.

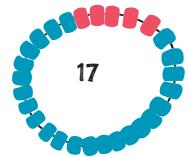
Is it okay to wear one of those things [sanitary pad] for one week?

12 yo

Try not to assume the extent of knowledge, and awareness around menstruation or MHM within the group you are engaging with. Give the participants time to ask questions and to share their impressions. Make time to respond to all questions gently and respectfully, you are defining the group dynamic and maintaining a respectful and shame free space is very important. Prepubescent girls sometimes do not want older girls who are already menstruating to come along, as this may stop them from speaking freely or expressing the things they do not understand, or how they may feel about their body and the idea of menstruating. Be sensitive and responsive to the group the girls create to go and talk about 'girls' things'. This may mean you need to do several sessions with different groups to ensure good practice.

Unwrap all items, including tampons, make clear gestures while removing packaging to make it very obvious. 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 (having a rubbish bag with you is handy as there will be quite a bit of rubbish!).





## MHM Session Reflections

### Bush trip

I picked up six girls I was aware 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.

**I'm really frightened of it, but if it is natural and normal I'll be okay**

10 yo girl

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 4/5/6 girls. This community did not have a high school, 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 the 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 a MHM session. The boys were engaged in another activity in another classroom, and present were 5 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 to possibly help troubleshoot any issues.



## Growing up painting

This painting illustrates some of the elements of the different stages of life girls experience, from pre-natal to being a grandmother. If you are delivering MHM at a school as a visitor, you could share this painting with the staff before your visit so the teacher has option to introduce the topic to the group before your visit. This can support and strengthen the relationship within the class room at school and works to make schools be equipped and allocate time to make school more girl friendly.

### Activity

Display the painting so everyone can see it, ask what the group can recognise in the painting

The discussion around this painting may inspire participants to do their own painting about this kind of story, it may be worth asking the group who they would like to invite to help do the painting.

### Materials

Poster 1 Painting - digital or print form

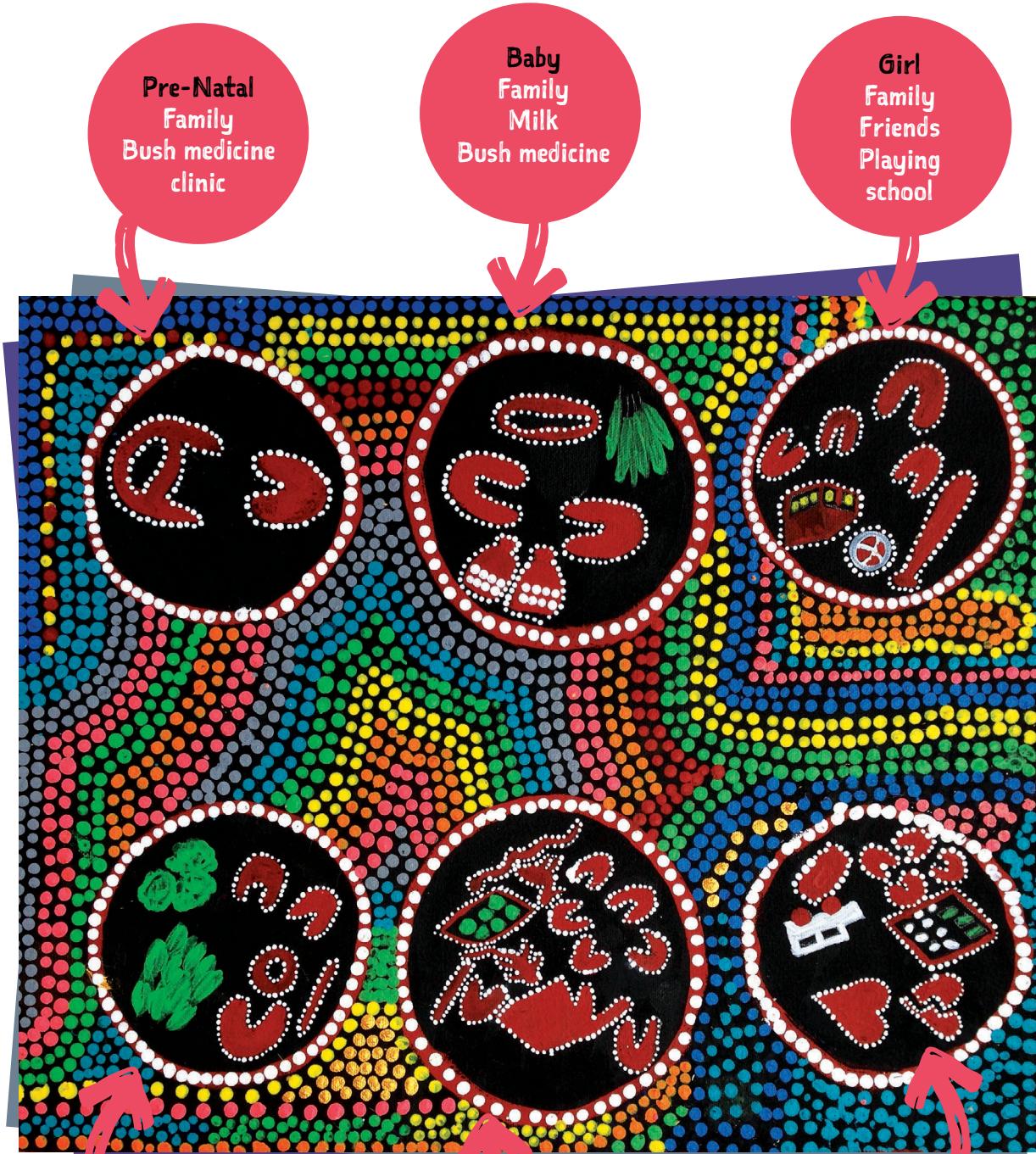
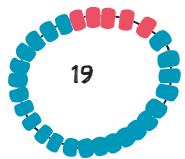
### Discussion

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 shame. This 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, eg. a little girl and her teenage sister. A baby boy and his grandmother
- Family responsibilities in the different stages of life
- Particular themes, events or needs at different times of life, eg. having a relationship, earning money, 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 association activity, see page 20.

### Share

See feedback form on page 23 to share the experience of the session with CAYLUS



**Pre-Natal  
Family  
Bush medicine  
clinic**

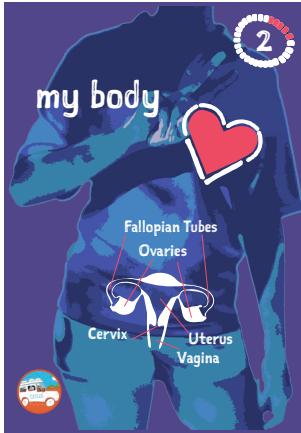
**Baby  
Family  
Milk  
Bush medicine**

**Girl  
Family  
Friends  
Playing  
school**

**Old Lady  
Family  
Bush medicine  
hunting**

**Woman  
Family  
Home  
Money  
Work  
hunting**

**Teenager  
Family  
Friends  
Love  
Heartbreak  
Money  
Phone/Internet  
Car/independence**



## 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 do not have access to buying all the materials, you can use the images in this book. 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, let each girl complete the task with minimal interference

Show where the tampon is inserted into the vagina by using real, unwrapped tampon and the poster 2

## Materials

Different sizes of pads, liners and tampons

Undies (approx. 10, one pair for each girl participant and for present adults)

Toilet paper to show demonstration of disposal

Bag to keep everything private

Small rubbish bag to dispose unwrapped pads & tampons

Posters 2-5

## Discussion

What the pad is

Where to buy or access item in community and town

What each item is good for

Hand washing and unwrapping

Inserting tampon in vagina and placing pad in underwear, hand washing

How long it is safe to wear item

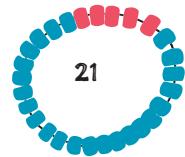
Showering and washing

Appropriate disposal and toilet blockages caused by flushing

Ask participants to think of a person they can/would go to to talk about menstruation, at home, and at the school/s they go to.

## Share

See feedback form on page 23 to share the experience of the session with CAYLUS



## At the Shop

Use posters 7-8 with images of stock at the local shop and in town as examples of what you'll find on the shelf. It can be very nerve-wracking for girls and women to purchase tampons or pads, and it can be such an overwhelming feeling of shame that they may not even make an attempt to purchase them. This activity aims to give girls some sense of navigation and familiarity with products and their packaging, as well as inform us of most appropriate store sales strategies.

### Activity

Look at the printed poster, or the image on screen, and allow girls to zoom in, or point out the location of different items.

Have posters 1-2 available also, and while talking about the posters get girls to show where the specific item is on the shelf.

### Materials

Posters 7-8

### Discussion

Fundamental messages to share;  
Where to buy or access items in community and town, where they are kept in the store  
What makes it easy or difficult to buy pads and tampons

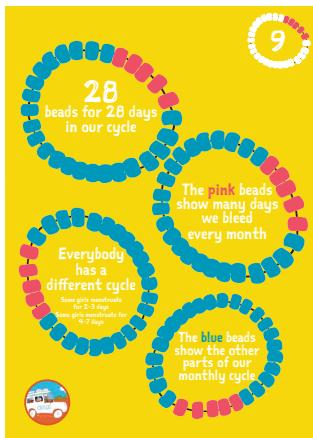
There are different types of pads and tampons, and when you have the right kind to use you feel more comfortable

What might need to change in community to make it easier to buy pads eg. store having them behind the counter

Who might be able to help purchase/access pads or tampons if you feel too shame

### Share

See feedback form on page 23 to share the experience of the session with CAYLUS



## Girl's Bracelets

### Activity

Make a bracelet with girls and ladies, with 28 beads representing the 28 days of the menstrual cycle.

Invite girls to select two different colours of beads, to represent bleeding days and non-bleeding days. If girls do not feel comfortable revealing how many days they bleed, suggest 5 or 6.

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

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 giving them more control and capacity to manage MHM

This activity gives participants a practical and appealing thing to do while other discussion can take place and other resources can be shared

### Materials

Beads and elastic

Experiment with different size beads, if they are too big/small the bracelet will be to large/small to be worn on the wrist. It is important to have the beads in a circle, ie. Not stop start by other features in the piece, so it can effectively illustrate the cyclical nature of the menstruation

All other posters may be useful, depending on the discussion  
Media: Funny menstruation animation

### Discussion

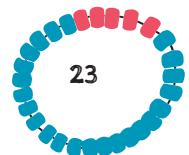
Fundamental messages to share

Everybody is different, some of us might bleed for 2-3 days, and others might bleed 4-7 days

Everybody is different, but there are some things which many of us feel

### Share

See feedback form on page 23 to share the experience of the session with CAYLUS



## ► 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 around MHM in Central Australia.

Please contact [leyla@caylus.org.au](mailto:leyla@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 (eg. school classroom, bush trip, youth centre, clinic etc.):

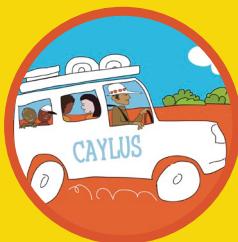
### Other resources used not included in this booklet:

### Language/words used to talk about menstruation:

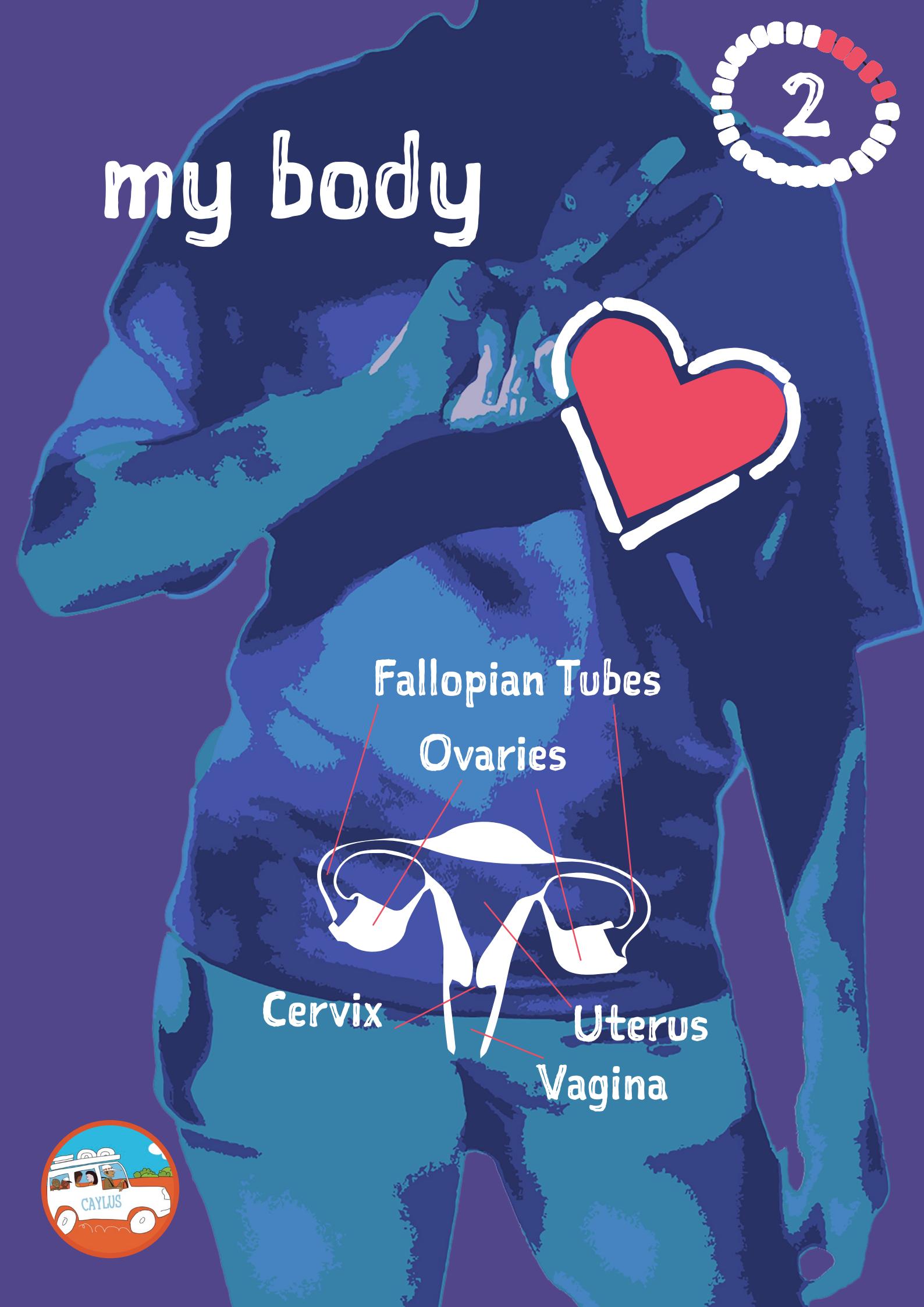
### Comments and suggestions from facilitator and/or participants (please specify):

N.b Age of participants is useful to pair with information, however anonymity will always be respected, names of individuals and communities will not be published. Permission will be sought for any shared material which may be included in further editions of this discussion paper.

1



# my body



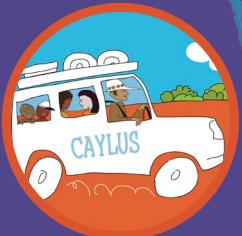
Fallopian Tubes

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 having the ability to have children, it does not mean that girls are ready to have children.

## 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.

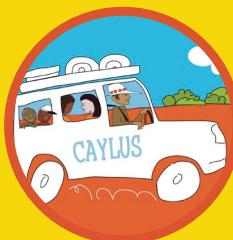


## What are the physical changes that take place in girls?

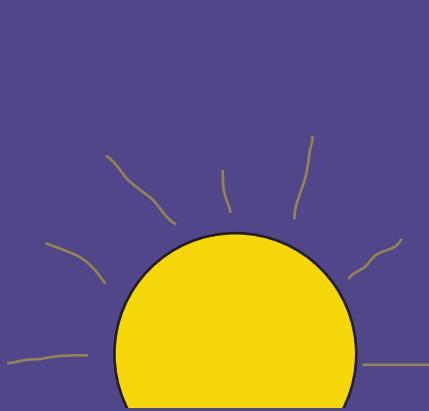
- A girl's breasts start to grow and her hips get wider.
- Hair starts to grow under her arms. Hair grows in her pubic area. She starts to menstruate (have her period or bleed every month).
- 

## What is menstruation?

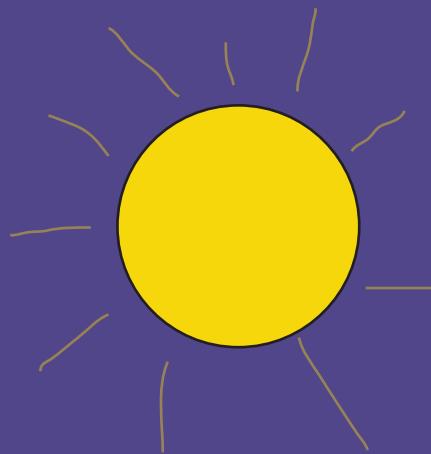
- Menstruation means that a girl's body is growing up, and is preparing for the future when she might get pregnant and have a baby.
- During menstruation, the lining of the uterus comes out along with blood through the vagina.
- Bleeding usually lasts 4-7 days and usually happens every month.
- Monthly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



4



Morning



Midday



Evening



Night time pads



Liners



Regular pads



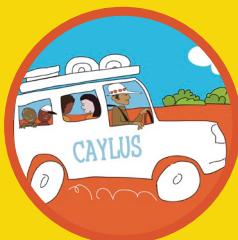
5

Change tampons  
every 3 hours



Regular tampons

Super tampons



6

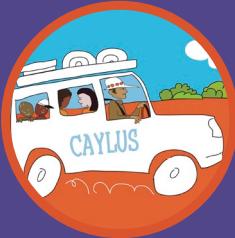


showers

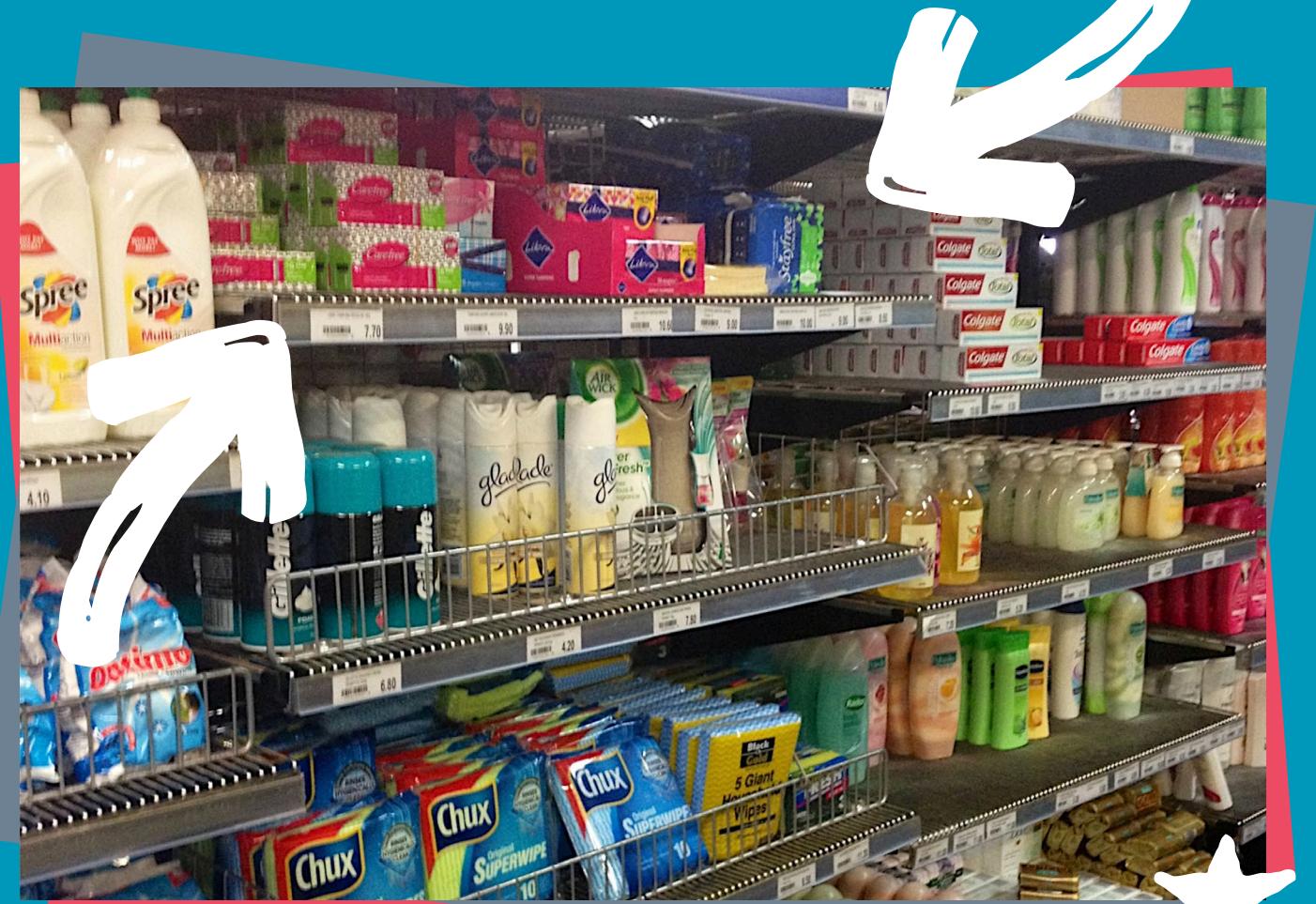
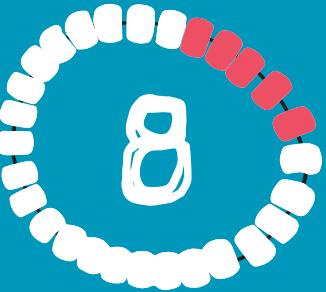


7

# At the town shops



# At the community store



9

28  
beads for 28 days  
in our cycle

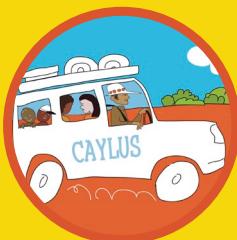
The pink beads  
show many days  
we bleed  
every month

Everybody  
has a  
different cycle

Some girls menstruate  
for 2-3 days

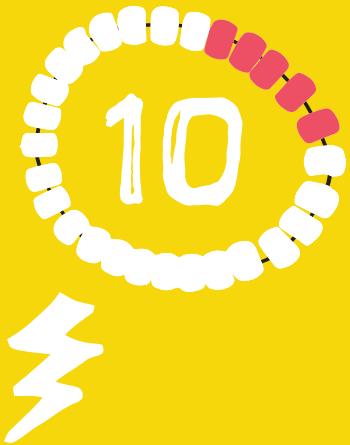
Some girls menstruate for  
4-7 days

The blue beads  
show the other  
parts of our  
monthly cycle





# Toxic Shock Syndrome



**Change your tampon  
every 3 hours**

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

**Only use tampons you have  
unwrapped, if you decide not  
to use it, throw it in the  
rubbish, don't keep it for later**

- Using tampons means you need to take extra care of yourself, or you might get really sick
- Toxic Shock Syndrome might make you feel sick, have a headache, vomit, have fever, diarrhoea, feel weak, dizzy, confused and get a rash
- When you leave your tampon in for too long, and you're not careful with staying clean, you might get something called
- Stay safe
- Use the right size tampon for your amount of bleeding
- During the days of your monthlies, you might need to use super (big) and regular (medium) and mini tampons

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

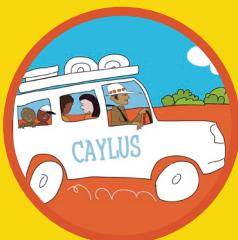
**Only use a tampon when  
you have your monthlies**

**Only use one  
tampon at a time**

**Take special care of yourself  
& wash everyday when you  
have your monthlies**



**Don't use a tampon  
if it hurts you**



11

# 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.

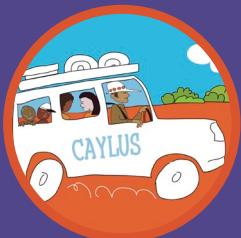
PMS can start a week before you start bleeding, and usually goes away after the first couple of days of bleeding

## You might feel

- moody, miserable, frustrated
  - stressed
  - sooky, crying
- tired, weak, sleeping a lot, or finding it hard to sleep
- no feeling to join in or being with others
- getting more hungry, or having cravings
  - mixed up thinking

## In your body you might have

- muscles paining
- sore, swollen boobs
- stomach ache
- big, tight stomach, bloating
- diarrhea and constipation
  - pimples
  - headaches
- nausea, feeling like vomiting



# Is it normal if...

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

Yes, when girls' bodies are developing, the period is often not regular and 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 will last 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 depending on the girl.

## 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 menstrual period is 5 days but it can range from 2 to 7 days.

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

Yes, as a girl's body is developing, 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 period. This is normal and as you get older, you will feel less shy.

## Is it normal to get water-like or white discharge right before or after your period?

Yes, once a girl's body starts to develop, having some clear or milky- white discharge is normal. During her 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

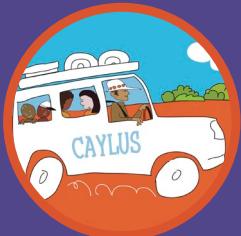
[http://www.growandknow.org/Growth\\_and\\_Changes\\_Ethiopia\\_Book\\_Oromiffa.pdf](http://www.growandknow.org/Growth_and_Changes_Ethiopia_Book_Oromiffa.pdf)

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 will get my monthlies next
13. Flushing pads/kimbi 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

'True or False?' has been partly sourced from Shama Books, Grow and Know resource,  
'Growth and Changes' page 32  
[http://www.growandknow.org/Growth\\_and\\_Changes\\_Ethiopia\\_Book\\_Oromiffa.pdf](http://www.growandknow.org/Growth_and_Changes_Ethiopia_Book_Oromiffa.pdf)  
CAYLUS has permission to feature this in this resource book

## Further Reading

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Housing for Health,<br>Central Australia                                 | How a Bathroom Fails to Function:<br><a href="http://www.housingforhealth.com/realworld/bathroom-fails-function/">http://www.housingforhealth.com/realworld/bathroom-fails-function/</a>   |
| Central Australian Aboriginal Congress and Alukura,<br>Central Australia | CCHEP Young Women's Community Health Education Program:<br><a href="http://www.caac.org.au/how-we-help/education/congress-community-health-education-program-cchepl/">http://www.caac.org.au/how-we-help/education/congress-community-health-education-program-cchepl/</a>   |
| High as a Koit,<br>UK  | Funny Menstruation Animation:<br><a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvPVyas68jE">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZvPVyas68jE</a>   |
| Wateraid,<br>International   | Menstrual Hygiene Matters:<br><a href="http://www.wateraid.org/what-we-do/our-approach/research-and-publications/view-publication?id=02309d73-8e41-4d04-b2ef-6641f6616a4f">http://www.wateraid.org/what-we-do/our-approach/research-and-publications/view-publication?id=02309d73-8e41-4d04-b2ef-6641f6616a4f</a>  |
| Menstrual Hygiene Day,<br>International                                  | Menstrual Hygiene Day:<br><a href="http://menstrualhygieneday.org/">http://menstrualhygieneday.org/</a>  |
| Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council,<br>International        | WSSCC Menstrual Hygiene Management:<br><a href="http://wsscc.org/resource-links2/menstrual-hygiene-management-mhm-manuals-wheel-flipbook/">http://wsscc.org/resource-links2/menstrual-hygiene-management-mhm-manuals-wheel-flipbook/</a>   |
| United Nations Children's Fund,<br>International                         | UNICEF WASH in Schools Empowers Girls Education Proceedings of the Menstrual Hygiene Management in Schools Virtual Conference 2012:<br><a href="http://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/files/WASH_in_Schools_Empowers_Girls_Education_Proceedings_of_Virtual_MHM_conference(2).pdf">http://www.unicef.org/wash/schools/files/WASH_in_Schools_Empowers_Girls_Education_Proceedings_of_Virtual_MHM_conference(2).pdf</a>   |
| Mailman School of Public Health,<br>International                        | Utilizing participatory and quantitative methods for effective menstrual-hygiene management related policy and planning by Marni Sommers:<br><a href="https://watsanmissionassistant.wikispaces.com/file/view/marnisommer_participatoryquantativemethodsmhpolicyplanning_2010.pdf/356181744/marnisommer_participatoryquantativemethodsmhpolicyplanning_2010.pdf">https://watsanmissionassistant.wikispaces.com/file/view/marnisommer_participatoryquantativemethodsmhpolicyplanning_2010.pdf/356181744/marnisommer_participatoryquantativemethodsmhpolicyplanning_2010.pdf</a> |
| Menstrupedia,<br>South Asia  | Menstrupedia: Official Blog of Menstrupedia:<br><a href="http://menstrupedia.com/blog/">http://menstrupedia.com/blog/</a>  |
| Share the Dignity,<br>Australia  | <a href="http://www.sharethedignity.com.au">http://www.sharethedignity.com.au</a>  |



